The Ambivalence of the Unveiled: A Feminist Reading on Asghar Farhadi's Films

Elnaz Nasehi

Submitted to the
Institute of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Communication and Media Studies

Eastern Mediterranean University
April 2018
Gazimağusa, North Cyprus

Approval of the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research

_____
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Hakan Ulusoy
Acting Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication and Media Studies.

_____
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Agah Gümüş
Acting Dean, Faculty of Communication
& Media Studies

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication and Media Studies.

_____
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nurten Kara
Supervisor

Examining Committee
_____

1. Prof. Dr. Dilruba Çatalbaş Ürper   _____

2. Prof. Dr. Hülya Uğur Tanrıöver   _____

3. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mashoed Bailie   _____

4. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nurten Kara   _____

5. Asst. Prof. Dr. Pembe Behçetoğullari   _____

ABSTRACT

Feminist contribution to the studies of film is rooted in the feminist concerns with the cinematic reproduction of gendered ideologies. Acknowledging the specificity of Iranian society and Iranian cinema, this research endeavors to introduce and theorize "buttressing unconscious" as the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society and discusses "buttressing strategies" as the way it affect representation of female characters narratively and aesthetically on the screen.

The main concern of the current research are how buttressing unconscious is inscribed into the screen and it shapes cinematic conscious/unconscious choices of the filmmaker. As buttressing unconscious entails a form of veiling- as a buttress- in order to deactivate the threat of an unveiled/empowered woman, it is inscribed on the screen through the three cinematic functions of veiling; sartorial practices, behavioral codes and sex-segregation.

A qualitative method of textual analysis is used to find out how meaning is constructed via various thematic, stylistic, technical and narrative tools in six films directed by Asghar Farhadi, the only Iranian Oscar-winner filmmaker. The analysis reveals that Farhadi's representation of veiling creates parodies of the conventional propriety in regard to the issue of obligatory hejeb. However, his aesthetic engendered the mise-en-scene and cinematography, and imposes buttressing/veiling gaze on female characters, and while the narrative moves toward the state of reparation and the new state of orders is established, the female empowered characters are buttressed and controlled. Farhadi's portrayal of patriarchy is

pervasive insomuch that he succeeds to address the complex network of dominative mechanisms of patriarchy in the economic, and political levels. However, his desire to move beyond patriarchy fails to reach its object of desire, and reproduces its very core of criticism within in accordance with symbolic culture and the sustainable buttressing unconscious of Iranian society/cinema.

Keywords: Iranian Cinema, Feminist Film Studies, Representation of Women, Buttressing Strategy, Buttressing Gaze, Buttressing Unconscious, Neopatriarchal Unconscious, Asghar Farhadi.

ÖZ

Feminizmin film çalışmalarına katkısı, toplumsal cinsiyetlendirilmiş ideolojilerin sinemasal yeniden üretimiyle ilgili feminist kaygılara dayanmaktadır. Bu araştırma, İran toplumunun ve İran sinemasının özgüllüğünü göz önünde bulundurarak, İran toplumunun yeni ataerkil bilinçdışısı olarak sunduğu "payanda stratejisi" üzerine bir kuram inşa etmekte ve bu stratejinin ekranda, kadın karakterlerin anlatımını ve estetik olarak temsilini nasıl etkilediğini tartışmaktadır.

Araştırmanın temel ekseni, payanda stratejisinin ekrana nasıl yansıdığı ve film yönetmeninin bilinçli/bilinçdışı sinemasal tercihlerini nasıl şekillendirdiğidir. Başı açık/güçlenmiş kadının yarattığı tehdidi etkisiz hale getirmek için, örtünmeyi bir tür destek gibi sunan payanda stratejisi, ekrana tesettürün üç sinemasal işlevini yansıtmaktadır: örtünme uygulamaları, davranış kodları ve cinsiyet ayrımı.

İran'ın Oscar kazanan tek yönetmeni olan Asghar Farhadi'nin yönettiği altı filmde, çeşitli tematik, biçimsel, teknik ve anlatı araçlarıyla anlamın nasıl kurgulandığını ortaya koymak için nitel bir metinsel analiz yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Yapılan analiz, Farhadi'nin tesettür temsillerinin zorunlu tesettür ve geleneksel örtünmeye dair parodiler yarattığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bununla birlikte, Farhadi'nin estetiği, toplumsal cinsiyetlendirilmiş bir mizansen ve sinematografi yaratmakta ve kadın karakterlerine payandalandırılmış/örtünmüş bir bakış empoze etmektedir. Anlatı, çatışmanın çözüldüğü ve yeni bir dengenin oluştuğu aşamaya doğru ilerlerken, kadın karakterler payanda ile desteklenir ve kontrol edilir. Farhadi, ataerkilliğin ekonomik ve siyasal düzeydeki egemen mekanizmalarının karmaşık ağının kapsamlı bir

portresini çizmeyi başarır. Bununla birlikte, ataerkilliğin ötesine geçme arzusu, arzu nesnesine ulaşamaz ve Farhadi, eleştirdiklerini, sembolik kültür ve İran toplumunun/sinemasının sürdürülebilir payanda bilinçdışısı doğrultusunda yeniden üretir.

Anahtar sözcükler: İran Sineması, Feminist Film Çalışmaları, Kadınların Temsili, Payanda Stratejisi, Payanda Bakışı, Yeni Ataerkil Bilinçdışı, Asghar Farhadi.

To

"The ongoing struggle of Iranian women for equality and freedom"

ACKNOWLDGMENT

sacrificing their own wishes, and trusting their daughter paved the way for me to choose my own path and be the one who I wanted to.

Finally, Arman Arian, my best friend and my husband, has been supportive in any possible way, and has shown patience, love and care through all the years of my PhD education. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to him for providing me with a perfect example of how life would look like if equality of men and women finds its way to our thoughts and deeds.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Problem

The current research chooses Asghar Farhadi's cinema for the purpose of analyzing the cinema of a male filmmaker in a male-dominated society within the framework of feminist concerns. Feminist contribution to the studies of film is rooted in the feminist concerns with the cinematic reproduction of gendered ideologies. What all the different feminist theories and approaches to film have in common are their concerns about the way men and women are not represented equally on the screen, and the way by which the femininity and masculinity are dichotomized respectively between passive object of male desire, and active subject, who owns the powerful gaze.

In her groundbreaking article, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*[1], Laura Mulvey raises the question of why men and women are depicted in active/passive opposition, and why filmic images reinforces the "socially established interpretation of sexual difference" ([1975]1990, p. 28). Drawing on Lacanian Psychoanalysis, Mulvey describes the contemporary patriarchal unconscious and the way it is inscribed into the silver screen. She argues that as the film is constructed in a way to meet the needs of patriarchal unconscious, it serves the scopophilic pleasure of the male spectator.

---

[1] - Originally published- Screen 16:3, autumn 1975, PP. 6-18.

The current research aims to explore the representation of women in post-revolutionary Iranian cinema. Acknowledging the specificity of Iranian society and Iranian cinema, this research questions the ahistoricity of Mulvey's psychoanalytic theory of film studies and, therefore, endeavors to argue and theorize the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society and its impact on the way female characters are being represented narratively and aesthetically on the screen.

In order to meet this objective, Asghar Farhadi's cinema is chosen based on some reasons which are discussed in details in the next section. Asghar Farhadi's cinema is being analyzed within the framework of feminist concerns in order to find out if Farhadi's subjective version of reality of Iranian society succeeds to break the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian cinema or the outcome of Farhadi's conscious/unconscious choices contributes to the ambivalent diegetic representation of women.

Iranian society have been through series of political and social upheavals during the last two centuries, and the Iranian women's body and sexuality have been the site of struggle through the still ongoing social and political changes. These constant changes have found its way to the silver screen. For, as Naficy argues "movies are important causes, effects, and instruments of modernity. Every movie is at once an individual expression and a collective one. As a result, movies are potent currency in ideological battles, affecting both modern individual subjectivities and collective national identities" (2011, p. 15).

Based on the social constructionism, which is the methodological paradigm of the current research, Farhadi's cinema will be analyzed not as the reflection of the self-

present reality of the Iranian society but as a cultural product which is constructed through the cinematic conscious/unconscious choices of the filmmaker. Therefore, the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society needs to be discussed in order to, firstly, avoid the essentialist monolithic perspective of Lacanian portrayal of patriarchal unconscious; and secondly, to provide a theoretical platform for a discussion of possibilities and shortages of Iranian cinema as a form of counter cinema.

1.2 Why Asghar Farhadi?

The current research aims to analyze Asghar Farhadi's cinema within the framework of feminist concerns. There are two broad reasons for choosing Farhadi and his films into the focus of this piece of research.

The first reason to choose Asghar Farhadi is his cinematic and socio-political significance and influence according to which his films have been watched by large number of Iranian and non-Iranian people. Undoubtedly, Farhadi is one of the most Internationally recognized Iranian filmmakers whose national and international success[2] raises his name as the most recent addition to the list of Iranian internationally recognized Film makers such as Abbas Kiarostami, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, Majid Majidi, Jafar Panahi, Bahman Farmanara and Bahman Ghobadi. His name is listed as one of the 100 Most Influential People in the world by *Time* magazine in 2012 (Corliss, 2012).

His international presence, however, differs from most of the other internationally recognized Iranian filmmakers in the sense that his films, besides their international recognition, are received well by domestic audiences as well. For, hitherto most of

---

[2] - His international awards are listed in Appendix A.

the Iranian internationally praised films which were categorized as arthouse cinema could not connect to their audiences at home. The main reason might be the reluctance of previous internationally praised films to depict the life of middle class Iranians[3] which are the main cinema-goers and, therefore, to lose their connection to their everyday concerns, whereas Farhadi has depicted the middle class Iranians in their challenging situations.

Farhadi's cinema deals with the issues of the Iranian middle class (Ahupa, 2012; Jahed, 2011; Kazemi, 2011). This claim, however, does not apply to the first two films of Frahadi, *Dancing in the Dust* (2003) and *The Beautiful City* (2004) which depict lower class characters. However, the next four films[4], *Fireworks Wednesday* (2006), *About Elly* (2009), *A Separation* (2012), and *The Salesman* (2016) are the quadruple of the middle class stories in which the life of urban middle class Iranian people are depicted being entangled in between hegemonic tradition and authoritative modernity[5]; *About Elly* takes a group of middle class young people whose intimate relationship change to frustration, anger and suspicion after disappearance of Elly, a single newly invited person; both *Fireworks Wednesday* and *A Separation* comprise, each in its own way, a middle class couple at the end of their

---

[3] - Khaled Ahupa (2012) discussed the dismissal of the middle class from cinematic representation in Iran. As he discussed, one reason of this dismissal is the assumption according to which dichotomization of higher and lower class characters have a richer dramatic potential, and the second reason is the delayed formation of the actual middle class in Iranian society. Despite the formation of middle class urban culture in Iranian society, however, most of the filmic representations in the Iranian Art cinema still prefer to portray the lower class characters. Depicting lower class characters in the rural areas is also rooted in the way Iranian cinema has been struggled to survive under the restrictive 'rules of modesty'. This issue will be discussed in details in the next chapter under the section of "Allegorical Language of Allusion".

[4] - The film *The Past* (2013) is excluded from the current research. The reason of this exclusion is discussed in more detail in the fourth chapter.

[5] - Explaining the reason of this shift in his storytelling from lower to middle-class themes, Farhadi, in an interview with Hassannia (2014), relates it to his initial fascination with the leftist Iranian writers whose works addresses the lower-class-related themes. However, later he turns into his own experiences as a person from middle class tier. Another reason for this shift, as Farhadi discusses, is the importance of middle class in the formation of the destiny of a society.

marriage whose relationship with each other and with their lower class workers is portrayed; *The Salesman* tells a story of a middle class couple whose calm is cracked by an intruder's assault. Through addressing issue of classes, Asghar Farhadi raises other mutually related issues such as economic problems, prejudice norms, traditional values, regulations, and the way they impact on people's everyday life.

Another socio-political significance of his cinema is his association with the Green Movement, a political oppositional movement. First, Farhadi's *A Separation* was released alongside the pro-government film of Masoud Dehnamaki[6], third installment of *The Outcasts* (*Ekhrajiha*). Accordingly during the screening time, Farhadi's film was associated with "Green Movement". Therefore, the simultaneous screening of these two films became the battlefield of the pro-government and oppositional movement. Second, this conflict enhances by the temporarily suspension of the permission of Farhadi's film, *A Separation*, by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance duo to his support of exiled filmmakers[7]. Although, Dehnamaki's film received much more success in the box office and hit the record of the most selling film in Iranian history with $6 million in ticket sales through benefitting the support of state television promotions and being shown on more

---

[6] - Dehnamaki, the director of *The Outcasts* series who has hold many box-office records was a journalist for Ansar-e Hezbollah, a conservative group which is accused of attacking peaceful reformist gathering, and beating up student demonstration in 2009 protests. The Outcasts 3 portrays a group of Iran-Iraq war veterans as opposition parties and represents them as power-hungry parties who are trying to deceive youth by telling lie and cheating in order to win the presidential election. Despite Dehnamaki's claim that there are no similarities between his film's characters and the real-life candidates (Erdbrink, 2011), the opposition believes that his 2 greedy candidates resemble the official image the government is trying to present of the two candidates who are considered as Green Movement leaders, and are house arrested since the political unrest after presidential election in Iran in 2009.

[7] - In September 2010, while receiving his award as the best director for *About Elly* in the ceremony held by Iran's House of Cinema, Farhadi expressed his hope for the return of the exiled filmmaker, Mohsen Makhmalbaf to Iran, and also for the return of Jafar Panahi to filmmaking. Panahi had been imprisoned months earlier and banned from filmmaking (Yong, 2010; Dehghan, 2012). Farhadi was forced to apologize to have the ban of *A Separation* lifted. However, "it was unclear precisely how Mr. Farhadi had apologized. He had previously said his remarks had been misconstrued" (Yong, 2010).

screens, Farhadi's film which sold $3 million played its crucial role to bring socio-political challenges into the realm of popular culture.

Besides Farhadi's national and international significance, the second reason to choose his cinema for the purpose of this research is his controversial claims of 'reflecting the reality' and 'multiplicity of voices'. What is meant with "reality" and "multiplicity of voices" are one of the most important paradigms in communication and film studies. Those terms cannot be separated from the core discussions on "truth" and "plurality". In an interview with *Evene,* Farhadi claims:

> …in all my films, I have tried to **multiply the points of view**, rather than imposing my own, to enable the viewer to have different angles of the story. It is not difficult to agree that cinema, in essence, is a dictatorial art, where the director dictates what the spectator must see. It is exactly that attitude which I fight against…I hope in all cases that it is a **democratic cinema**! (Cited in Burke, 2011).

Farhadi's claim about 'multiplicity of voices' raises question on the presence of female characters and gender-related concerns in his films among many other issues. It has been claimed that Farhadi's films are rich in addressing the issue related to gender[8]. There are also several consistently repeated themes in Farhadi's cinema addressing gender-related issues; from issues such as marriage, divorce, family, caring for relatives and parental relationship to more abstract motifs of justice, truth, class, and religion. That's why the question of women representation in Farhadi's cinema seems to be a vital question. Do women have voices within his putative 'democratic cinema' through the opportunity of 'multiplicity of voices'?

---

[8] - In his review on Farhadi's cinema, Atkinson (2012) claims that "Farhadi's movie is nothing if not a crucible for the social firefight that is Iranian gender politics." In another review on *About Elly*, he also writes that in Farhadi's films, "the crisis always ends up being about gender" (2015).

In reference to the way women are represented in his films, Farhadi said in an interview with Emanuel Levy that "in my films, I try to give a **realistic** and complex vision of my characters, whether male or female. Why women tend to be more of a driving force. Perhaps it's an **unconscious choice**" (Levy, 2011). His claim of 'reflecting reality' in his films implies his full access as a 'knowing subject' to the objective reality of the outside world which can be reified objectively into a form of discursive reality. Through this claim, he denies the very constructed quality of his artistic experience. For, as an individual filmmaker he is participating in the construction and creation of his own perceived reality rather than depicting an unmediated, self-identical reality. The reality of Iranian society is not a to-be-discovered truth which is accessible with an objective act of uncovering. "Rather, there can be multiple realities that compete for truth and legitimacy" (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010).

Farhadi's metaphysical claim about 'reflecting reality' is in contrast to his confession about his 'unconscious choice' regarding the presence of women in his films. This confession refers to the structure/agent relationship. The relationship between individual activities and social structure has been negotiated amply and the dispute is an on-going one.

Structure/agency debate is an ontological question in social sciences. Three standpoints are recognizable about agency-structure issue; according to the first position, the social structures are powerfully dominant in formation of human agencies. This position is mostly grounded in Emile Durkheim's theory of 'social facts' according to which social facts "consist of manners of acting, thinking and feeling external to the individual, which are invested with a coercive power by virtue

of which they exercise control over him" (Durkheim, 2013 [1982], p. 21); the second position emphasizes the power of human agencies as autonomous beings in control of their actions and decisions. Theoretical arguments of Max Weber were one of the prominent frameworks in this position; trying to reconcile the dichotomization between agency and structure, the third approach upholds the dialectic relationships between the two. In his classic book, Anthony Giddens faulted both individualist and structuralist sociological perspectives for their negligence of interdependency of 'action' and 'structure'. He explains that "the notions of action and structure presuppose *one another*" in a 'dialectical relation' (Giddens, 1979, p. 53).

As far as related to this research, it can be claimed that a film-maker, although being an autonomous being, is a constructed 'knowing subject' and is socialized in a dialectical and mutually constitutive relationship with social structures.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on discussed arguments, this research posits that Farhadi creates his own version of reality about Iranian society and Iranian people, "whether male or female". Whose voice and desire are constructed in Farhadi's films is the main concern of this research. How does the outcome of Farhadi's conscious/unconscious choices contribute to the feminist concerns? What is the status of women within his claimed "multiple-voiced" cinema? As a male director in a male-dominated society, are his 'unconscious choices' complicit with the 'unconscious of patriarchal society' -to draw on Mulvey- or does he move beyond the society's unconscious to break the male desire in constructing his filmic representation?

The approach toward women under the Islamic Republic is ambiguous as it vacillates between hostility and modification. Being rooted in the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society, this ambivalent approach have found its way to the silver screen and led into ambivalent representation of empowered women in Iranian cinema; the ambivalence which is rooted in what Zeiny (2013) insightfully called "neopatriarchal Iranian cinema". While the concept of "neopatriarchal Iranian cinema" is not further addressed by Zeiny, this research tries to theorize neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society and the way it shapes neopatriarchal Iranian cinema.

Buttressing unconscious- the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society-, as theorized in chapter four, is inscribed into cinematic representation in both levels of aesthetics and narrative. Therefore, this research analyzes Farhadi's cinematic world in both narrative and aesthetic levels to examine the way it is negotiating with Iranian neopatriarchal unconscious. The main question of the current research is **how buttressing neopatriarchy is inscribed into the screen and how it shapes cinematic conscious/unconscious choices of the filmmaker**. As buttressing unconscious entails a form of veiling- as a buttress- in order to deactivate the threat of an unveiled/empowered women, it is inscribed on the screen through the three cinematic functions of veiling; sartorial practices, behavioral codes and sex-segregation. The following questions break down the above-mentioned main question into more focused issues through which different aspects of cinematic inscription of neopatriarchal unconscious are addressed,

RQ1. Which characters do contribute to the breaking of the equilibrium?

RQ2. Does the cinematic representation of female characters imply or suggest any subversive or critical perspective on obligatory sartorial practice of veiling?

RQ3. Do the female characters manifest any transgressive and subversive behavior to break through the confinements of patriarchal society?

RQ4. Are the female characters represented through buttressing gaze with visual reference to sex-segregation?

RQ5. What do the state of reparation and the establishment of the new state of orders imply about the way Farhadi's films negotiate with empowered female characters?

1.4 Research Sampling and Method of Analysis

The current study concentrates on the analysis of women's representation in Asghar Farhadi's films. The analysis sample includes all the films which are shot inside the country as the current study focuses exclusively on the socio-political context of Iranian society. *The Past* (2013) is excluded from this analysis due to its production in France and the presence of French characters. Therefore, the six analyzed films are *Dancing in the Dust* (*Raghs dar ghobar*) 2003; *The Beautiful City* (*Shah-re Ziba*) 2004; *Fireworks Wednesday* (*Chaharshanbe-soori*) 2006; *About Elly* (*Darbareye Elly*) 2009; *A Separation* (*Jodaeiye Nader az Simin*) 2012[9], and *The Salesman (Forushande)* 2016.

In connection with critical feminist film studies, a qualitative method of textual analysis is used to find out how meaning is constructed via various thematic, stylistic, technical and narrative tools in the above-mentioned films.

---

[9] - The narrative of each film is provided in the appendix B to G.

The texts' structural features and cinematic elements are analyzed to examine how the texts construct meaning. Bearing in mind that film is a cultural product negotiating with the anxieties, contradictions and ideologies of the society they have been produced in, when necessary the contextual particularity of the film is mentioned in order to situate the filmic texts in their socio-political and cultural specificity.

The representation of women and women-related issues will take special focus, and the researcher constructs her own subjective interpretation of shadows Farhadi constructs in his Platonic Cave. For, the texts are not analyzed "as a closed, segmented object with determinate, composite meanings, but rather as an indeterminate field of meaning in which intentions and possible effects intersect" (Larsen, 1991, p. 122).

Moving beyond unmediated and transparent "reality reflection" perspective of filmic medium, this research deals with material and technical elements in the process of construction of filmic representation. The various implications of cinematography, editing, mise-en-scene, and narrative are explored and discussed in the analysis of Farhadi's cinema at the textual and contextual levels.

1.5 The Structure of the Thesis

This research deals with the analysis of Asghar Farhadi's cinema from a feminist perspective. In order to meet this objective, the second chapter provides an overview of the representation of women in Iranian cinema within the pre- and post-revolution eras.

The third chapter deals with the theoretical framework of the current research. First, feminist film theories are discussed. The emergence of essentialist reflection approach of feminist film studies in 1970s and its further development as social constructivist theories are covered. Also, psychoanalytical feminist film theory and its relevance to the current research is discussed.

In Chapter four, the concept of Neopatriarchy in Iran along with the "Buttressing Unconscious" as the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society are introduced and theorized. For, this unconscious has shaped the neopatriarchal ambiguous representation of empowered women in Iranian cinema, and has reinforced conscious and unconscious choices of Iranian filmmakers in constructing their own subjective version of Iranian women's life and reality. Furthermore, the new language of Iranian cinema which is born out of neopatriarchal Iranian society and leads into formation of neopatriarchal cinema is introduced.

The following chapter discusses the way buttressing perspective on femininity- as the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society- and buttressing/veiling strategy as the way this neopatriarchy deals with women's putative threat are inscribed into filmic representation through different functions of veiling in Iranian cinema; sartorial function, behavioral function, and function of sex segregation. Farhadi's cinema is analyzed according to this introduced buttressing/veiling strategies.

The last chapter offers a conclusive discussion on the questions addressed by this research.

Chapter 2

IRANIAN WOMEN AND CINEMA

In this section the representation of women in Iranian cinema will be discussed. Forasmuch as the Islamic revolution of 1979 has profound influence on different aspects of Iranian society through the inscription of new rules and values, the representation of women in cinema is divided and discussed within the two eras of before and after the revolution.

Although Iranian society has gotten familiar with cinema's comprehensive potential in a slow pace, cinema in Iran has later been advanced and found its own unique language. In the recent decades, Iranian Cinema has been receiving international acclaims. However, it is puzzling to notice the dark portrayal of post-revolution Iran in western media. For, despite this political dark portrayal of Iran, Iranian cinema has adapted a humanitarian approach which has been discussed by many critics and researchers (Mohammadi & Egan 2001; Sadr 2006; Holman 2006; Sheibani 2011; Jahed 2012). But how women are represented and situated within this 'hu**man**itarian' cinema is where this research embarks from.

Despite the fundamentally patriarchal society of Iran, women are struggling for gender equality. Cinema industry in Iran, as one of the most influential mass medium, although surviving under the limitations of censorship[10] tries to depict

---

[10] - Censorship has been always part of filmmaking in Iran. However, as Rezai-Rashti (2007) argues, censoring before the revolution were more related to discussion about the oppressive nature of the

women's struggle toward subjectivity within the society. Although the presence of women in the cinema had faced difficulties and religious panic, cinema had a significant role in breaking the confinement of women in the private sphere and in their admittance into the public sphere as spectators, citizens, and consumers (Naficy, 2011, p. 132).

One of the key concepts one should constantly take into consideration while studying Iranian pre/post-revolutionary cinema from different aspects are westernization and modernity; the two concepts which have been inevitably connected to and have affected the status of women within the Iranian society and Iranian cinema. Westernization as a path to modernity is intensified in Iran in 19th century with the increasing interaction of Iranian society to the west. Modernization started to change Iranian life "in terms of politics, education, law, custom, and culture, and including some leeway for women to participate in the society" (Afkhami, 1994, p. 9). That's how the Iranian national cinema through the power-relations of state and classic Hollywood cinema have been constantly defined and redefined with its relation to modernity.

Iranian cinema as a modern art has been always influenced by political, cultural and social changes. While in the Pahlavi era, Iranian cinema was encouraged to turn into an ideological tool to promote modernity and westernization, the post-revolutionary Iranian cinema through the project of Islamisation was inscribed to function as the religious ideological tool to promote Islamic values and life style which were defined in contrast to its western counterparts.

---

shah's regime, while after the revolution, in line with Islamisation of cinema, political and cultural censors were coerced on Iranian filmmakers.

The Iranian filmmakers' responses to the two sets of state-imposed policies have been constantly vacillated between submissive complicity and adept dodging; the dodging that leads to a new language of Iranian cinema which was born out of struggle of Iranian filmmaker to survive. This struggle leads to the formation of what Naficy calls "other moments of partial hegemony" (2011, p. 2). The New Wave Iranian cinema before the revolution, and also Art cinema and Women's cinema after the revolution are examples of this moment of partial hegemony. In the worst scenario, the dodging strategies failed and those Iranian filmmakers who struggle to save their professional career despite censorship face ban of their films and at best, they are censored by the relevant organizations or by themselves.

Through these ideological changes, however, the Iranian women's sexuality and body has been constantly the site of struggle. In the next sections of this research, the changing status of women in Iranian cinema is discussed in accordance with socio-political changes of Iranian society before and after the revolution of 1979.

2.1 Before the Islamic Revolution

The very early presence of cinema in Iran was in 1900, five years after the Lumiere brothers' invention of the cinematograph machine, with the first Iranian documentary film concurred with Qajar dynasty. The first public theater was opened in 1904, and the first Iranian feature film was screened in 1930 (Jahed, 2012, p. 55) in the early years of Pahlavi dynasty. Like any other film industry, Iranian cinema has been always interacting with socio-political changes of the society since the very beginning of it. Bearing in mind the mutual interaction of Iranian cinema and society, the status of women in cinema is being discussed in the following section in

accordance to political eras before the Islamic Revolution of 1979; Qajar Dynasty, and the first and the second Pahlavi eras.

2.1.1 Qajar Dynasty: First Public Presence

The cinema in the Qajar era was limited to the exhibition of foreign actualities and narratives and the rare production of domestic actualities and comic skits (Naficy, 2011a). Since the very beginning of cinema, the presence of Iranian women in cinema has been a controversial issue. "Women's routine presence in public places such as parks, streets, and cinemas would be interpreted as always already sexual and immoral, let alone their presence onstage as entertainers performing for strangers." (Naficy, 2011a, p. 134).

Being rooted in pre-existing religious creeds according to which women were excluded from previously male-dominated forms of visual arts including Persian literature and visual art performances (Najmabadi, 1998), the presence of Iranian women both as film spectator and performer encountered hostility and opposition. It took many years for women to become accepted into the public space and as members of the category called "audience". Despite all the constraints, Iranian women, have gradually found their way to cinema as spectator and performer on the base of previously launched and continuously progressive social changes.

In the first volume of his important book, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema*, Hamid Naficy argues that the engagement of women in the Constitutional Revolution improved their social roles (2011a, p. 132). It needs to be mentioned that despite frequent references to Constitutional Revolution, and Reza Shah's modernization as two main sources of the roots of the social changes which profoundly altered status of Iranian women in the society, the Babi and Baha'i religions and their impact on all

aspects of Iranian society not only predated the Constitutional Revolution but also "had led the way with many of the social reforms being advocated by the Constitutionalists" (Momen, 2008, p. 352). In the analysis of nineteenth and twentieth century Iran, most of the Iranian and non-Iranian historians and scholars within different disciplines tend to neglect the role of Babi and Baha'i community in introducing ideas such as "participatory democracy, the setting up of modern schools, and the advancement of the social role of women" (Momen, 2008, p. 362).

As Maneck (1994) argues "no other world religion has been quite as explicit as the Baha'i faith in its support of the principle of the equality of men and women" (p. 211). In contrast to other religions, Tahereh[11] as the "Baha'i Paradigm of Womanhood" (in Maneck's word) is not symbolized as an ideal mother, daughter or wife but she was a gifted poet of nineteen century who converted to Babi religion in contrast to the wish of his father, a prominent Muslim cleric of Qazvin, and also left her husband and children. "At a time when women were not allowed to set foot outside their homes without their husbands' permission, she left her husband and two sons to become one of the Babis' most effective and outspoken leaders" (Nafisi, 2003). Her most courageous act was unveiling her face in the gathering of Bab's followers as a symbol of arrival of a new faith which opens "the private into the public domain and turns the injustice of women's personal life into a public injustice" (Nafisi, 2003).The movement of Babi and Baha'i is one of the major forces behind the Constitutional Revolution paved the way for the presence of women in public sphere.

---

[11] - Her given name is Fatimih Bigum Baraghani, and Tahereh (literally means "The Pure") is the title she had received from Bab. She was among eighteen initial followers of Bab, although she has never met the Bab personally. Being worried about executing the 36-year-old Tahereh in public, the government secretly planned her death, and she was strangled and thrown into a well.

In the Qajar era, women found the way to public cinema as spectators, although attending the gender segregated movie houses. The presence of women on the stage and on the screen was more controversial than their presence as spectators. Prior to cinema, there was the long tradition of employing young boys playing the women's roles[12]. Also non-Muslim women appear as Muslim women on the stage. On screen, however, it took longer years to employ this latter strategy for the presence of women on screen, and the first adult female actor who appeared on screen without a full veil was Asia Qestanian, a Christian Armenian, and also Zoma, another young Armenian girl who was the daughter of an Iranian-Armenian director, Ovanes Ohanians, played the role of a dentist's assistant in a film.

2.1.2 The First Pahlavi (1926-1941)

At the same time with socio-political changes in Iranian society, women presence in cinema both as spectators and actors went under profound changes in Pahlavi era. With the replacement of Qajar with Pahlavi Dynasty in 1925, the modernization of Iran was reinforced by Reza Shah, the first Pahlavi king of Iran. Reza Shah's centralized state policy is what Naficy called "syncretic Westernization" with its key components of revival and reinforcement of "certain ancient Persian, pre-Islamic, and Zoroastrian cultural features while simultaneously instituting various formations of modernity—sociopolitical, technological, cultural, ideological, spectatorial, and authorial—under the authoritarian guidance of the Shah" (2011a, pp. 141-142).

Following the reformist changes by the first Pahlavi king, the newly-emerged nation-state kingdom of Pahlavi brought drastic changes in Iranian society through its project of westernization and modernization. The one with the most effects on women's life was the ban of any form of hejab. Under the severe western scrutiny of

---

[12] - They were called *zanpush* , literally mean "dressed as women".

hejab in the 20th century, hejab is associated more and more with backwardness, and therefore, its urgent abolishment became the indispensable step in the projects of modernization in countries such as Turkey and Iran.

In 1920s and 1930s, women's participation and active presence in public sphere was considered incompatible with wearing hejab (Chehabi, 2003). Therefore, on 8 January 1936, forced unveiling implemented as "the beginning of the state-sponsored so-called women's awakening movement", which was accomplished "by a combination of state prevention, coercion, encouragement, violence, propaganda, and the publicizing of unveiled women" (Naficy, 2011a, p. 147), and "mandated Iranian women to unveil their hejab[13] in public spaces and tried to impose upon them European female dress codes of that time such as European hats and skirts" (Moradiyan Rizi, 2015, p. 22).

Prior to the ban of hejab, there were a number of reforms in regard to the position of women; educational reforms such as providing public schooling for girls; and marital reforms in order to modernize marriage and divorce practices through legislation (Mahdavi, 2003). This is the time when the first Iranian woman appeared on the first Iranian talkie, *The Lor Girl* (Abdol Hossein Sepanta, Ardeshir Irani, 1933), and the deeply-rooted taboo of depicting women and love was broken. The film depicts the love story between Jafar, a government officer (played by Sepanta himself), and Golnar (played by Sediqeh Saminejad, the wife of Irani's driver). Although the film has received well by the audiences, and Sepanta, the male actor became a star, the female actor, Sediqeh Saminejad and her family encountered social harassment and

---

[13] - Rostam-Kolayi clarifies that unveiling in this era was not the uncovering of the head and hair but it was the abandonment of "the face veil and Iranian-style *chador* (a long piece of cloth covering the body from head to foot and often pulled to conceal part of the face)" (2003, p. 173).

physical abuse (Naficy, 2011; Zeydabadi-Nejad, 2010; Mir-Hosseini, 2007). It was Saminejad's first and last acting experience as it had affected her life traumatically. According to Mir-Hosseini, the reason of this rejection of Saminejad as the first Muslim cinema actress is that "Golnar breaks deeply engrained Irano-Muslim gender taboos, and she is far removed from an idealized and passive object of love" (2007, p. 675). For years, acting women in films remained a problematic issue associated with corruption and unchastity. Consequently, the first acting school in Tehran failed to attract any female students (Baharlu, 2002, p. 25).

Reza Shah's "women-awakening movement" succeed to improve the position of women in the society. However, the harsh and tactless means of unveiling through police harassment led to exclusion of traditional women- who were unwilling to toss their hejab- from attending public spheres such as shops, public bathhouses, and maktabs (traditional schools) which had been previously accessible to them (Chehabi, 2003).

What the mentioned policy of modernization had in common with the policy of Islamic government of post-revolutionary Iran is the denial of the right of women to choose, and the disability/undesirability to imagine a more participatory society with the presence of citizens, males or females, who can freely choose what to wear as the first step toward freedom. In the first volume of his groundbreaking book, *The History of Sexuality* (1990), Michel Foucault asserts that "where there is power, there is resistance" (p. 95). The coerced unveiling of Reza Shah's modernization policy and the compulsory veiling of Islamisation policy, although occurring within half of the century, have both encountered the resistance and opposition by Iranian women.

While before the unveiling edict, the male westernized dandies (fokoli) were the signifier of modernity, the new image of unveiled woman both in public spheres and on the screen turned into a figure to represent modernity. This persistent image with its continuation during the second Pahlavi cinema was being associated with modernity's excesses and moral corruption, and became the root of hostility toward westernization, modernity and cinema after the revolution.

2.1.3 The Second Pahlavi (1941-1979)

For years after the forced unveiling embarked by Reza Shah, hejab had remained a site of struggle between tradition and modernity, and women's body and sexuality have signified this struggle constantly. Although under the reign of Reza Shah's son, Mohammad Reza Shah, hejab was not banned in public anymore and women could choose to wear or not to wear hejab, hejab was still associated with backwardness and was discouraged in public in contrast to the western life style which has been promoted and encouraged.

During the second Pahlavi era while the country was experiencing the rapid transition into modernity, capitalism and industrialization, "an advertising-driven star system developed and popular movies became commodities" (Naficy, 2011a, p. 12). Women who were hitherto merely a "spectating subjects", became "diegetic subjects" who were central to the cinema, it would take years, however, before women became "producing subjects", making their own films. (Naficy, 2011a, p. 151).

Despite the increasing presence of women on screen in 1940s, most of the films "shared a simple-minded kind of romanticism, mixed with a strong tendency to moralize. In most of them, women were at the center stage as victims of male

21

immorality. These women were not presented as examples of moral superiority, though they were the advocates of a type of simple and easily accessible morality" (Lahiji, n.d.).

2.1.3.1 Commercial Cinema: Women as Unchaste Dolls[14]

With the increasing number of imported foreign movies in the late 1950s, the Iranian producers shifted to a new strategy of utilizing physical attraction of actors and actresses in order to be able to compete and attract the audiences into cinema (Lahiji, 2002), bearing in mind that the cinema-goers at that time was mostly young and male (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi, 1994, p. 35). This new strategy led into formation of a new melodramatic genre known as *film farsi* in Iranian cinema. The financial success of this new genre of Iranian cinema encouraged further production of these movies in 1960s.

The most important subject of Iranian melodramas was the issue of morality and sentimental stories such as "sacrifice in the realm of the family, domestic crises, faithless husbands or wives, lost children, crimes of passion" (Sadr, 2006, p. 74). Lahiji (n.d.) addresses this genre as "velvet hat-meat broth-cabaret genre"; "velvet hat" refers to typical male heroes appeared in these films. They were strong-arm, well-proportioned fist fighters "who mixed a kind of benevolent violence with a life of both piety - as regards for instance to respecting the honor of women - and lack of it, for they spent much of their evenings drinking in rather shabby cabaret-joints"; and "meat broth" is a traditional Iranian food associated with the lower class of the society. For these films were usually dealing with the sentimental class differences.

---

[14] - As it will be discussed, the two phrases of "Women as Unchaste Dolls", and "Women as Chaste Dolls" are borrowed from Lahiji's conceptualization of the representation of women respectively in Commercial and Art Cinema (Portrayal of Women in Iranian Cinema: A historical overview, n.d.).

With the popularity of *film farsi*, however, in the 1960s and 1970s, the presence of women on the screen increase profoundly. Despite the quantitatively significant presence of women on the screen, the image was not improved much and still women were excluded from production as a meaning-creating subject.

Following the pattern of Indian, Egyptian and Turkish cinema, the new melodramatic genre of Iranian cinema was predominated with women singing and dancing in cafes and cabarets. Hamid Naficy in the second volume of *A Social History of Iranian Cinema* states that in *film farsi*, "a leering, voyeuristic, male-driven camera gaze filmed [women's] performances, which either isolated their legs, breasts, and faces into fragmented fetish objects ..." (2011a, p. 208). Therefore, the cinema "turned into the place for the regurgitation of suppressed sexual drives" (Lahiji, n.d., para.19-20).

The 'woman as victim' was a central theme in these melodramatic genre (Sadr, 2006). In refer to the thematically stereotypical representation of women, Lahiji writes,

> The pervert woman who was easily deceived, became a cabaret dancer and a prostitute until the day when the saving angel arrived in the shape of an attractive strong arm, velvet-hat wearing man, or a roving fist-fighter who would then wake the woman from her sinful ways with a slap of the face, take her and pour the water of repentance on her head and finally, save her (n.d., para. 21).

Women's objectified images not only appealed to the male gaze but also satisfied young male audiences' narcissistic ego through getting control over the women's life as the hero who saved them. This sole cinematic representation of women as object of desire led into formation of what Lahiji called "unchaste dolls". Derayeh (2010) re-conceptualizes Lahiji's formulation of the representation of women in *film farsi*

through the "protégé identity of Iranian women" as "paradoxical paradigm of a masum (naive/innocent) protégé (mother, sister, and wife) vis-à-vis the fasid or gumrah (corrupt/misguided hence promiscuous) protégé (p. 151).

Emergence of this representation of women as object of desire created anti-cinema feeling before the revolution. That's why the clerics rejected cinema as Haram (religiously forbidden). The idea of purifying cinema after the revolution stems from this perspective on cinema.

It should be noted that during the 1970s the status of women in Iranian society profoundly changed. The 1967 Family Protection Law was one of these drastic changes in Iranian society according to which men's right to divorce and polygamy was curtailed. Under this law men and women got equal access to divorce and child custody (Mir-Hosseini, 2010). However, despite the relative social empowerment of women in the society, "the life, suffering and joys of normal women, the housewives, women working on the farm, in factories, at school and offices, physicians, nurses, poets, authors, lawyers, and university teachers engaged in living normal lives had no place in the Iranian movies" (Lahiji, n.d., para. 22). As Talattof (2011) asserts "women gained 'power' in society but lost it in the *film farsi* movies. The more men lost control over women's bodies in real life and the more the law limited them in the courts, the more they gained control over female body in cinema" (p. 125).

2.1.3.2 Art Cinema: Women as Chaste Dolls

In the late 1960 and 1970, the flourishing era of Iranian cinema under the Pahlavi Dynasty began with the emergence of Iranian New Cinema, also known as 'New Wave' cinema. However, as Gow (2011) argues the label of "Iranian New Cinema" – with its exclusive reference to Iranian post-revolutionary cinema- ignores this rich

pre-revolutionary tradition of Art Cinema. Avant-garde intellectual film making of New Wave art cinema were developed in terms of techniques and themes, and succeeded to receive international recognition with the initial films of 1969, *The Cow* (*Gav*) by Daryush Mehrju'i, and Qeysar by Massoud Kimia'i.

Although Iranian New Wave films were socially conscious, and developed "more realistic story lines, superior filmmaking techniques and included little or no voyeuristic exploitation of the female image" (Zeydabadi-Nejad, 2010, p. 108), there were no or exceptional development in regard to the representation of women.

In order to show opposition toward western-oriented policy of the ruling regime, the intellectual filmmakers addressed indigenous Iranian cultural attributes through representing image of a good woman who became

> a faceless, unexciting figure who wore traditional costume and stayed in the background as an obedient housewife, or a virgin in training for the role, whose only concern in life was to make the home comfortable for male masters who wielded knives and got into fights in order to defend the honor and virginity of their female flock (Lahiji, 2002, p. 221).

In compare to the previously "unchaste dolls" of *Film Farsi*, the alternative image of women in this new supposedly intellectual Art Cinema is saturated with "chaste dolls". Mentioning this derogating representation from unchaste to chaste dolls, Lahiji (2002) argues that the idea of the chaste dolls has continued to survive in post-revolutionary Iranian cinema as "the lackluster yet predominant image of women".

2.2 After the Revolution

The overthrow of Pahlavi dynasty and its replacement by the Islamic government in 1979 was followed by a series of political crisis[15] among which the eight-year Iran-Iraq war[16] was the most influential event with "1 million dead, thousands of innocent chemical victims, millions of displaced Iranian civilians, and almost $1 trillion in damage" (Fair, 2010). Under the influence of the Islamic revolution and Iran-Iraq war the situation of women have transformed dramatically within the Iranian society, and subsequently within the Iranian cinema.

Despite their profound participations in the revolution, Iranian women have faced marginalization and exclusion under the new revolutionary government. For, there were significant transformation of gender and sexuality including but not limited to obligatory hejab in public and the abolition of Family Protection Law (1967, modifies in 1977) which was in support of women's rights.

Extraordinarily, despite the new restrictions and limitations, women's presence and participations in Iranian society and Iranian cinema has gradually increased. However, women's success to survive and flourish is not a one night achievement but it is indebted to decades of inexhaustible and arduous struggles.

2.2.1 Islamisation as a New Policy

Iranian filmmakers have faced censorship both before and after the revolution. However, since the revolution, the restriction codes have become more strict and

---

[15] - For example, the occupation of Us Embassy and the hostage crisis in 1980, a massive bomb blast in Tehran in 1981 that killed many Members of Parliament; a number of military coup attempts; declining oil prices, etc..

[16] - This longest conventional war of the twentieth century, also known as the 'Persian Gulf War', began in September 1980 with the invasion of Iran's land by Iraqi forces, and finished almost inconclusively in August 1988.

pervasive. The first occurrence of film censorship was in 1904 by a leading cleric, Shaikh Fazlollah Nuri, over the screening of unveiled Western women in films (Naficy, 2011a, p. 15). Anti-cinema feeling among clerics and the condemnation of cinema as "the satanic work of 'polluted foreigners'" (p. 5) was rooted in the rejection of the modernity and colonialism that cinema symbolized "to 'stupefy' Iranians and undermine the authority of Shiite tradition and Muslim clerics" (p. 90). This magic-bullet-like understanding of the effect of cinema fueled with the rejection and hostility toward modernity/Westernization, and consequently toward cinema was the root of the urge for reformulating the cinema under the new revolutionary regime.

One of the most important points of departure of the revolution which has directly influenced cinema was the rejection of pro-western policies of Pahlavi era. Rejection of the Western policies was not limited to the realm of politics and international relations, and soon turned into the main axis in redefining the cultural codes and values. For, the new ideology of Islamisation which has been defined in contrast to the ideology of Pahlavi era, has been tried to be embedded in the society through "state apparatuses" (Althusser, 1971), conglomerating the elements of repressive and ideological apparatuses.

The project of "Islamisation", hand in hand with the rejection of westernization and modernity, was launched as the main policy of the new regime which entails the immediate reformulations in the realm of religion, education, family, law, politics, communication and culture including cinema. It should be mentioned, however, that as Gramsci argues the "intellectual and moral reform" does not remove the elements of the previous world-view and ideology thoroughly but the elements of the

subordinate one continue to exist (Gramsci, 1971). The Islamic regime has not rejected the modernity thoroughly but tried to redefine it through Islamic version of modernity. The new state resumed the previously launched literacy and health campaign of Pahlavi era, and also formed its own army, police force and parallel paramilitary forces (Afary, 2009, p. 265). The same ambivalent strategy of hostility and modification toward modernity was utilized in regard to cinema and women.

Despite the initial rejection of cinema –with revocation of the screening permission of domestic and foreign films and stagnation of film industry- clerics who had hitherto showed hostility toward cinema, recognized its power and instead of forbidding it, they try to control it through the process of Islamisation (Tapper, 2002). In his early speech after his return to Iran form exile, Ayatollah Khomeini, the religious leader of the revolution addressed the issue of cinema and its position in the Islamic regime:

> We are not opposed to cinema, to radio, to television.... The cinema is a modern invention that ought to be used for the sake of educating the people, but as you know, it was used instead to corrupt our youth. It is the misuse of cinema that we are opposed to, a misuse caused by the treacherous policies of our rulers (Cited in Mottahedeh, 2006, p. 176).

As Sadr (2006) mentions, the transition from pre to post Iranian cinema, between 1978 to 1982 was "the vaguest age of Iranian cinema history" (p. 169) duo to the ambiguity of the criteria to define national Islamic values and codes. Therefore, the Ministry of Culture and Art was replaced by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, with the main mission of Islamizing all kinds of art and cultural activities (Mir-Hosseini, 2003).

As it has been discussed, the first criterion of this new cinema was a political-ideological stand of anti-western, anti- Shah and anti-imperialism which was in line with "neither West nor East" doctrine of new foreign affairs (Naficy, 1987, p. 455). "This kind of filmmaking excluded profit, the star system and competition. Communication with the people was the objective in film, just as it was the aim of the struggle" (Sadr, 2006, p. 173). The strict codes of censorship, however, were not limited to these and were taken further to cover Islamic codes of modesty and heterosexual relationship.

As Naficy thoughtfully argues "in modern Iran, any time that national identity is at stake, women, their social roles, and their representation on screens become central to the national debate" (Naficy, 2011a, p. 133). This centrality of women to national identity is rooted in chronic surveillance over female sexuality within normative patriarchal values and desire. As Butler (1990) asserts "persons only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility" (p. 16). The more women's sexuality and body are being regulated, the more women turn into site of political struggle and controversy. While in Pahlavi era unveiling of women was one of the most controversial manifest of modernity, under the Islamic regime the Iranian women were pulled into the first line of the battle against the westernization and modernity through the obligatory "re-veiling".

Right after the revolution, women and the issue of hejab turned into a sign of resistance to westernization. In accordance to the mentioned policy about hejab, after the 1979 revolution of Iran, the division of ideas appeared among women when the arguments about enforcement of hejab were launched by the government. Some

women who considered hejab as a sign of resistance against western-oriented policies welcomed it eagerly, while many others took stand against it. However, finally, in the summer of 1981, despite resistance of many Iranian women, the obligatory practice of hejab was imposed on Iranian women as the sign of Islamism, modesty and virtue which has changed the represented images of women both in the society and in different forms of art, including cinema. In line with the Islamisation policy of the government, in order to define the new ideal Muslim women,

> Suddenly images of veiled women sprang up everywhere, seemingly infinite variations on a theme. In every Iranian city, on every building, inside all businesses, outside and inside public transportation facilities, and in every educational institution, the private and 'sacred' woman of Iranian culture was transformed into a public image for all to view…. during this era, the *Hejab* became a universal symbol of the chaste and pious Iranian daughter, sister, wife, and/or mother (Shirazi F. , 2010, pp. 112-113).

2.2.2 from Invisible to P olitically Active!

Hamid Naficy (2012) categorizes four phases of the presence of women in Iranian post-revolutionary cinema: "Phase 1: Women's structured absence (early 1980s), Phase 2: Women's background presence (mid-1980s), Phase 3: Women's foreground presence (since the late 1980), and Phase 4: Veiling and modesty as political criticism (since the mid-1990s)" (pp. 111-135).

After the revolution, in order to comply with the Islamist values -based on clerics' limited interpretation of Islam through *Fegh* (religious jurisprudence)- women's presence in cinema need to be desexualized, and any manifest objectification of women 's body were banned. Modesty in appearance and behavior was the first principle of Islamisation of cinema which has been mostly associated with the presence of women in cinema, and imposed by codes of dressing and behavior.

According to the 'dressing codes' of modesty, women have to cover their body with head scarf and loose cloths; even in the home and in bed, women must have body and hair hejab, and only women's faces and hands are allowed to be without hejab (Moradiyan Rizi, 2015; Recknagel, 2014; Naficy, 2012). The 'behavioral codes' of modesty prohibit physical contacts between men and women, and "forbid almost all physical gestures of romantic love, limit the kinds of issues that can be discussed, and bar women from singing or dancing on screen" (Recknagel, 2014). In addition to dressing and behavioral codes, cinematic techniques such as close-ups of a woman's face or body, and point-of-view shots in a male-female scene have to be modified in order to hinder a mutual, sexual look between man and woman (Moradiyan Rizi, 2015).

The restrictive initial codes resulted in sudden elimination of women from the filmic representation in the early 1980s, in the first phase of the presence of women in Iranian post-revolutionary cinema, which Hamid Naficy (2012) titles as "Women's Structured Absence". The second Phase, "Women's Background Presence", soon started with the reappearance of women on the screen in mid 1980s, although in a more restrictive marginal roles within the limited sphere of family as self-devoted mother and modest wife and sister. Lahiji describes this marginal presence as follows,

> The faint shadow of women in the new films was cast in neutral roles, sitting next to the *samovar* to pour tea for the men of the family, to obey the father, husband and even young sons. When given key roles, women played the part of upper class grumbling women with illogical, demanding characters without accepting responsibility (n.d., para.40).

By the termination of war in 1988 and the newly-emerged era known as "construction Era" with the presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989-1997), "women

who had endured economic pressure and shortages, life under bombs and rockets and the martyrdom of their dear ones, while many of them had had to assume the role of the breadwinner in the absence of their men" (Lahiji, 2002, p. 224) raise their malcontent voices against structural discrimination in the society, and cinema found the opportunity to function as the social critique.

Under the new liberal policy in the third phase, "Women's Foreground Presence", women appeared more actively in cinema and women's images on screen have profoundly changed by the emergence of powerful female characters. Filmmakers such as Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, Tahmineh Milani, Puran Derakhshandeh are regarded as the influential women filmmakers who emerged in post-revolutionary Iranian cinema. By the films such as *Time of Love* by Mohsen Makhmalbaf (1991) and Bani-Etemad's *Narges* (1992), the taboo subject of romantic love was broken.

Under the social transformation of Iranian society with the increase in women education, the emergence of new generation who questioned the previously set norms and values, and the reformist era of President Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005) new themes have emerged in Iranian cinema including but not limited to "critical perspectives on traditional, arranged marriage, patriarchal family, male prerogative laws,…portrayals of female self-expression and independency, heterosexual and homosexual relations, and transgender problems" (Moradiyan Rizi, 2015, p. 12).

In this forth phase of "Veiling and Modesty as Political Criticism" (2012, p. 127), the representation of women was fostered both behind and in front of the camera; women have more freedom to show their hair partly; many previously banned films

have received screening permission; the topic of women and love, which was hitherto suppressed within the filmic representation, fid a path to be demonstrated; the presence of female filmmakers who exclusively started dealing with female characters, and criticize patriarchal demands against women[17]increased; and the image of womanhood has been advanced, "from a passive cipher to a more fully formed, molded character with clear convictions" (Sadr, 2006, p. 266), and "the main tasks of these new heroines were not just to suffer from male jealousy or unfair laws but to rebel – if need be– against the very heart of the family" (p. 264).

2.2.3 Desexualized Sign of Sexual Desire

As it has been discussed, the removal of Pahlavi dynasty and the establishment of post-revolutionary government have brought significant transformation of gender and sexuality into Iranian society. While rejecting the pro-western policy of Pahlavi era, Islamic government has hegemonically launched the project of "Islamisation" as its main axis in redefining the cultural codes and values (Naficy, 1998; Naficy, 2011). Cinema, which has initially encountered hostile rejection, soon has been considered as a powerful ideological tool for the purpose of Islamic regime, and it has been adapted through the project of Islamisation- although vaguely defined (Zeydabadi-Nejad, 2010)- in order to impose Islamic codes of modesty and heterosexual relationship (Tapper, 2002). The codes of modesty were introduced as tools for purifying the western-oriented cinema which was believed to be the source of corruption and objectification of women in the society.

The new post-revolutionary regulations tried to redefine the film industry in a way to abide by 'the rule of modesty' (Mottahedeh, 2006). As it has been discussed, the

---

[17] - In two of her films (*May Lady*, 1998 and *Under the Skin of the City,* 2001) made during the presidency of Khatami, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad directly addressed the issues of political changes and social tensions (Sadr, 2006).

codes of modesty encompasses Islamic dressing codes, and behavioral codes according to which women should avoid the activities which demonstrate their bodies erotically, and should have no direct physical contact with men, and men-women mutual look shouldn't demonstrate sexual desire. The rules of modesty also restricted cinematic techniques such as close-ups of a woman's face or body which was considered as a tool for objectification of women's body, and point-of-view shots in a male-female scene, which have the potential to construct the gaze of an unrelated man through the gaze of the camera.

As a result of the mentioned codes of modesty, the image of women on screen has been desexualized and female figures have been no longer objectified through the mechanism of scopophilic gaze. As far as women comply with the Islamic rules of modesty, the cinema industry would be thoroughly open to them more than any other time (Naficy, 1994, p. 132).

There is a repeated claim that the inscription of hejab and the project of "purification" of cinema open the way for the profound presence of women in front and behind the camera. It is being discussed that the inscription of hejab and rules of modesty "lustrated" cinema from previous stigmatic attributions, and paved the way for the gradual transformation of cinema into a "reliable" and "safe" public sphere for women. In addition, although women were active in cinema industry as spectator and actor "they ironically only came to their own as film directors during the Islamic Republic period, when women faced the suppression of their rights and the imposition of the veil" (Naficy, 2011a, p. 15). This raises the question that if the elimination of limited iconic role of women as erotic object has led into formation of

a feminist counter-cinema which is able to deconstruct the language of classic cinema.

In her afterword to *The New Iranian Cinema: Politics, Representation and Identity,* Laura Mulvey recognizes the above-mentioned potential introduced by new Iranian cinema for the purpose of feminist concerns. She writes,

> Islamic censorship reflects a social subordination of women and, particularly, an anxiety about female sexuality. But it then produces, as a result, a 'difficulty' with the representation of women on the screen which has some – unexpected – coincidence with the problems feminists have raised about the representation of women in the cinema (2002, p. 258).

As Mulvey argued, her polemic on the aesthetics of spectatorship in Hollywood Cinema, and the way it constructs female image as the object of the gaze of the assumed male spectator, provides a ground to envision the counter cinema, "iconoclasm from below", to draw on her own word. Iranian post-revolutionary censorial system, as Mulvey argues, generates the same counter "negative aesthetics" in oppose to Hollywood cinema as a "regulation from above". According to Mulvey, the common concern of feminism and the Islamic censorial system is their wariness of "the overt sexualization of femininity associated with Hollywood" (ibid).

Similarly, Mottahedeh argues that:

> it was in its attempt to purge technology from imperialist and capitalist forces, that the post-Revolutionary Iranian film industry came to produce a cinema that is, in my view, the apotheosis of 1970s European feminist gaze theory and a surprising expression of the feminist avant-garde's stance against the voyeurism of Hollywood melodrama (2009, p. 533).

In this regard, the Iranian new censorial system which necessitates the questioning of usual well-established conventions of classic cinema in order to alter the dominant

form of representation of sexuality in cinema and its signification processes, has led

into discovering a new "visibility", as Mulvey puts it, and changes the characteristics

of cinema;

> The characteristic film of the Iranian New Wave shrinks in scope and
> expands in time, moving away from dramatic plot, action or romance into
> scaled-down events and location-based stories of great simplicity. With a
> shooting style that tends to avoid close-ups or shot-countershot, the camera
> takes on an equivalently greater importance, and its relationship to what it
> sees enters into the picture, breaking down the cinema's conventional
> transparency. The collapse of cinematic narrative convention opens up a
> space and a pace in which the elements of cinematic form acquire visibility in
> their own right (Mulvey, 2002, p. 259).

Despite the mentioned progressive themes and images, the standard female

characters still reflected the official mood, and were developed in response to the

perceived "economic and sexual threat" pose by "educated non-traditional women"

(Sadr, 2006, p. 261). Sadr called this representation of women as "a mixture of

idealism and misogyny" (p. 266). He argues that women's problems on the screen

are too deep to be resolved. Whenever women have counter-attack on patriarchal

structures, they are finally punished in the films for finding their voice, getting

empowered and seeking independence. Filmmakers are mostly unable to break the

patriarchal restrictions because not only their female and male characters but also the

filmmakers, themselves "live in a world with many unanswered questions regarding

women's autonomy" (p.266).

There are the progressive themes and new image of non-traditional Iranian women in

Iranian newly emerged cinema. However, still the neopatriarchy is what shapes the

representation of women in cinema. The mandatory veiling although paving the path

for the presence of women in cinema, it still keeps its function as a tool to control

women's body and male domination over women's sexuality. For, it is rooted in

neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society which has ambivalent approach toward women.

2.2.4 Neopatriarchal Ambivalence

Patriarchy seems to be sustainable in different forms. Enloe argues that patriarchy is not a static system but is dynamically updated and modernized and therefore "it is useful [...] to talk about patriarchy as 'sustainable'" (Franz-Balsen, 2014, p. 16). This sustainability leads into the formation of what Sharabi called neopatriarchy (1988). Although originally being developed in the context of Arab society by Sharabi, the concept of neopatriarchy is relevant to the new situation of ambiguity in regard to the presence of empowered women in Iranian society, and consequently in Iranian cinema.

Despite all restrictions and suppressions, Iranian women have managed to get empowered in the society. However, the approach toward empowered women under the Islamic Republic has always been ambivalent; while "the state defines women as mothers and considers motherhood the basis of their dignity and value in Islamic society… it refuses to grant them the right to keep and raise their children in the absence of the father" (Sadr, 2006, p. 264); while after the revolution, the education of women continued to be encouraged and in 2001, for the first time, female students outnumbered male student, new rules in more than 30 universities banned female students from almost 80 different degree courses in 2011 (Sahraei, 2012); and Morality Police is still patrolling the streets to repressively impose dressing codes of modesty, arresting women for violating the Islamic attire. On 15 June 2015, the 195 members of the Iranian parliament formally warned the president Rouhani for more serious confrontation with "women failing to properly observe modest Islamic covering" and they showed their worries about "irreversible consequences from a

Western cultural onslaught seeking to 'change the Iranian people's way of life vis-à-vis hejab and chastity" (Elmjouie, 2014).

Sharabi describes neopatriarchy in Arab countries, as a form of a "'modernized' patriarchy" (p. 4), and a "deformed, 'modernized form'". Sharabi (1988) writes;

> the Arab Awakening or renaissance *(nahda)* of the nineteenth century not only failed to break down the inner relations and forms of patriarchalism but, by initiating what it called the modern awakening, also provided the ground for producing a new, hybrid sort of society/culture—the neopatriarchal society/culture we see before us today (p. 4).

Sharabi's conceptualization of neopatriarchy "refers equally to macrostructures (society, the state, the economy) and to microstructures (the family or the individual personality)" (p. 3), and therefore, provides a perfect concept for the current research in which cinema as a cultural institution with its socio-political attributions, and individual practices is explored.

Neopatriarchy is shaped in Iran within the ambivalent interaction of tradition and modernity, and has been reinforced with the emergence of new generation of youth in Iranian society. This is what Talattof calls modernoid, "a society that resembles a modern one in some areas but lacks other essential modern structures" (2011, p. 21); the situation which is neither modern nor traditional.

In order to avoid an essentialist perspective on modernity as a fixed Western structure to be applied elsewhere around the world, this research puts forward the concept of neopatriarchy as an outcome of "multiple modernities" (Eisenstadt S. , 2003) in the context of Iranian society.

Addressing the characteristics of the modern era, Eisenstadt questions the classical theories of modernization and the classical sociological approaches for assuming that "the cultural program of modernity as it developed in modern Europe and the basic institutional constellation that emerged there would ultimately take over in all modernizing and modern societies; with the expansion of modernity, they would prevail throughout the world" (2000, p. 1). However, as he discusses, the "association of modernisation with Westernisation" has been disproved by "the actual development", and "modernity and Westernization are not identical; Western patterns of modernity are not the only 'authentic' modernities" (pp. 2-3). He furthers his arguments as follows:

> While a general trend toward structural differentiation developed across a wide range of institutions in most of these [modernizing] societies –in family life, economic, mass communication, and individualistic orientation- the way in which these arenas were defined and organized varied greatly, […], giving rise to multiple institutional and ideological patterns […] such patterns were distinctively modern, though greatly influenced by specific cultural premises, tradition and historical experiences (p. 2).

Janet Afary argues "the 1979 Islamic Revolution was not a wholesale return to the past; rather, the new state reinvented and expanded certain retrogressive gender and cultural practices and presented them as what Foucault has called a 'regime of truth' through modern technologies of power" (2009, p. 265). The approach toward women under the Islamic Republic is the outcome of this newly emerged "regime of truth"; the approach which has been as ambivalent toward women as it has been toward modernity (Moradiyan Rizi, 2015, p. 6) and cinema; all the three are accused of being the source of corruption unless they are confined, controlled, and manipulated through patriarchal version of Islamic values. This ambivalent strategy of hostility and modification which is employed toward modernity, cinema, and women is the underlying assumption of neopatriarchal unconscious in Iran.

The above-mentioned ambiguity in regard to the presence of empowered women in the Iranian society have found its way to the silver screen and led into ambivalent representation of empowered women in Iranian cinema; the ambivalence which is rooted in what Zeiny (2013) insightfully called "neopatriarchal Iranian cinema". While the concept of "neopatriarchal Iranian cinema" is not further addressed by Zeiny, this research tries to theorize neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society and the way it shapes neopatriarchal Iranian cinema.

Recognizing neopatriarchal practices of Iranian cinema does not deny the Iranian cinema's significant steps toward transcending the binary of sexes but it aims to acknowledge the long way ahead of it toward gender parity. This is a vital issue considering the volatile nature of state policies in regard to women, as with the defeat of the reformist government and the election of Mahmood Ahmadinejad in 2005, there were increased concerns about the new ideological scrutiny on different cultural and artistic activities, including cinema.

Although the restrictions and new conservative policies have been encouraged and imposed on Iranian filmmakers, many of them succeed to follow their way of filmmaking. Asghar Farhadi is an example of the filmmakers who have survived under detention and restrictive rules and succeeds to raise the issues and concerns of modern Iranian middle-class. Moradiyan Rizi claims that male filmmakers "such as Jafar Panah, Asghar Farhadi, and Abbas Kiarostami, under the influence of Iranian female filmmakers who have been the pioneers of the women's movement in Iranian cinema, "have acknowledged the efforts of women in making progress in their social and familial lives and represented them in their films" (2015, p. 11). She claims that "these filmmakers seem to have realized that a society can effectively progress only

if there is parity between the sexes within it and women are as socially active as men" (p. 11).

Situated within the long history of Iranian cinema, Asghar Farhadi's cinema is being analyzed within the framework of feminist concerns in order to find out if Farhadi's subjective version of reality of Iranian society succeeds to break the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian cinema or the outcome of Farhadi's conscious/unconscious choices contributes to the ambivalent diegetic representation of women.

Chapter 3

FEMINIST FILM STUDIES

The first part of this chapter is concerned with the emergence of feminist film studies in 1970s and its further development. The approaches to feminist film studies will be discussed within the two sets of essentialist reflection and social constructivist theories. The main theoretical arguments employed for this research is, however, based on social constructivist theories of feminism in regard to film.

Later in this chapter, psychoanalytical feminist film theory will be discussed as an approach which focuses on "the way a text constructs a viewing subject, and the ways in which the very mechanisms of cinematic production affect the representation of women and reinforce sexism" (Erens, 1990, p. xvii), and it's relevance to the current research will be discussed.

In early 1970s, feminist film studies emerged as a theoretical film criticism from the second wave feminism and women's studies. "Feminist film theory begins as an urgent political act" (Thornham, 1999, p. 10) under the influence of initial feminist works like Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969) (Hollinger, 2012, p. 7). McCabe (2004) elaborates the discussion on political act beside the theoretical foundation of feminist film studies offered by the above-mentioned writers; Simone de Beauvoir's account of the root of women's oppression in the

society and the reason Woman is defined as 'Other' and 'inessential' in the process of identifying men as 'Subject' and 'essential'; Betty Friedan's introduction into another influential concept according to which sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love are naturalized and women are bind into putative "true" oppressive female roles; and Kate Millett's arguments about ideological socialization of women through cultural text into accepting consentingly, not coercively, an inferior social status (pp. 3-6).

Feminist film studies "emerged from the daily, ongoing concerns of women re-evaluating the culture in which they had been socialized and educated" and in this regard it differs from earlier critical movements which were a reaction to dominant theoretical positions (Kaplan, 1983, p. 23). It opens up the previously male-dominated field of film studies to female writers and to feminist perspective who were concerned about the way by which patriarchal ideology is inscribed into filmic texts.

While in 1983, after 10 years of feminist film criticism, E. Ann Kaplan condemns the feminist approaches to film as being `virtually unknown' for students and academicians in other disciplines (p. 1), today, feminist film theories and discussions are academically enriched. There are several journals dealing exclusively with issues on feminism and media studies and highly noteworthy amount of researches have been devoted to the issue of women and film.

Feminist film theory is a heterogeneous discourse encompassing various, even competing, approaches to ideological analysis of film.

3.1 Looking for a 'Better' Image

The earliest critical stance of feminist film theory came to be known as "the images of women approach" or "reflection theory" (Hollinger, 2012). Adapting this sociological approach, inaugural feminist film theories focused on the stereotypical images of women as a reflection of a society's view of them. Analyzing the function of women in narrative and genre of a particular film, sociological feminist film scholars **"**assessed roles as "positive" or "negative" according to some externally constructed criteria describing the fully autonomous, independent woman" (Kaplan, 1983, p. 23) and criticized the "unreal", "false", "stereotypical", and "distorted" images of women (Kaplan, 1983; Hollinger, 2012).

The essentialist perspective of this first phase of feminist film criticism assumed an "unmediated relationship between cinema and society, [and] film was understood to form a reflection of reality" (Smelik, 1995, p. 67), and it implies that the society could be changed through showing the reality. Therefore, in order to reach the "liberating purpose" of this movement, "women directors only have to break through the enchantment of false images by showing 'real' lives of 'real' women on the silver screen" (p. 67).

Thornham (2007) identifies 3 feminist groundbreaking works which typifies this first phase of feminist film theory: Marjorie Rosen's *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies and the American Dream* (1973), Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Movies* (1974), and Joan Mellen's *Women and Their Sexuality in the New Film* (1974). They all mainly focused on Hollywood films chronologically and analyzed the "distorted image" of women. Being Influenced by

Kate Millett's arguments about "gender ideology as a conscious male conspiracy", Rosen posit a conscious male conspiracy to use film images as a means of social control (Hollinger, 2012, p. 8). As Thornham argues, Haskel "sees images of women in film as 'the vehicle of male fantasies' and 'the scapegoat of men's fears', but she also sees films as complex texts which may contain competing, even subversive voices" (1999, p. 11) Although Haskell's work is valuable in developing critique of violence against female characters, calling the attention into women's film as a genre dedicated to women issues, and upholding the contribution of women in front and behind the camera (Hollinger, 2012, p. 9), her analysis simplistically "devolve into plot summaries of individual films" (p. 9).

In her review on Joan Mellen's *Women and Their Sexuality in the New Film* (1974), Ann Kaplan recognized the lack of critical perspective in her analysis, as she declares "A study of women in film is an excellent way to focus on connections between sexism and U.S. ideology as reflected in the commercial film" (Kaplan, 1974), and she calls for the development of the approaches with a deeper insight into the way sexism functions in art and in society.

As early as 1978, the image of women approach encounter questions in regard to its essentialist conceptualization of stereotypical representation of women on the screen that must be, and can be, corrected and replaced by a more positive "true" image of them. The utopian conceptualization of women's image implies the possibility of filmic representation to have access into a coherent self-identical and self-present reality of all women which can be reified through "true" representation of women. The very essentialist underlying assumptions of this approach presumes a commonality of experience in the category of 'women', and also the possibility of

having direct access to real experience of them. However, white Western women can no longer speak for all women and the image of women cannot be judged as 'misrepresented' and be simply compared and corrected by more `realistic' portrayals.

3.2 Constructing the Gender through Film

Integrating Psychoanalytic theory, semiotics and Marxism and its conceptualization of ideology, British critical feminist film theorists condemn the American approach for its essentialized perspective on film. Semiotics, Psychoanalysis, and Marxism opened wholly new approaches to feminist film studies.

Under the influence of French (post) structuralism, the second phase of feminist film theories, such as Claire Johnston, Pam Cook, and Laura Mulvey, replaced the perspective of equality between sexes with differences between them. As Smelik (1995) points, there was a changing focus from 'Content of a film' (what is the meaning of a film?) to "the process of signification" (how does a film construct meaning) (68). Therefore, the film is not understood as the reflection of self-present reality outside the world of the film but it constructs the meaning and reality.

Film production and industry received more attention under the impact of Marxist feminism in which film is being approached as an ideological and commercial product; semiotics focuses on "crucial role of the film apparatus, such as camera work and editing" (Smelik, 1995, p. 68); and psychoanalysis introduces new concepts such as subjectivity, desire and visual pleasure.

While sociological approach idealized the depiction of the reality of the society and criticize the filmic representation for its false and distorted reflection of real women,

"Cinefeminist critics" (Hollinger, 2012) view film as "bearers of ideology''; a complex text which is constructed by verbal and visual codes in order to produce specific meanings.

Mulvey's ground-breaking article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) introduced psychoanalysis as a methodological tool to describe the filmic representation from the feminist perspective. As this research is mainly employed Psychoanalytical approach for the purpose of analyzing Farhadi's cinema, Mulvey's psychoanalytic film theory and the concept of cinematic gaze are discussed in the following section.

3.3 Psychoanalytical Film Theory

Based on key Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theories, Laura Mulvey, as the first feminist critique who analyzed the objectification of women in films from psychoanalytic perspective, employed concepts such as scopophilia, fetishism, voyeurism, Oedipus complex, the mirror stage, and castration anxiety to describe "the intimate connection among the male gaze, the patriarchal unconscious and spectatorial pleasure" (Hollinger, 2012, p. 12) in mainstream film.

Psychoanalysis focused on "the production of meaning in a film text, the way a text constructs a viewing subject, and the ways in which the very mechanism of cinematic production affects the representation of women and reinforce sexism" (Erens, 1990, p. xvi). Psychoanalysis presents a major departure from sociological feminist approach to film studies through discussing the role of cinematic apparatus in dissemination of ideology.

3.3.1 Male Gaze

Whose desire and interest are constructing our perspective of the world through media images? Whose interests, values, and desires are the most constitutive power of an image? Recalling Asghar Farhadi's claim of "multiplicity of voices", and "reflecting reality" while confessing his "unconscious choice" about the presence of women in his films, this research is summoned back to the very crucial issue of "the Gaze" which is mainly concerned with the relationship between gender and look, and with the hierarchal representation of male and female in accordance to patriarchal 'unconscious'.

The feminist film scholars problematize the issue of gaze for its pervasive androcentric perspective according to which masculine attitudes and desires constructs the image of the world, and in particular of women (Eaton, 2008). Instead of referring to the actual act of looking, the gaze refers to the way an image is constructed to be looked at. "The male gaze usually refers to the sexually objectifying attitude that a representation takes toward its feminine subject matter, presenting her as a primarily passive object for heterosexual-male erotic gratification" (Eaton, 2008, p. 878). Therefore, based on its hierarchal power relations of males and females, the patriarchal attitude constructs women as a passive object to be looked at. For, they are structured for their ideal male spectators and with the purpose of flattering their gaze.

Although Laura Mulvey, a feminist film theorist, has been credited for theorization of the concept of 'the gaze' in film studies, three years prior to publication of her ground-breaking article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,* John Berger, an art historian, describes this hierarchal different depiction of men and women in his book

"Ways of Seeing" (1972). "Men act and women appear" is the way John Berger refers to this hierarchal depiction. Criticizing the ideological construction of women in Western cultural aesthetics of visual arts, Berger writes:

> Men look at women. Women *watch themselves* being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to *themselves*. The surveyor of woman in herself *is male: the* surveyed *female*. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight (1972, p. 47).

Being emerged out of psychoanalytic, structuralist, and semiotic theories (Kaplan, 1983), Laura Mulvey advances the issue of male gaze through raising question of why man and women are depicted in active/passive opposition, and why filmic images reinforces the "socially established interpretation of sexual difference" (Mulvey, [1975]1990, p. 28). Mulvey re-conceptualizes Berger's "men act and women appear" as "women as image, men as bearer of the look" (p. 33). Going beyond the mere question of 'how' in regard to this ideological representation, Mulvey draws on psychoanalysis, as 'a political weapon' to discuss its root and writes "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure of looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (p. 33); an active/passive heterosexual division of labor which has controlled narrative structure of a film in the same way (p. 34).

Drawing on Lacanian Psychoanalysis, Mulvey argues that the gaze in classic narrative cinema is structured for the pleasure of the male gaze through the two mechanisms: first is "scopophilia", as a function of the sexual instincts, which "arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight" (p. 32); and second is "Narcissistic identification with the ideal ego", as the function of ego libido. Experiencing "the illusion of voyeuristic separation" through

"the extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium… and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen" (p. 31), the spectator experience the scopophilic pleasure through looking at female form which is constructed for his gaze; "the eye of the camera is like an eye looking through a peephole" (Walters, 1995, p. 54), which provides a voyeuristic pleasure through secretly watching. Similar to Lacanian "mirror stage" when the mirror image looks more perfect and ideal in compare to the child's experience of their body, the spectator also gets fascinated with his ideal ego image on the mirror of the screen through identifying with him and sharing his power and control over the female diegetic figure (Mulvey, [1975]1990, p. 31). Mulvey writes:

> As the male spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look into that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence (p. 34).

As Mulvey discusses, women are constructed as spectacles in cinema through triple-layered gaze of "the camera as it records the pro-filmic event", of "the audience as it watches the final product", and "of the characters at each other within the screen illusion" (p. 39).

Women as signifiers connote to-be-looked-at-ness according to male desire. But at the same time, it connotes the sexual difference. She is a threat; an "other" who lacks penis, and signifies differences and the castration anxiety. Male unconscious deactivates this threat through utilizing two visual and narrative mechanisms (Mulvey, [1975]1990; Hollinger, 2012); voyeurism/sadistic voyeurism and fetishism/fetishistic scopophilia. While "the fetishistic look has to do with the endowment of some object or body part with sexual meaning" (Walters, 1995, p. 54),

Sadistic voyeurism reassure control over original castration anxiety through punishing female figure for her lack.

In order to deal with the threat of women's otherness, fetishistic mechanism replaces female lack with a fetish. Kaplan defines Fetishism as the "perversion whereby men strive to discover the penis in the woman in order to grant themselves erotic satisfaction (e.g. long hair, a shoe, or earrings stand in for the penis)… In the cinema, the whole female body may be "fetishized" in order to counteract the fear of sexual difference, i.e. of castration" (1983, p. 14). Fetishistic scopophilia "builds up the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself" (Mulvey, [1975]1990, p. 35). The female star's glamorized figure is reduced into "pure spectacle" (Hollinger, 2012, p. 11). Also female figure could be fetishized partly through "ascribing a phallic connotation to a female body part (legs, breast) (Walters, 1995, pp. 54-55).

While fetishistic scopophilia is exercised through the function of camera, voyeurism, being associated with sadism, develops narrative pleasure through "ascertaining guilt… asserting control and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness" (Mulvey, [1975]1990, p. 35).

Although Psychoanalysis has been employed by numerous researchers to examine filmic representation, many scholars have criticized its deterministic perspective. One of the earliest criticisms of dominant growth of cine-psychoanalysis appeared in 1975 by four members of the *Screen* editorial board, Edward Buscombe, Christine Gledhill, Alan Lovell, and Christopher Williams. The writers' concerns included, but not limited to, psychoanalytic theory's strong emphasis on the narrative, with only

"occasional references to camera movements, sound, etc" (p. 125), the "blind spots" situatedness of women which leave no possibility for female spectatorship. They assert that "the blind spot is not created by patriarchal order or capitalist societies but by psychoanalytic theories" (p. 128).

Psychoanalysis was criticized for its radical notion that in Hollywood cinema the gaze is exclusively male, leaving no space for men to have "the function of an erotic object" and also ignores the active look of young women (Hollinger, 2012). Kaplan writes that "Lacanian systems have hitherto disturbed me because of their determinism, ahistoricity, and anti-humanism, and because they seemed to lock us inevitably into a framework that degraded women." (Kaplan, 1983, p. 152).

Despite the above-mentioned criticisms, psychoanalytic film studies provides conceptual framework for the purpose of the current study. Drawing on constructionism, this study rejects the ahistorical/deterministic perspective on psychoanalysis as a tool to "uncover essential truths" about the human psyche and consequently, as a justification for women's inscription to marginalized and silent position. Rather, psychoanalysis is considered to be capable of decoding the patriarchal psychic patterns in order to provide a path to break through its confining mechanism.

In this regards, The current research share a similar approach with Kaplan's *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera,* in which she argues that despite many feminists' rejection of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis theory, it is a relevant tool to the state of industrial social organization characteristic of the twentieth century; a tool that can unlock the secrets of socialization of women within

(capitalist) patriarchy (1983, p. 24). In a similar way, Judith Mayne argues more recently that although psychoanalytic feminist film theory is "limited by certain assumptions", it is still "enormously productive in the questions it raises" (2004, p. 1263).

Also Kaplan discusses the usefulness of psychoanalysis in analyzing melodrama:

> Using psychoanalysis to deconstruct Hollywood films enables us to see clearly the patriarchal myths through which we have been positioned as other (enigma, mystery), and as eternal and unchanging. We can also see how the family melodrama, as a genre geared specifically to women, functions both to expose the constraints and limitations that the capitalist nuclear family imposes on women and, at the same time, to "educate" women to accept those constraints as "natural," inevitable – as "given" (1983, p. 25).

Asghar Frahadi's films are family melodramas according to 'staple fare' of melodrama defined by Kaplan as being explicitly concerned with "Oedipal issues – illicit love relationships (overtly or incipiently incestuous), mother–child relationships, husband–wife relationships, father–son relationships" (1983, p. 25). Therefore, historically-confined psychoanalytical tools provide proper lens to analyze the way women and familial relationships are constructed in regard to patriarchal unconscious and desires.

The current research embarks from an inquiry into Farhadi's cinema as the outcome of the male filmmaker's unconscious/conscious choices in the patriarchal society of Iran, in which hybridity of modernity and tradition generates a form of neopatriarchal society with its consequent ambiguity in regard to the presence of empowered women both in the Iranian society and on the screen. Therefore, psychoanalysis found to provide relevant concepts for the purpose of theorizing unconscious of Iranian society and its consequent cinematic effects in visual and narrative levels.

Next two chapters deal with the mentioned contextual-bound theorizations and analysis of Farhadi's cinema.

Chapter 4

NEOPATRIARCHAL UNCONSCIOUS OF IRANIAN SOCIETY/CINEMA

Patriarchy is a dominant structure in most societies. However, in real life, its application is not universal but diverse and particular, depending on the different ideologies and cultures they are rooted in; the ideologies which are materialistically shape and reshape social relations.

Questioning the ahistoricity of Mulvey's psychoanalytic theory of film studies, this chapter provides a discussion on neopatriarchy in Iran and tries to theorize "Buttressing Unconscious" as the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society. For, this unconscious has shaped the neopatriarchal ambiguous representation of empowered women in Iranian cinema, and has reinforced conscious and unconscious choices of Iranian filmmakers in constructing their own subjective version of Iranian women's life and reality. Therefore, understanding this neopatriarchal unconscious is crucial for dismantling the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian cinema and the way it affects filmic representation of not only female characters but also social facts, social relations, institutionalization of patriarchal structures, and all other relevant issues. While this chapter provides an introduction into Iranian neopatriarchy in both societal and cinematic levels, the next chapter deals with detailed cinematic implications of it and the subsequent analysis of Farhadi's film.

Before going further to discuss the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society, it is necessary to elaborate more on two mutually related concepts of "veiling" and "empowered woman", for the concept of "veiling" is crucial in understanding the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society and cinema.

Chehabi (2003) writes "hejab refers not merely to the piece of clothing that protects women from the gaze of men, but also to the proper mode of interaction between the sexes, which aims at minimizing contact between unrelated men and women and has visual, acoustic and behavioral dimensions (p. 203). He insightfully distinguishes between "veiling" as "sartorial practices that derive from hejab", and "purdah" as "the segregation of the sexes" (p. 203). Although Chehabi's distinction between veiling and purdah is found to be so useful for the purpose of the current study, to avoid circumlocution, I prefer to use only the word "veiling" for three different functions of veiling in Iranian cinema which are introduced by this research; first, sartorial practices (also being referred as dressing codes of modesty); second, behavioral codes of modesty; and third, sex-segregation[18].

---

[18] - These functions are being introduced as different aspects of veiling in Iranian cinema and not necessarily as universal functions of veiling. This research does not draw on the social and religious aspects of hejab, and it also rejects the monolithic perspective on this issue. The researcher oblige herself to discuss some previously neglected assumptions about the issue of hejab and veiling which are necessary to be discussed for the purpose of the current research. First, pertinent to this argument, it should be mentioned that contrary to the common belief, the practice of Hijab predates the emergence of Islam (Das & Shirvani, 2013; Croucher, 2008; Shirvani, 2007; Macdonald, 2006). Croucher (2008) claims that the ritual of veiling, to cover part of head and face, is originated in Judaism. Hijab as a social practice has been adapted in pre-Islamic Arabia, Greece, Assyria, the Balkans, and Byzantium (Macdonald, 2006) but its religious origins predates Judaism and Christianity. The earliest reference to a form of religious hejab is found in Pahlavi scripts (6th century) as a female head dress worn by Zoroastrian women (Encyclopedia Iranica, 1990). Its reductionist association with Islam is used as a tool to justify "barbaric" representation of this religious practice deploying it from its earlier references. Therefore, the practice of veiling and its aesthetic impact on Iranian culture and art predates the emergence of Islam in Iran and rooted deeply in Zoroastrian culture. However, as focusing on the post-revolutionary Iranian cinema, we are referring to it as Islamic codes and veiling.

Second, the obligatory hejab which is coerced on Iranian women in contemporary Iran is unfounded in Islamic Sharia, and the practice of veiling is a personal religious choice. This is an important issue

According to the above-mentioned functions of veiling, an "unveiled" woman is not necessarily the one without sartorial practice of hejab. "Unveiling" does not necessarily refer to the absence of sartorial function of veiling. As in Iranian contemporary cinema women are obliged to follow the Islamic codes of dressing, the "unveiling" in Iranian cinema refers to two other functions of hejab; behavioral function and the function of sex segregation. Therefore, what I am going to refer to as an "empowered" women in Iranian cinema through the rest of this research is the uncontained, unconfined woman who, although sartorially veiled, succeed to transgress other two aspects of veiling, and in this regard, is considered to be unveiled. The image of this empowered woman- who breaks the behavioral function and the sex segregation- encounters ambivalent representation in Iranian cinema.

---

because these two understandings of hejab, one as a personal choice of an individual, and one as a coerced rule of the society that need to be exercised through moral police patrolling and interference, each generates different assumptions, attributions and influences in the society in regard to the issue of hejab. This second issue propels the third consideration which is the rendition of veiling as a monolithic and unitary mode of covering body.

"Media discourse and debates are fixated on "veiling" and "unveiling" and rarely differentiate between styles of Muslim clothing" (Macdonald, 2006, p. 8). This rigid representation of Hijab is reductionist because it does not only denies the diversity of practices of Hijab and "brings both the loose head-scarf and the all-encompassing burqa into a singular discursive frame" (Macdonald, 2006, p. 8) but also obscures the diversity of motivations among individual women who are practicing it. For, the functions of veiling defer in different contexts. While it might be a sign of oppression of women in one context, it might be the sign of resistance, agency and identity in another. Thirteen veiled American Muslim women share their definitions of Hijab in Droogsma's research (2007). These women claim that hejab functions to define their Muslim identity, performs a behavior check, resists sexual objectification, affords more respect, preserves intimate relationships, and provides freedom. Also after the banning of the wearing of the Islamic veil in French public schools (Law 2004–228) many women have resisted the French law. Croucher (2008) interviews forty-two Muslim women in France about their practices of Hijab and concludes "the hijab is a vehicle through which many French-Muslim women assert aspects of their identity" (p. 210). These French-Muslim women identified four functions/reasons for wearing Hijab in France: to blend their French, Muslim and North-African identities; to help them feel comfortable or secure in their bodies while out in public; to aid in feeling a closeness to the Prophet Muhammad and to the Muslim community; and to provide a silent way to protest and identify themselves as Muslims to others. Therefore, the functions of veiling which have been discussed in Iranian cinema do not offer an ahistorical perspective on veiling, and are contextual-bound.

4.1 Neopatriarchal Unconscious of Iranian Society

What all the above-mentioned functions of veiling have in common is a form of barrier, a curtain which is erected to hide, segregate, and "buttress". While articulating the approach of the Islamic Republic toward women's femininity and sexuality in Iran, Najmeh Moradiyan Rizi explains "cinematic interdictions" as "the visual part of a general strategy, authorized by the government, regarding gender segregation and sexual hierarchy" (2015, p. 7). According to her, "the Islamic regime buttressed, and still buttresses, this gender segregation by claiming to protect women's virtue and integrity from Western commodification" (p. 7).

Moradiyan Rizi insightfully recognizes a "general strategy" based on which gender segregation is buttressed and strengthened by the Islamic regime. However she fails to theorize this "general", better to call "structural" strategy. I would like to embark from where she left and take the idea further to theorize the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society as a "general strategy" in regard to women. Therefore, the way Islamic regime buttresses and strengthens gender segregation, as Moradiyan Rizi mentioned, is just part of a more comprehensive approach to femininity according to which women are buttressed through imposed 'veiling' in order to deal with their putative threat.

Under the obligatory wearing of hijab, veiling is coerced through neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society which I prefer to call "buttressing unconscious". This buttressing unconscious is used to justify the existence of veil as a protector of society from corruption. The putative threat of women is rooted in this unconscious according to which a woman as a necessary "other" to define the "self" of a

patriarchal society is believed to be in need of protection through the mechanism of veil with all its three functions.

The buttressing unconscious, rooted in institutionalized practice of veiling, is evident in the most repeated promoting mottos "hejab is like an oyster around the pearl" or "hejab is immunity-not limitation". Figure one depicts a pearl in oyster, and figure two juxtaposes women in hejab (sartorial function of veiling) with the image of a pearl in oyster. In both figures, hejab is represented as a protective oyster around the pearl of the women's essence, their precious hidden self.

Figure 1: "Hejab, an oyster around the pearl of essence"- the photo is taken from the website of Cultural and Religious Base of Women and War
(http://jangvazan.blogfa.com/author-jangvazan.aspx?p=4)

Figure 2: Book cover, Women and Islamic Perspective on Hejab (Mohammad Taghi Seifi, 2012)

The most apparent implication of the above-mentioned mottos and justification of veiling is that core value, the interior meaning, and the hidden aspect of the self are highly valued and need to be protected. This culturally well-rooted belief is discussed by Naficy in his important article, the Averted Gaze in Iranian Post-Revolutionary Cinema (1991), in which he theorizes the manner in which the rule of modesty is inscribed in the system of looking in Iranian post-revolutionary cinema.

Naficy argues that in Iranian psychology, the self is constituted as dual, both private and public. According to Naficy, "the self is thought of as familial and communal rather than fully autonomous and individuated. There is also a clear demarcation between an inner core, or private self, and an outer shell, or public self- both of each are available simultaneously" (p. 30). This simultaneous duality necessitates the existence of an "amorphous" boundary or veil, separating interior from exterior.

"Veiling and the codes of modesty that attend it, therefore, are operative within the self and are pervasive within the culture" (p. 30).

Psychological and cultural veiling is not a new phenomenon in Iranian society. It is rooted in Iranian visual art, poetry, and religious believes. Naficy mentions some of the examples of instances of veiling:

> The inner sanctum hides the family, the veil hides the women, high walls separate and conceal private space from public space, the exoteric meanings of religious texts hide the esoteric meanings, and the perspectiveless miniature paintings convey their messages in layers instead of organizing a unified vision for a centered viewer (p. 30).

Iranian subjects, therefore, need constant interpretive activities in order to discover the inner meanings while interacting with others and also to camouflage their own inner intentions. "This is because Iranian hermeneutics is based on the primacy of hiding the core values (that is, veiling), and of distrusting manifest meanings (that is, vision)" (p. 31).

While in the first two figures, women's essence is highly valued through being equalized with pearl, the third and fourth figures more explicitly reveal the ideological assumption hidden in these mottos about femininity; the image of a veiled and an unveiled woman are juxtaposed respectively with covered and uncovered chocolates while flies are gathered around the uncovered chocolate, and there is one dead fly next to the uncovered one.

Figure 3: A promoting billboard, representing "Hijab is Immunity"

Figure 4: "Immunity or…?", The photo is taken from a blog Chastity and Hijab
(http://www.dokhtarannoor.blogfa.com)

This juxtaposition implies that women, although being 'desired' like a piece of chocolate, are prone to commit sin, become corrupted, and consequently corrupt the whole society if they are not veiled. Veil is a buttress to prevent women from falling down. The manipulative masculine ideology, therefore, utilizes the practice of hejab

and veiling to justify the relegation of women to silence, absence and inferiority in the society.

Hamid Naficy argues that "the Islamic system of looking and the semiotic of veiling and unveiling" are based on three suppositions; first, "eyes are active, even invasive organs, whose gaze is also constructed to be inherently aggressive"; "second, women's sexuality is thought to be so excessive and powerful that if it is uncontained… it is supposed to lead inevitably to the wholesale moral corruption of men and of society as a whole"; and "third, men are considered to be nothing but weaklings in the face of women's powerful sexual force, and the effect of looking on the men is clearly posited to be direct and unmediated" (1991, pp. 33-34).

Based on the above arguments, buttressing strategy is not a mere protective strategy of the inner valuable essence of women but it is to protect the patriarchal power and sovereignty through buttressing the posited threatening women's corrupted-to-be self. For, it is assumed that when a non-buttressed woman –read as unveiled, empowered and unconfined- unavoidably transgresses the boundaries and falls down, the whole structure of male-dominated family and society would fall down and become morally corrupted. This neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society finds its way to the silver screen and shapes neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian cinema in regard to the representation of empowered women.

According to Western feminist film studies, the image of women is ambiguous as it signifies desire and threat; the threat of castration. In Iranian new cinema, image of women signifies the duality of desire and threat as well. However, its threat is not a threat of castration but the threat of humiliation and corruption. While Western

mainstream cinema deals with women's putative threat through the mechanism of voyeurism/sadistic voyeurism and fetishism/fetishistic scopophilia (Mulvey, [1975]1990; Hollinger, 2012; Walters, 1995), neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society is inscribed into the silver screen through visual and narrative strategies of buttressing/veiling.

4.2 Neopatriarchal Unconscious of Iranian Cinema

Iranian society has constantly gone through discontinuity and rupture for centuries. The most profound rupture in contemporary Iranian society is the Islamic Revolution of 1979 which have brought fundamental changes into socio-economic and cultural aspects of Iranian society. One of the cultural spheres of Iranian society which have experienced sudden rupture right after the revolution is Iranian cinema. Through launching the Islamisation and anti-western policy of the Islamic government, the cinema has to adapt itself into the newly imposed rules of modesty and veiling. These rules have mostly influenced on the representation of women and heterosexual relationships. In order to survive under the constraints of censorship, Iranian filmmakers have developed different cinematic strategies. Although through the decades, the censorship codes and constraints have been eased on Iranian cinema, there is still continuity in the restricted ways women are represented within the veiling framework.

As it has been discussed, despite all the restrictions and boundaries, the Iranian post-revolutionary cinema surprisingly did not turn into a propagandistic tool in the hand of Islamic regime. Iranian filmmakers react differently to these newly-imposed rules and codes; some eagerly embraced them. Naficy (2002) labels them the 'populist cinema' which "affirms post-revolutionary Islamic values more fully at the level of

plot, theme, characterization, portrayal of women and mise-en-scène" (p. 30); some

other filmmakers such as Kiarostami, decided not to deal with bodies, relationships

and spaces that had to be "misrepresented in order to be represented"[19] (Khosrowjah,

2011, p. 57); and some struggle to find a way to negotiate and survive under the

newly-introduced censorial codes.

Different responses of Iranian filmmakers to the censorial codes and regulations

penetrate the body of its ideological machine and open the leeway for negotiation. As

Zeydabadi-Nejad argues the vagueness in the way censorship code is defined and the

absence of "unitary censorship mechanism" provide filmmakers with opportunities to

infiltrate the suppressive mechanism (2010, p. 30). It is out of the mentioned

negotiation that the social films emerged. Naficy uses the term 'art cinema[20]' for

---

[19] - *Ten* (2002) is a shift in Kiarostami's perspective on using female characters. Ten is a docufiction in which a woman, a female driver (Mania Akbari) has 10 conversations with a variety of passengers - her own son, a bride, a prostitute, her sister, and so on- while driving around Tehran. Király claims that Kiarostami's female characters are not represented as "'objects of desire', but as holders of reality and truth"; "Their faces left visible – all their body is covered and they are wearing scarf – are, in fact, an *inter-face* were reality (about man's world, their wars, fights for power, culturally coded relationships between man and woman) becomes visible" (Király, 2010, p. 138).

[20] - The Iranian cinema joined the previously occupied position of Italian neo-realism, the French New Wave, and the New German Cinema in countering the economic and cultural domination of Hollywood cinema (Gow, 2011, p. 10) through the project of Islamisation of film. Farhadi's cinema is considered as one of them for the purpose of this research. His cinema falls into this categorization according to Naficy's and Bordwell's references to Art cinema. In line with Naficy's conceptualization of Iranian art cinema, Farhadi's cinema, although implicitly, touches the sensitive political and social issues and raises the criticism of "social conditions under the Islamic government" (Naficy, 1998, p. 230). Also Bordwell defines two main principles of Art cinema, which are both being met by Farhadi's cinema: realism and authorial expressivity (Borwell, 2002). Farhadi's cinema foregrounds the author as a "textual force 'who' communicates (what is the film saying?), and 'who' expresses (what is the artist's personal vision?)" (p. 97). Finally, what Bordwell calls "ambiguity", which can be considered as the third trait of Art cinema is evident in Farhadi's cinema through open-ended narrative and the lack of clear-cut resolution. Recognizing certain thematic and stylistic features in Farhadi's cinema is what makes his films proper authorial texts for the purpose of feminist inquiries.

This analogy between Iranian New Cinema and European art cinema is discussed by many scholars from different aspects (For examples, Jahed, 2012; Gow, 2011; Thanouli). For the purpose of the current research, the importance of this analogy is in the issue of the representation of women. For, being categorized as an art cinema is not a sufficient condition for a film to be considered as a female-friendly film. As Mark Betz (2009) suggests while the modern women is "a primary *subject* of art cinema", its representation is contradictory due to the "aesthetic, spatial, and national-historical crisis particular to Western Europe" (p. 35). Betz asserts that women in art cinema are depicted "as the central movers of narratives that do not really move anywhere" (p. 38). In order to clarify the contradictory image of female characters in European art cinema, Betz writes "[women] are treated as

those films which intend to critique "social conditions under the Islamic government" (1998, p. 230). These films look for strategies of metaphor and symbolism to bypass these imposed values.

As the Iranian cinema under the new rules of modesty attempts to separate and distinguish itself from dominant cinema, the specific techniques and conventions are employed by Iranian filmmaker to depict women on screen. Mottahedeh (2006) also discusses the way by which the rejection of "conventionalized language of Hollywood realism" affected not only the course of the events but also the form of the film. Therefore, filmmakers of 1980s and 1990s faced the dilemma to redefine "cinematic grammar and language of film". The language of "allusion" was born out of the struggle of filmmakers to survive under restrictive censorship and depict intimacy. The examples of the numerous allusive techniques to deal with the dilemma of restrictions were "creating allegorical figures, displacing plots and deferring cinematic closure" (p. 180). These conventions have been standardized through repetition.

These invented conventions mostly function as a replacement for direct depiction of affection and intimate relationships. When the story necessitates any form of physical touching or contacts- for example within fictive heterosexual or parental relationships- an allegorical figure is employed. Mottahede (2006) gives an example

positive agents of their own desire, central to the narrative, a liberated image of modern European womanhood. They are also insular, isolated, alienated beings, out of touch with the social world around them, unable to communicate freely or fully with men, unlikely to achieve happiness by narrative's end" (p. 35).

In regard to the critical socio-political perspective his films take and the aesthetic and narrative choices, Farhadi's cinema share the same position with the world art cinema. It negotiates and survives through employing and developing the new tropological language of Iranian cinema. However, none of the above-mentioned features necessarily guarantees the female-friendly and subversive representation of women in his cinema.

from Ali Hatami's *Del Shodegan* ('*The Enamored*', 1992) in which a couple in Qajar Dynasty are depicted in an emotional farewell scene. In this scene, symbolic figures of a cat and a musical instrument function as replacements for heterosexual relationship and love on the screen:

> The musician and his wife then sit down by a round table on which rests a set of book, a santoor (a string instrument) and a cat. The couple discuss the things that join them in their affections for one another and review the promises and sacrifices they have made in their devotion to music. The wife speaks to her husband with an averted gaze while she strokes the musical instrument-the signifier of their common love- with her palm… the close up frames the cat, who we first see being stroked by the musician's hand, and then by his wife's hand (p.180-182).

As Mottahedeh (2006) argues, children are another symbolic figure who can not only dance, sing and show heterosexual emotions openly but also being employed for critique of a restrictive society. Depicting children stories in the urban areas[21], the directors avoid problem with keeping modesty in dress[22] and also project the societal critique into a more symbolic figures and location. It seems that Islamic censorship paved the way for Iranians to creatively disguise their political opinion through different medium (Taheri, 2011).

The allegorical language of allusion of post-revolutionary Iranian cinema enables Iranian filmmakers to survive under restrictive censorship codes and to penetrate the body of its ideological machine. However, as it is born out of the buttressing/veiling perspective on femininity, it unconsciously reinforces this neopatriarchal perspective and utilizes buttressing/veiling strategies to deal with the female characters

---

[21] - Abbas Kiarostami's *Where is the Friend's Home?* (*Kane-ye doost Kojast?,* 1987), *Bashu, the Little Stranger* (1989) by Bahram Beizai, and Majid Majidi's *The Color of God* (*Range Khoda*, 2000) are three exemplary films.

[22] - As Mottahedeh (2006) discussed while urban women, in contrary to their actual practices, have to be depicted with loose-fitting clothes in private spheres, it is easier to imagine rural female peasant outdoors, wearing headscarves and colorful garments in contingent with regime's rule of modesty.

narratively and aesthetically. The following chapter addresses these strategies according to the three previously-introduced functions of veiling in Iranian cinema, and respectively, offers analysis of Farhadi's filmic representation.

Chapter 5

BUTTRESSING THE EMPOWERED THREAT!

The neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society as a powerful ideology constructs social relations according to buttressing perspective on femininity. This ideology is disseminated and reconstructed through cultural products among which films hold special place. The current chapter discusses the way buttressing perspective on femininity- as the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society- and buttressing/veiling strategies as the way this neopatriarchy deals with women's putative threat are inscribed into filmic representation. Farhadi's cinema is analyzed according to this introduced buttressing/veiling strategies.

Buttressing perspective on femininity necessitates the depiction of female characters as the source of disequilibrium. The first section of the current chapter deals with this implication in the level of narrative and analyzes Farhadi's cinema accordingly. Furthermore, the buttressing/veiling strategies neopatriarchal cinema utilizes to deactivate and control the putative threat of 'corrupted-to-be' female characters are discussed, and analyzed respectively in Farhadi's cinema.

In this research, buttressing/veiling strategies are introduced and analyzed in accordance to three previously-discussed functions of veiling in Iranian cinema; In regard to sartorial function of veiling, the current research tries to find out if cinematic representation of female characters in Farhadi's films imply or suggest any

subversive or critical perspective on obligatory sartorial practice of veiling, or it simply offers an unproblematic representation of officially-promoted ideal sartorial practice of veiling; The function of behavioral code of modesty will be explored to find out if female characters manifest any transgressive or subversive behavior to break through the confinements of patriarchal society; and in regard to the function of sex-segregation, buttressing gaze which is born out of the new language of allusion in Iranian cinema and its neopatriarchal unconscious is introduced, and its visual references are explored.

Finally, the last section deals with the question of how Farhadi's films negotiate with empowered female characters towards the state of reparation and the establishment of the new state of orders.

5.1 Always there is a Woman Involved: Female Breakers of Equilibrium

As it has been discussed in the previous chapter, according to the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society women are prone to be corrupted and subsequently corrupt the whole male-dominated society. When being inscribed into the filmic representation in the level of narrative, the 'corrupted-to-be' conceptualization of women necessitates the depiction of female characters as the sources of disequilibrium. The empowered/unveiled woman who tries to break through the confines of patriarchal structures, is the one who breaks the initial state of equilibrium and her presence and demands continuously entail problems and catastrophe.

In Farhadi's films, there is always a woman- even if she is not visually present- who is depicted as the source of disequilibrium[23]. In *Beautiful City*, all the sufferings that characters, whether male or female, go through are caused by an absent female character whose death is the mover of the film narrative; Malihe, is the girl who didn't accept his father's will to marry a man he chose. There is an implication in the way A'la retell the story as if Akbar and Malihe both decided to die. However, Akbar couldn't commit a suicide after killing Malihe. Malihe's 'absent presence' cast shadow on Akbar's life and shape characters' tense relationship.

In *Dancing in the Dust*, the happiness and love-filled marriage of the young couple – Reyhaneh and Nazar- is doomed to failure due to the bad reputation of the bride's mother. Reyhaneh's mother, although being visually almost absent is depicted as the source of disequilibrium. Nazar's parents force him to divorce his wife because of the rumors suggest that Reyhaneh's mother is a prostitute. Also the mother's loneliness prevents Reyhaneh to flee with her husband and start a new life somewhere else where nobody knows them. The mother's 'absent presence' leaves no hope for the young couple to save their love and marriage. Although Reyhaneh agrees to divorce without receiving her marriage dowry- despite her mother's disapproval- Nazar feels responsible for her future and he goes through series of problems in order to pay his divorced wife's marriage dowry on installments.

Similarly, there is a shadow of the presence of a women in the life of the snake hunter. Although being present only through a pail photo on the bottom of an old box, the woman is the one who is responsible for the current situation of the elderly

---

[23] - The motif of an absent female character who is depicted as the source of disequilibrium is repeated in Farhad's films.

71

snake hunter whose haunted face revealed openly his devastation; he committed a murder because of her, have been imprisoned and lives his miserable life as an old lonely man wandering in an uninhabited wilderness. It seems that the life of the male characters of *Dancing in the Dust* are haunted by the 'absent presence' of female figures for whom they are still pining.

In *the Salesman*, the previous tenant of the apartment who was a single mother is the unseen source of disequilibrium; Shortly after a couple- Rana and Emad- moves to their new apartment which is given to them by their friend, Rana is being assaulted by an unknown intruder who is discovered to be a client of the previous tenant, the single mother who was a prostitute! Through the film, the strong shadows of these unseen female character are casted on life and equilibrium of the couple. The suffering that the presence of the unseen 'corrupted' female figure imposed on their life has been commenced long before the catastrophic incident of assault. Her 'absent presence' is emphasized through her belongings which are abandoned in one of the apartment's room as she left in a hurry and promised to collect them later when she succeed to find a new place. Her belongings turn into a hassle for the couple as they need to use the room. They decide to move them to the balcony and it raises another problem for Emad as he has to cover them in order to protect them from rain in the middle of a night. This scene has allegorical function which depict how her 'absent presence' cast a threat on the couple's life. Although never seen in the film, her belongings, her reputation and her absence- which prevents her to deal with her own clients- are the sources of disequilibrium.

In *Firework Wednesday*, *About Elly* and *A Separation*, the main female characters are present and have their own goals and desires. However, they are still represented

72

as the source of disequilibrium. In *Firework Wednesday*, despite the fact that Mojdeh and Morteza have already a turbulent life, Mojdeh is depicted as a semi-paranoid suspicious wife who is accusing her husband wrongly. Her pale complexion, nervousness and irrationality in the way she deals with her neighbors and relatives[24] along with her dull and dark costume, encourage this depiction. However, towards the end of the film, it is revealed that her accusation of Morteza is not unfounded and he actually has affair with Simin, their divorced neighbor. Although Morteza's fault is evident, the way narrative moves toward the reparation doomed Simin and Mojdeh to suffer.

In *About Elly*, the disturbance of the initial equilibrium starts by disappearance of Elly which force them all to return to the crowded urban area as if they are summoned back from an unreal dream-like world. Through launching the patriarchal investigation of 'truth', it is revealed that the equilibrium has been broken long before the disappearance of Elly; Sepideh and Elly hide the truth about Elly's fiancé, not only from their fellow travelers but also from their own families. Presence of Elly, an engaged[25] woman, in a matchmaking trip to meet with Ahmad, a young man,

---

[24] - There is an accusation that she flattens a woman's car which was parked in front of the parking road. She is the one who complain about Simin's customers. She cuts her relationship with her brother-in-law. While talking to his colleague, Morteza tries to justify the way he acts in beating Mojdeh through accusing Mojdeh of having problem with everybody around her including her own family.

[25] - A typical wedding ritual in Iran consists of two stages; "Aghd" which is a legal process in which marriage contract is signed, and "Jashn-e Aroosi" which is a wedding reception (Hamidpour, 2016, p. 4). What must be noted is that these two events are not necessarily on the same day as there might be months and even years in between the two events. There is a confusion and ambivalence in regard to the nature of the boy and girl's relationship. Despite the fact that they are legally married and the married contract is signed, they are considered as engaged till the night of marriage (Jashne aroosi). Most of the engagement parties are actually aghd celebrations. This custom is mostly common in traditional and religious families in order to provide the comfort for the couple to meet and socialize with each other. Considering the fact that Elly and her fiancé are both from more traditional families, there is ambivalent in the nature of their relationship; are they only engaged or they are in the aghd status which is equal to be married legally.

is the starting point of the challenges they all go through, and her 'absent presence' breaks the fragile initial equilibrium.

In *A Separation*, the main female character appears as a rebellion against her positioning as marginal and tries to find her 'subjectivity' and pursue her own desire. Simin is the one who insist on immigration and ask for divorce. All the problematic situations commence after she left the house; she has been responsible for taking care of Nader's Alzheimer's-stricken father so when she decided to leave the house Nader has to employ Razieh. That's how all Simin's demands and desire lead into catastrophe. Also Razieh starts the job without informing her bad-tempered husband and hides the incident of her car accident. Despite the fact that she is a deeply religious woman from a lower-class in the society, she subjectively tries to alter the condition of her family. However, in a similar way, her endeavor leads into destruction and catastrophe.

5.2 Parodies of the Sartorial Propriety

As it has been discussed amply in chapter two, shortly after the revolution of 1979, in the summer of 1981, despite the division of ideas among women in regard to the enforcement of hejab, the obligatory practice of hejab was imposed on Iranian women as the sign of Islamisation of the country and the revolution's anti-western policy. Since then, despite the state oppression on the practice of 'proper' Islamic hejab, Iranian women's practices of hejab have varied and been determined by regional, economic, religious, and many other variables. What has remained the same is the conflict and the contradiction between enforced hejab and its supporter and contesters. The most recent opposition to the obligatory female sartorial rules has

broken out on December 27, 2018 with the "Girl of Enghelab Street"[26] who "was filmed standing defiantly bare-headed while waving her white headscarf" (Lusher, 2018). Her protest has been re-enacted by many Iranian women who take off their headscarves publicly and wave them on sticks. Surprisingly, these protests were joined by some women wearing the chador[27] to show their solidarity with the anti-obligatory hijab movement (Malm, 2018). Videos and photos of these protests have been shared widely on social media, spreading the message of those Iranian women who are against obligatory hejab and demand their right to decide about their own body.

Within this context, chronic controversy over female sartorial practice finds its way to the silver screen as the most manifest function of buttressing/veiling in Iranian cinema. Therefore, this section deals with the question of what cinematic representation of female characters in Farhadi's films implies or suggests in this regard; is there any subversive or critical perspective on obligatory sartorial practice of veiling, or it simply offers an unproblematic representation of officially-promoted ideal sartorial practice.

Gaines argues that costume has the function of signifying characters in the film; "Costumes are fitted to characters as a second skin, working in this capacity for the cause of narrative by relaying information to the viewer about a 'person'" (1990, p. 181). Farhadi tells the story of ordinary people, but his stories offer a great deal to say about social and cultural questions in contemporary Iran, including sartorial

---

[26] - Enghelab, literary means revolution, is the name of the street in which Vida Movahed, the Girl of Enghelab Street, protested. She was arrested on that day and was released a month later.
[27] - According to Encyclopaedia Iranica, Chador is "a loose female garment covering the body, sometimes also the face" (Algar, 1990) .

practice of women. As important elements of mise-en-scene, costumes in Farhadi's films are rich in the message they communicate about female characters. Costumes are reach in the way they question promoted ideal sartorial practice.

Chador is a traditional orthodox kind of hejab in Iran. Although it was being worn before the Islamic revolution, it has been officially promoted as the 'superior veil' after the revolution. "The picture of an ideal woman represented in media, school, and university is a woman who has a superior veil (chador), is a good wife, a good mother and a perfect Muslim" (Hamzehei, 2014, p. 2).

This image, however, has no place in Farhadi's cinema as his representation of veiling creates parodies of the conventional propriety in regard to the issue of obligatory hejeb. First, in Farhadi's films chador is associated with lower class of the society and consequently is not idealized and promoted. Costumes signify class differences as women from lower societal class wear chador which distinguishes them from middle class female characters who all have loose style of hejab. Although Farhadi monolithically associate chador with lower class female characters, he does not distinguish female sexuality within the dichotomization of active unveiled and passive veiled women. For him, although traditional hejab is associated with lower class, the women with chador do not lack agency.

The second way through which Farhadi creates parodies of the conventional propriety in regard to the issue of obligatory hejeb is his cinematic critical references to this issue. There are scenes in which chador is problematized either through the threat it imposes on characters or through rendering them to invisibility.

In *A Separation*, when Hodjat accuses Nader of being responsible for Razieh's miscarriage, Nader claims that he wasn't aware of Razieh's pregnancy duo to her all-covering attire of chador. Farhadi offers a critique on a way chador renders women and their body to invisibility.

In *Firework Wednesday,* there are several criticizing scenes in regard to veiling practice. Chador turns into a leitmotif which offers an extradiegetic reference to daily experiences of Iranian women. The opening scene of *Firework Wednesday* depicts Ruhi and her fiancé, Abdolreza, on a motorbike while Ruhi is watching their photos and keeps commenting on them enthusiastically (figure 5).

5-a

5-b

5-c

Figure 5: Ruhi's problematic chador

Their spatial proximity on the motorbike and in the photos symbolizes their love-filled relationship. While watching a photo, Ruhi's chador drops from her head (5-a). Ruhi tries to pull it up again in a close shot which frames her hand and her chador (5-b). One of their photos fell down in this shot. Followed by an insert shot of black chador floating in the air (5-c), the chador becomes entangled in the motorbike causing it to stop harshly. After falling down, the young to-be-married couple immediately turn back to their good mood of happiness and humor, and the film goes on. However, this scene can be read as a subtle criticism of sartorial practice of veiling and also as foreshadowing comment on their imminent nuptials.

The foreshadowing meaning of this scene becomes clearer after Ruhi's experience of a long day exposure to a turbulent marital life of Mojdeh and Morteza. The way marital problems and relationships are represented in Farhadi's cinema is discussed in section 5.3 while addressing the diegetic objectives of female characters.

In a shot on which the credit appears, Ruhi pushes the bus window open and puts her hand alongside part of her scarf and chador out of the window of a bus floating in the air (figure 6).

Figure 6: Ruhi's floating hand

The subtle colorful margins of her scarf symbolizes the three colors of the flag of Iran, twisting and waving in the air. The free dance-like movement of Ruhi's hand and attire in the air symbolizes the blithe moment of freedom. "This is Iran… The feeling of the wind blowing through every strand of hair is a girl's biggest dream." This is one among hundreds of bilingual captions Iranian women post alongside their bare-headed photos on the Facebook page called *My Stealthy Freedom*, a page dedicated to "Iranian women inside the country who want to share their 'stealthily' taken photos without the veil" (Saul, 2014). Hence, the above-mentioned shot both symbolically and indexically is signifying Iranian women's struggle and longing for freedom. The reflection of urban environment with its emphasis on residential building on the bus window is rich in attributing Ruhi's experience with the daily experiences of Iranian women. This shot has a descriptive function which suspend the story time, creating a narrative pause, and impels the viewer to think about its meaning.

After losing her chador, Ruhi explicitly feels uncomfortable and unsecure. It is not yet revealed that her chador is taken by Simin to spy on her husband. In a scene in which Ruhi tries to call her fiancé on the balcony without wearing chador, a teenage boy from the neighboring building openly flirts with her. Similarly, when she has to leave the house without chador in order to pick Mojdeh and Morteza's son from school, she feels embarrassed and unsecured holding her bag in her hand in front of her chest (figure 7).

Figure 7: Ruhi's public presence without chador

In the scene Morteza and Simin secretly meet somewhere in the empty street, Simin surprisingly wants them to separate as she doesn't want to be responsible for the destruction of his family. After leaving Morteza's car, Simin depicted alone in a lonely street. She is a lonely woman in a loose hejab (figure 8). The camera follows her in a lengthy track shot while she is deeply immersed into her thoughts (8-a; 8-b cont'd).

8-a

8-b cont'd

8-c

8-d cont'd

8-e cont'd

8-f

8-g

Figure 8: Simin's being harassed after leaving Morteza

In the same shot, two men on a motorbike get close to her and suddenly throw a firecracker on the ground behind her. The explosion of the firecracker is depicted in the next reversed shot in which Simin shouts fearfully (8-c) and disappears in the explosion smoke. The shot awaits patiently till Simin appears again. However, this time she is looking back towards the alley where she left Morteza's car a moment ago (8-d cont'd). Shattered and frightened, she starts walking toward the camera to reach to a medium close up shot (8-e cont'd). The following shot reveals her P.O.V of the empty alley in which there is no sign of Morteza's car and only an old woman is walking with a walker (8-f). Simin's reaction to the empty alley is depicted in another medium close up shot (8-g).

These last two scenes may be read as a subtle implication that chador and proper hejab is a necessity for the immunity of women without which the incident of flirting and harassment are encouraged and invited. This reading complies with the

buttressing perspective on femininity according to which the image of an unveiled woman imposed threat and then is needed to be veiled. However, Farhadi negates this perspective through depicting Mojdeh being harassed and flirted while being fully covered under the chador for the purpose of spying on her husband. Simin's similar experience of being flirted and harassed negates the depiction of loosely-veiled women as an inviter of the problem. Farhadi's criticism, therefore, targets the very patriarchal root of the problems women encounter in the society and succeeds to unfold the multi-layered pressure they feel which threaten them to comply with patriarchal orders and proprieties.

Another example of this negation is when after a long tiring day, Ruhi reunite with her fiancé. "Where your chador is?" Abdolreza asks when seeing Ruhi without chador late at night while a tiny spark of suspicious flares in his eyes. Farhadi insightfully comments on a way the hegemonic power of chador (hejab in general) is exercised on Iranian women. He moves beyond mere reference to sartorial practice of veiling to the way patriarchy makes Iranian women feel unsafe without it.

The third way through which Farhadi creates parodies of the conventional propriety in regard to the issue of obligatory hejeb is by transforming chador into an empowering veiling tool. In this way, veiling as a sign of oppression of women is used purposefully by women to reach their objectives.

In Beautiful City, Firuzeh puts on chador whenever she goes to talk to Abol-Ghasem (figure 9), a religious man who has the power to save her brother. Firuzeh utilizes chador not as a form of veiling to comply with the obligatory practice of hejab but as

an empowering tool which she uses to reach her objective of winning Abol-Ghasem's consent.

Figure 9: Firuzeh puts on chador to reach her goal

Similarly in Firework Wednesday, Mojdeh tries to use chador as an empowering tool. Mojdeh takes Ruhi's chador without informing her and leaves the house to spy on her Morteza as she guesses that Simin and Morteza has a pre-arranged date. In this scene, when Morteza receives a call from his son's school and finds out that Mojdeh left without informing Ruhi and asked her to pick their son from school, he suddenly moves toward the window of his office and checks out the street (figure 10). In a series of jump cuts, his P.O.V shots are depicted. A woman in full black chador hiding her face framed in two successive shots (10-a; 10-b). Recognizing this woman, Morteza leaves the shot furiously (10-c). The camera stays with Morteza in the following shot while he is going downstairs in a lift (10-d). Looking down from a glass window of the lift, Morteza still can see the woman in black chador in a P.O.V. shot (10-e). The following shot returns back inside the lift which reaches the ground floor and Morteza leaves the shot from the right side. The camera stays there and pan to the left in order to depict the rest of the story in the street from behind the glass window of the lift (10-f). In this shot Morteza attacks the driver who was trying to

83

flirt with the woman and then rushes toward her and starts beating her harshly till people interfere and shove him back. The lift start moving upward again and we are not able to see the rest of the story till the glass window moves to darkness of the wall. The black image cuts into a medium close up of Simin, shattered and beaten is crying in a taxi (10-g).

10-a

10-b

10-c

10-d

10-e

10-f

10-g
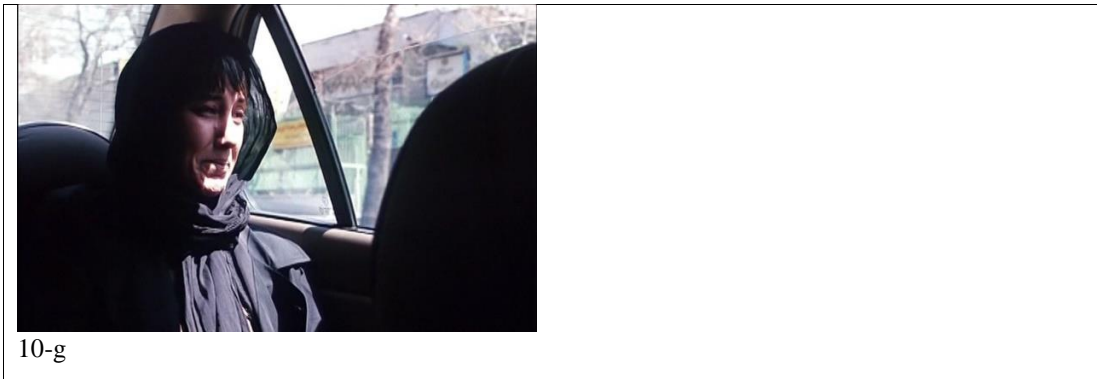
Figure 10: Simin puts on chador to reach her goal

What needs to be mentioned is that despite their initial effort to transform chador into an empowering tool, none of the female characters succeed to reach their goal through utilizing chador. Notably, both Firuzeh and Simin have been beaten and are doomed to failure in regard to their transforming attempt.

5.3 Function of Behavioral Code

This section deals with the second function of veiling in Iranian cinema to find out if female characters manifest any transgressive or subversive behavior to break through the confinements of patriarchal society. In order to explore the representation of 'behavioral code of modesty', the occupational status of women and their diegetic objectives are analyzed.

5.3.1 Occupational Status

According to feminist criticism, female characters in the media are less likely than male characters to be depicted working outside the home (Jacobs, Claes, & Hooghe, 2015; Emons, Wester, & Scheepers, 2010; Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001) and if they have any occupational roles, they are usually limited to traditional works which are public extension of duties associated with women in private spheres; works related to care-giving and care-taking (baby sitter, teacher, nurse, etc.); household chores (maid, servants, waitress, cook, etc.); and beauty/fashion-related works (tailor, hairdresser, etc.).

This gender-based stereotypical representation of occupational role is a relevant issue to explore in Iranian cinema because it complies with the picture of an ideal woman in Iranian society; a woman with superior hejab who successfully carry out her assigned duty as a good wife and a good mother. Alaedini and Razavi (2005) offer a critical discussion on female labor force participation and employment in Iran. They argued that besides overall economic and social problems that Iran has been facing, the dynamics of women's relationship with the political system is the main reason which hinders equal labor force participation of women and creates a male-dominated public sphere. They insightfully recognize the duality of relationship in regard to women which is discussed in section 4.2 as neopatriarchal ambivalence; to keep the royalists at the center stage of the revolution, and to impose restrictions on full participation of women in the society through emphasizing their 'proper' roles (Alaedini & Razavi, 2005, pp. 70-71).

Based on the above-mentioned discussion, the occupational status of female characters in Farhadi's films is explored in order to find out if there is any differences in the way occupational roles of male and female characters are represented. Borrowing from definition and statistics provided by the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor, Hammer (2010) introduces traditional (female-dominated), non-traditional (male dominated) works, and also oppressive traditional career "which refers to careers such as prostitution, which while it is a career that has been in existence for as long as women have been working and in fact is sometimes referred to as the oldest profession, it is still a career that is viewed as demeaning and objectifying for women".

The current analysis shows that most of the female characters in Farhadi's films have occupations. However, their occupations are traditional or oppressive and these occupations are not depicted as self-realizing opportunities for women to reach the equal power or autonomy within the realm of public. The only exception is Rana in *the Salesman*. Rana and her husband, Emad, are both theatre performers.

All the female characters, except Rana, have traditional or oppressive traditional occupation. In *Dancing in the Dust*, the only female character with a mentioned job is Reyhaneh's mother who has an oppressive traditional career as a prostitute.

In *The Beautiful City*, Firoozeh, as the only employed female character, has a traditional career as a worker in the laundry section of a hospital. In *Fireworks Wednesday*, there is no direct reference to Mozhde's occupation, and she is presented as a housewife. Simin has a traditional career as an unlicensed beautician who works at home. There are also two other female characters, Ruhi and the Janitor's wife who are both working as servants.

In *About Elly*, there is rarely any reference to characters' occupations except in the case of Elly who is a baby sitter in a kindergarten. Elly is the only character with manifest, although traditional occupation. Her work functions as a characterization tool within the film narrative. The care-giving nature of her job moves beyond the public sphere of her work place and shapes her relationships in the private sphere that she is constructing with new people. She frequently volunteers to take care of children, clean the house and share the responsibility. "I am used to it" is her response to one of the female characters who appreciates her help with taking children to the toilet.

In a scene when they are playing pantomime game, Peyman refers to his educational background as a law school student and also in another scene, when Peyman and his wife, Shohreh, are arguing in the kitchen, Peymen refers to their time as classmates in the law school. However, while it is apparent that Peyman has occupation based on his education and he is proud of it, it is unknown if Shohreh, as a mother, continues working in this major or not.

In *A Separation,* Simin and Mrs. Ghahraei are both teachers and Razieh works as an elderly caregiver. Female characters' association with educational career is more traditional kind of occupation for women in Iran because pre-university education is gender-segregated and therefore, teaching in girl-only school, as in the case of Mrs. Ghahraei is a conservative situation of women within the public space. In *the Salesman*, although Rana has a non-traditional occupation as a theatre performer, the previous tenant who is an absent character, is a prostitute.

It can be discussed that one of the reasons of the lack of engagement of women in the public spaces is the pervasive confinement of Iranian cinema to the realm of privacy and enclosed locations. According to a recent research on the outlook of Iranian cinema on urban spaces, Iranian films only occasionally involve urban spaces, and it confines most activities to enclosed spaces (Habibi, Farahmandian, & Mojdehi, 2016). One of the reasons for this restrictive spatial depiction is "the structural deficiencies in Iranian cinema"; "the directors' lack of attention to urban/public spaces, high costs associated with their use, problems related to the management of people in urban spaces, and difficulties in obtaining permits for shooting in open urban spaces" (p. 235). Therefore, in Iranian movies, the spaces are limited to enclosed areas such as home, workplace, educational or medical places, and even

outdoor sequences are very limited or are designed in closed shots. Habibi et al. (2016) claim that "Iranian cinema is an indoor industry that explores personal lives preferably in enclosed spaces and not in public outdoor realm of a city" (p. 236).

This restrictive spatial depiction might be applicable to Farhad's cinema as there are rare direct references to male characters' occupations as well. However, those rare references depict male characters in empowering and creative kind of occupations such as working in a bank (Nader in *A Separation*) or in an advertising company (Morteza in *Fireworks Wednesday*). Farhadi fails to break the confinement of female characters to the traditional/oppressive occupations. It's not hard to imagine female characters of his films in more empowering occupations while still keeping the minimalistic spatial and narrative references to their occupations.

What needs to be mentioned is that despite its restrictive spatial consequences, however, the depiction of enclosed locations has the potential to open a leeway to address how political and social events deeply affect the private spheres of the characters, esp. of women, and in this way, break the dichotomy of public/private and bring the realm of private into the public. This is one of the issues which is discussed in the next section.

5.3.2 Diegetic Objectives

Women's objectives through the course of narrative are explored in Farhadi's cinema in order to find out if their diegetic objectives are feminist-oriented in the way to open a path towards the female characters' power-equality, autonomy, and agency.

Asghar Farhadi asserts:

The reason I spend so much time working with the subject of marriage is that I love making films about relationships between people, and family is a very rich source of relationships between people. In a family, you have women, men, old people, kids, every one… It's a very good tool that allows me to talk about deeper things about people. It's not just about marriage and man and woman. It's an excuse to talk about everything else regarding people (Hassannia, 2014, p. 58).

Asghar Farhadi's cinema has dealt exclusively with the private sphere of home, domestic themes, and family relationships in the contemporary Iranian society in which dialectical coexistence of tradition and modernity constructs and reconstructs the social values and family relationships constantly. Therefore, his films are rich in addressing the entangled relationships in the woven spheres of private and public.

In Farhadi's films women are given leading role and are portrayed as independent, socially active. They are capable of independent thinking. However, in the public spheres, there is no narrative objective defined for female characters, and most of their goals are limited in the realm of family and privacy.

In *Beautiful City*, Firuzeh's initial diegetic objective is to save his brother from the death penalty. However, later she develops affection toward his brother's friend, A'la, and tries to get close to him as well. Both these diegetic objectives are dealing with the private concerns of the characters. However, Farhadi addresses the way their privacy are being affected by the aspects of public life including political and legal aspects.

Farhadi draws on the issue of capital punishment and *diyeh* (blood money[28]) in *Beautiful City.* According to Islamic sharia, while the right of the victim's family for retribution (Qesas) is recognized, forgiveness is encouraged. *Beautiful City* draws on different aspects of the issue of *qesas* in Iran; the *diyeh* of women is half of the *diyeh* for men according to Iran's Islamic Panel Code (Islamic Parliament Research Center of The Islamic Republic of Iran, 2013, p. Article 550). Therefore, the family of a female victim must pay half of the blood money to the male murderer's family for his retribution[29].

Also the execution of death penalty for minors which is a controversial human right issue (Bencomo, 2008) is addressed by *Beautiful City*; Akbar was under 18 when he committed murder and he has been held in rehabilitation center since then to reach the legal age for responsibility so that the conviction can be carried out. All these different aspects of religious-rooted conceptualization and legalization of *diyeh* is referred to and cinematically problematized in *Beautiful City*. Farhadi's references to these issues are not unproblematic ones as he portrays challenges both murderer's family and victim's family go through.

One of these references appears at the opening scene of *Beautiful City*; the opening sequence introduces the main male character, A'la, and his close friend Akbar in a rehabilitation center (figure 11). The first shot (11-a) iconically juxtaposes a flag of

---

[28] - According to Islamic Panel Code, Diyeh or blood money is a financial compensation for a criminal action which is given to victim or his/her family (Islamic Parliament Research Center of The Islamic Republic of Iran, 2013, p. Article 448)

[29] - It must be explained that although the base of this inequality has not changed in the 2013 version of the Panel Code, the new version suggests a solution in order to compensate for this insisting unequal treatment; it indicates that the difference between the diyeh of a woman and the diyeh of a man shall be paid from the Fund for Compensation of Bodily Harms (Islamic Parliament Research Center of The Islamic Republic of Iran, 2013, p. Article 551), which means that the payment for the qesas of the male murderer is not upon the female victim's family.

Iran with an old crooked speaker installed on an old wall. From the speaker, verses of Quran are broadcasted which refer to the judgement day[30], and continues to be heard on the next shots. Followed by a close shot from Akbar's hands creating a wooden human face (11-b), as an activity he pursues in the rehabilitation center, these opening scene is rich in the way it approaches the rehabilitative effect of legal punishment.

11-a
11-b

Figure 11: Opening scene of Beautiful City

In another scene, when Abol-Ghasem, Akbar's plaintiff turns to the court and requires immediate execution of Akbar, he has been told that the difference of the *diyeh* (difference between the diyeh of men and women) must be paid by him to Akbar's family beforehand. He is, however, is unable to pay this amount of money. Although Abol-Ghasem is portrayed as a religious man, he takes stand against this gendered-based unjust treatment and questions the religious root of it. His confrontation with religious creeds is not limited to this scene and is also repeated in the way he responded to the request of the Imam of the nearby mosque when he asks him for forgiveness.

---

[30] - "When the sun is covered, and when the stars darken, and when the mountains are made to pass away…" (Quran, p. Surah 81).

Interestingly, in his next movies, Farhadi seems to employ a more cautious approach in questioning cultural problems in contemporary Iran. Although keeping his accusatory perspective on Iranian society, his usage of narrative and aesthetic tropes is transformed into a more implicit- preferably-called "veiled"- cinematic language. Whether he finds this allegorical language more artistic or it offers him a way to trespass the censorial restrictions, definitely it affects his cinematic representation of Iranian woman.

In *A Separation*, there is a similar court scene. In the opening scene of *A Separation* Nader and Simin are shown across the judge's desk while sitting faced to the camera, next to each other, and discuss Simin's divorce request (figure 12).

Figure 12: Simin and Nader in the court

Simin is an educated middle-class woman who rebels against the status quo of her family and society. She is overwhelmed with the current situation, desiring to immigrate in search of a better life for her family and for her daughter. Simin asks for divorce. However, as she does not have a legal right to it, she needs to justify her request in the court. "I prefer my daughter not to grow up in this condition", Simin

responses to the judge in her effort to justify her insistence on immigration. However, she keeps silent when the judge asked her "what condition?" she does not explain her reasons openly to a pro-government judge. Unlike Abol-Ghasem, Simin is unable to question the court's decision. The question the judge asks is left unanswered to be responded by the audiences.

Simin is a potential member of the recent wave of immigration in Iran, which has occurred after the political unrest followed by the presidential election in 2009 and extension of global sanctions against Iran[31]. She is a modern woman. Her career as an English language teacher and her reddish hair that is covered loosely are two apparent signs that separate her from the traditional society and associate her with contemporary modern Iranian women. As a modern woman, she is also associated with political oppositional "Green Movement"; she informs Nader that she will take Shajarian's album with her. Known as the "Iran's greatest living master of traditional Persian music" (Mostaghim & Daragahi, 2009), Mohammad Reza Shajarian is associated with the green movement as he designated his support for the protesters against 12 June 2009 Iranian presidential election results. Also through the whole

---

[31] - Iran as an ancient country with its specific culture in the region has been through enormous political and social changes. In its recent history, Iran has claimed to have the highest rates of brain drain in the world whereas at the same time topping the list as the world's largest refugee haven (Hakimzadeh, 2006). It's noteworthy that while Iran's emigrants are poor educated who are mostly Afghans and Iraqis, the majority of Iranian immigrants are highly educated and possess entrepreneurial and managerial skills (Rahmandoust, Ahmadian, & Shah, 2011, p. 2077).
According to the report of the world migration policy institute (Hakimzadeh, 2006) Iran since the 1950s has experienced 3 different phases of immigration. The First phase (1950-1979) was triggered by Iran's slow economic recovery and resumption of oil production after World War II. Therefore, middle- and upper-class families prefer to send their children abroad for higher education as a means of ensuring socioeconomic security. However, after the revolution not only most of these students didn't come back to the country but also were followed by their family member, members of the government, military personnel, bankers, royalists, and members of religious minorities. The second wave of immigration which took place after the revolution included socialists, liberal elements, young men and women who fled the military service and restrictive rules respectively. Lastly, a more recent immigration wave occurred after the unrest followed by the presidential election in 2009 and extension of global sanctions against Iran.

film, Simin is dressed in various tones of green color. Her struggles to pack a green scarf into her bag is emphasized in a close shot (figure 13).

Figure 13: Simin is trying to pack a green scarf into her bag

Simin's character has potential capacity to provoke sympathy of the contemporary Iranian audiences who are highly overwhelmed by their current situation. Despite Simin's potential rebellious character she neither succeeds to transcend the status quo nor to illuminate the hidden aspects of her rebelliousness. A Separation fails to reveal Simin's deep core convictions and motivations and ends up depicting her as a powerless mother and a defeated subject whose antagonistic role is skirted in the story.

Kaplan recognizes four filmic stereotypes regarding the mother figure, which are rooted in patriarchy's problematic relation to the mother because of her 'lack': first, there is the good mother who is nurturing and puts herself in the background; second type is the bad mother who puts her own desires and needs before those of her children. Just as a woman in general must not put herself first, neither must the mother. She is therefore punished; third type is developed from the first and shows a

heroic mother who is more central to the narrative but who is willingly suffering for her children. The last mother type is the silly one who is ridiculed by both her husband and her children (Kaplan, 1983b: 467-468).

Farhadi's cinema breaks and deconstructs the sentimental myth of family life in contemporary Iran. However, it fails to offer a balanced alternative parenthood. In the opening scene of *A Separation* in the court, Nader claims that Termeh is more connected to him and that she prefers to stay with him. Later on through careful construction of close relationship between father and daughter, his claim seems to be approved. Her Father is the one who helps her during her exam times. Even when her father is in prison for a day it's her grandmother who takes the responsibility to help Termeh for her studying. Father is the one who cares about the way Termeh might view the world around her. He asked her to independently fill the car in the gas station and ask her to insist to get her change back.

Termeh also takes her father side despite her awareness that he lies about Razieh's pregnancy. Nader refuses to make a deal with Razieh and Hodjat because he considers it as a confession to his guilt. When Simin encounters Nader's obstinacy, although intending to go back home and reconcile, leaves the house again and for the first time she compels Termeh to follow her to the car. Nader asks Termeh to call her mother back if she also thinks that he is guilty. While Nader is watching them from the window of the apartment, Termeh gets into the car and didn't ask her mother back home. "If you didn't leave the house, father wouldn't be in prison tonight", Termeh blaming her mother for leaving the house. There is no evidence that Termeh support the mother or her decision. While it seems that she forgives father for his unintentional fault, she does not considered mother's fault as an unintentional one.

Termeh is a vulnerable girl in her perilous adolescent. Despite her parents attempts to keeps her out of their conflict, she is the one who suffers; She bears the rebuking look of the neighbor and reproach of her classmates; she suffers the burden of telling lie to the judge; and she is the one who should choose between her parents. Simin as her mother is of no help. She is a powerless mother whose decisions complicate the situation. However, it's Nader who cares about her, talks to her and accomplishes his fatherhood responsibilities as well as his son-hood responsibilities.

Khosrokhavar (2011) argues about the changes within the Iranian family through the transformation of Father's figure from a godlike position to a more fraternal one, and from a "authority-oriented" to a more "discussion oriented"; "one significant change has been for the father to get affectively closer to his children and in particular, to his daughters. [daughters] increasingly share men's universe, and their fathers treat them more and more, according to what young women record, like the boys, at least in matters that do not call into question female modesty and the issue of virginity" (p. 100).

Farhadi's cinematic representation of father-daughter relationship seems to comply with the above-mentioned change in Iranian society. However, despite the careful depiction of father-daughter relationship, Simin is rarely shown in a scene with her daughter, talking to her, helping her, or caring for her. Although it is claimed that she goes through all these hardships in order to protect her daughter, the film does not facilitate the balanced parental relationship.

This imbalance depiction of parental relationship suggests the impossibility of daughters' empowerment through being related to their mother's world, and

encourage the idea that empowerment can be only actualized through "renounce[ing] her mother as object of desire and then find[ing] her place in the order of language and culture as subordinate to the Law of the Father" (Kaplan, 1983, p. 149).

While analyzing the representation of mothers and the maternal in Asghar Farhadi's *A Separation,* Shirazi et.al. (2015) recognizes this "maternal" depiction of father-daughter relationship and emphasizes its empowering function, writing "Nader 'mothers' his daughter as he teaches Termeh to stand up for herself" (p. 89).

In her discussion of female sexuality, Julia Kristeva writes about the daughter's complex process of 'disidentification' from the mother, which leads to an identification with the father as a symbolic figure 'that allows the subject to speak, to think, and to take part in society' (2004, p. 497). In A Separation, the disidentification of the daughter from her mother is rooted in her desire for subjectivity. The father is the one who cares about building up the daughter's subjectivity through filling the car in the petrol station/ helping her in her homework/ the father-daughter relationship has nationalistic implications as the father is the responsible one for keeping the unity of the family, he wants to stay, he corrects non-Persian wordings. The girl tries to identify with her mother but finally the narratives leaves no space for this re-identification.

As it is discussed, Farhadi breaks the ideal image of a nuclear family. In *About Elly*, in the first half of the film everybody is playing the game of "happy families". Men are pretending to be 'henpecked'; while voting about staying or not staying in the beach house, when Shohre vote negatively, Peyman also vote negatively and says "if my boss says no, it's no then". His response is in contrast with his future deed in the

98

second half of the film, for example when their private dispute in the kitchen turns into a public contention and Peyman asserts that he has always been talking the same way since the university time. Amir also plays the same role during the voting when he says humbly and still dejectedly "my vote doesn't need to be count at all". In the second half of the film, these humble and happy face of the male characters are unmasked and the aggressive dispute launches.

The struggle is an important point in Farhadi's films. Women are struggling to live the life they choose. However, women of Farhadi's films do not still own the desire, and they are still controlled by the patriarchal structures, yearning for men and struggling to keep them. In *A Separation*, although Simin as a rebellion against her positioning tries to find her 'subjectivity' and pursue her own desire to immigrate, it is later revealed that she does not actually seek divorce but using it to convince her husband to immigrate with her. However, as it is discussed in section 5.5, she has to leave all of them at the end.

Divorce is one of the most important recurrent themes in Farhadi's films[32]. The way women negotiate with this dominant structure of power in regard to the issue of

---

[32] - The change in the family law of 1967 is one of the most important changes which has curtailed women's rights after the revolution and had profound influence on women's life. As it has been discussed shortly in the second chapter, the progressive Family Protection Law of 1967 (being developed later, in 1975) was a legal reform according to which women were granted more rights within the family, and received equal right to divorce and custody. However, right after the 1979 revolution, the Family Protection Law was abrogated. According to new divorce law, which is based on Jurisprudence and Shari'a law, the right to divorce is exclusively dedicated to men, except under special conditions which are spelled out in marriage contract (Rahimieh, 2009). The Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran, amended in 1992, expanded the woman's access to divorce. According to Article 1122 of this civil code, there are three conditions under which the woman has the right to annul the marriage; "1- Castration, 2- Impotency, provided he has not even once performed the matrimonial act and 3- Amputation of the sexual organ to the extent that he is unable to perform his marital duty". There is also a possibility to stipulate some conditions to grant women more right to divorce. The Article 1119 of the Civil Code states;
"The parties to the marriage can stipulate any condition to the marriage which is not incompatible with the nature of the contract of marriage, either as part of the marriage contract or in another binding contract: for example, it can be stipulated that if the husband marries another wife or absents himself

divorce is one of the repeated themes to define women's goals in Farhadi's cinema. Another reference to the issue of divorce is in *About Elly* in which Elly cannot easily pursue her divorce from her fiancé/husband.

Although being depicted as a shy and quiet girl, Elly breaks through confines of her marital life and pursues her desires by employing a false identity. Only through a mistaken identity, Elly can find a way to pursue her desire; surprisingly, after the disappearance of Elly, her fellow travelers recognize that none of them, not even Sepideh, knows her actual name, as "Elly" is a short form of many Persian names such as Elnaz, Elham, Elaheh, etc.

At the beginning, a dreamy world of Elly's subjectivity is emphasized through the choice of dreamy location. As a group of friends leave the city, they get far from materiality of urban area. Through this choice of setting, the film provides an apt metaphorical setting for Elly's dreamy subjectivity. Extreme long shots represent liberation. Unreality of the space fosters their departure from social obligations. However, still the social structures keep threatening her.

Elly is represented as a quiet girl. The representation of Elly as a 'quiet girl' needs a more careful attention. While taking departure from the dominant liberal feminist "girl power" rhetoric, Nault (2013) introduces the concept of "quiet girl" and the empowering potential it can offer in its cinematic representation. She argues that the lexicon of the third-wave feminism encouraged and co-opted the concept of "girl

---

during a certain period, or discontinues the payment of cost of maintenance, or attempts the life of his wife or treats her so harshly that their life together becomes unbearable, the wife has the power, which she can also transfer to a third party by power of attorney to obtain a divorce herself after establishing in the court the fact that one of the foregoing alternatives has occurred and after the issue of a final judgment to that effect".

power," or "powerful girlhood," as "unapologetic self-reliance, creativity and assertiveness" (2013, p. 303). In this feminist liberation "girls are told to 'find their voices,' 'express themselves,' 'tell their stories,' and 'be outspoken'" (p. 305). Nault puts forward an iteration of "potentially potent girlhood" which is not based on "vociferous and the conspicuous" but on "silence"; "In a world in which speaking does not always translate into being emboldened or even heard" (p. 304), she argues that the quiet girl's introspection has the potential to "disrupt traditional gendered power dynamics" (p. 303).

In her analysis on the way the cinematic figure of the "quiet girl" functions, Nault writes:

> She keeps her thoughts to herself and, as such, just beyond the reach of other's surveillance, delineation and control. Her silences unravel the self-certainty of others and deny them access and closure. But, the threat the quiet girl poses is always in danger of being contained via a coerced transformation into a more outgoing—that is, more knowable—version of herself. If all else fails, the quiet girl risks banishment and even death (p. 304).

Elly's silence and introspection open a leeway for her to hide her intention, her past, her personal life and in this way, to free herself from the dominance of her unwanted engagement. As Nault insightfully discusses "although 'talking back' to power can be liberating and even status-quo altering, silence can be a shield from cruel authority and a weapon against it" (p. 305). However, things are not keeping the same path for Elly. Elly's introspective character does not have a function to generate an alternative rebellious figure, which distracts the male rules.

Looking through the various filmic representation of quiet girl, Nault argues that the conclusive endings of these films tend to "happy endings" tell of the quiet girl's

induce the quiet girl into speech as "the normative folds of hetero-patriarchy" or are doomed to death, or it is reveals that they have hiding frightening secrets and insane violence. Elly is not a successful example of silence-as resistance. She is constructed as an outsider, a mystery through her silence. Despite her silence, Elly is not an unsettling character who is pulled to talk and open up herself. She is not diegetically forced to be transformed but she is doomed to death. The silence functions not liberating but fatal for Elly. Elly's mystery wreaks havoc not only on her existence but also on her reputation and honor.

In contrast to Elly who is represented as a quiet and shy girl, Sepideh is outspoken, rebellious wife who is trying to make herself heard. Her speech functions against the comfort of her husband and breaks the equilibrium of her marital life. *Firework Wednesday's* Mojdeh is also outspoken, rebellious wife who is trying to make herself heard. Her speech functions against the comfort of her unfaithful husband and breaks the equilibrium of her marital life. According to Nault (2013), speaking, however, cannot always be the best way. First, speaking up is sometimes very hard and even impossible, and it may open up the possibility of punishment and exclusion. Second, there isn't always a welcoming reception of other to hear and to legitimize women's speech. As in the case of Mojdeh, nobody seems to really accept her accusation of her husband. Whether outspoken or quiet, Farhadi's Female characters seem to be unable to subvert patriarchal domination.

5.4 Function of Sex-segregation

This section deals with the third function of veiling in Iranian cinema to find out if the female characters are represented through buttressing gaze. In order to explore

the function of sex-segregation in Iranian cinema and Farhadi's films, buttressing gaze is introduced and analyzed.

5.4.1 Buttressing Gaze: Theory

As it has been discussed, all three introduced functions of veiling in Iranian cinema entail existence of a form of barrier, a curtain which is erected to hide, segregate, and "buttress". This is how the new gaze of Iranian cinema is born as covered, segregated, mediated, and as Naficy called it "averted".

By "averted gaze", Hamid Naficy (1991) refers to the unique system of looking produced by "modesty and the psychology and ideology of the dual self" (p. 35). Naficy argued that the power relations of gaze in the Islamic world is in contrast with western feminist discourse in that while in western feminism gaze functions as a "controlling, sadistic agent that serves to support phallocentric power relations", in Islamic perspective, "the aggressive male gaze affects not so much the female target that receives it but the male owner of the gaze…because of male inherent weakness when it comes to sexual temptation" (p. 34). That's how the image of an unveiled – uncontained, unconfined and empowered- woman poses the threat to patriarchal domination.

The sadistic pleasure of the gaze in western feminism, Naficy argues, is replaced with masochistic pleasure men experience through becoming "humiliated" and "abject" by women in Islamic discourse. Naficy introduces "averted gaze" as a tool "to prevent such humiliation and abjection and to avoid or, alternatively, to encourage the resulting masochistic pleasure" (35). "This averted look is anamorphic because it is charged (and is distorted) with the voyeuristic desires and anxieties of the looker" (35).

The desexualization or, as Naficy called it, androgynization of the look in cinema through the averted gaze is the outcome of new language of post-revolutionary Iranian cinema which have been discussed previously.

Drawing on Naficy's conceptualization of averted look, Ghorbankarimi (2012) argues that while this theory was applicable to some of the early post-revolution films, it's not valid to films made after the first decade. She argues that first, the Islamic ideology is not proven to be fully applied in Iranian cinema and that "the individuals in the film industry are not necessarily amongst the most religious Iranians" (p. 49). Secondly, she argues that "A few years after the revolution, especially after the end of the Iran-Iraq war, a close-up or a two shot of a man and woman on screen was not longer taboo" (p. 51). Thirdly, she questions the way Naficy's conceptualization of veil creates mystery and curiosity, and reproduces voyeuristic gaze. Alternatively, she conceptualizes veil as "an inherent aspect that should not outshine the whole film industry" and that "to the people living in Iran, the veil is no longer a priority for change; if the audience makes it past the surface of the veil, underneath is not so different to what they are used to either. The headscarf has become part of Iranian culture" (p. 53).

Definitely, Naficy's concept of averted look is not applicable to all Iranian films after the revolution and it offers a monolithic understanding of the way institutionalized practice of veiling is inscribed into the silver screen. But normalizing the presence of veiling as "an inherent aspect" of Iranian cinema and denying its impact on narrative, aesthetic and stylistic aspects of filmmaking has a danger of perpetuating the ideological status que. That's the reason why this research suggests reconceptualization of averted look considering three different functions of veiling in

Iranian cinema. Therefore, this study introduces 'buttressing gaze' to refer to the new gaze of Iranian cinema which is born out of its new language of allusion and buttressing perspective on femininity.

According to western feminist film studies, the image of women is ambiguous as it signifies desire and threat, the threat of castration. In Iranian new cinema, image of women signifies the duality of desire and threat as well. However, its threat is not a threat of castration but the threat of humiliation and corruption. While western mainstream cinema deals with women's putative threat through the mechanism of sadistic voyeurism and fetishistic scopophilia, this newly-emerged cinema utilizes buttressing strategies including buttressing gaze as a tool to deal with women's threat.

In compare to 'averted gaze', 'buttressing gaze' is more suitable for the purpose of this research as it encompasses all forms of buttressing/veiling such as covered, mediated, averted, segregated, etc. Various forms of buttressing gaze are stemmed from different degrees of penetrability and permeability of the veil it erects. Hence, buttressing gaze can be categorized as follows: first, full-covering gaze which renders women to total absence and leaves no possibility of penetration; second, mediating or deferring gaze which veils women behind a barrier with a slight possibility of permeability; and third, spatial-segregating gaze which genders the spaces and mise-en-scene. These three forms of buttressing gaze, however, are not mutually exclusive but they do overlap with one another inclusively within the filmic representation. Therefore, the next section make inquiry about these different forms of buttressing gaze in Farhadi's cinema.

5.4.2 Veiled behind the Walls: Farhadi's Buttressing Gaze

While describing his initial motivations to write the story of *Dancing in the Dust*,

Farhadi mentions his inspiration as follows,

> I always used to pass by some place where there was a bridge under which there was a very poor house for immigrants. When I passed on the bridge, I could see everything in their house. It was a naked house. You could see everything, even their bedroom. It was like a naked woman sitting under the bridge. When I wrote the story about the prostitute, I thought her residence could be that house (Hassannia, 2014, p. 18).

Surprisingly, being depicted in front of Asghar Farhadi's camera, this naked initial

inspiring image get disappeared and the naked woman become veiled and absent. As

it is mentioned in section 5.1, there are female characters whose 'absent presence'

runs like a leitmotif throughout Farhadi's films. While the way they are depicted as

the source of disequilibrium is discussed in section 5.1, this section focuses on visual

aspects of female characters' absence as a form of buttressing gaze to deal with the

putative threat of corrupted/corrupted-to-be female characters.

The buttressing gaze in Farhadi's films is extra diegetic, not fully intradiegetic. In

Dancing in the Dust, Reyhane's mother, although is the mover of the narrative, is

visually almost absent. Her rare presence in only two scenes is visualized through

full-covering gaze. First, she appears in the first scene of the film in which Reyhane

and Nazar meet for the first time in a minibus (figure 14).
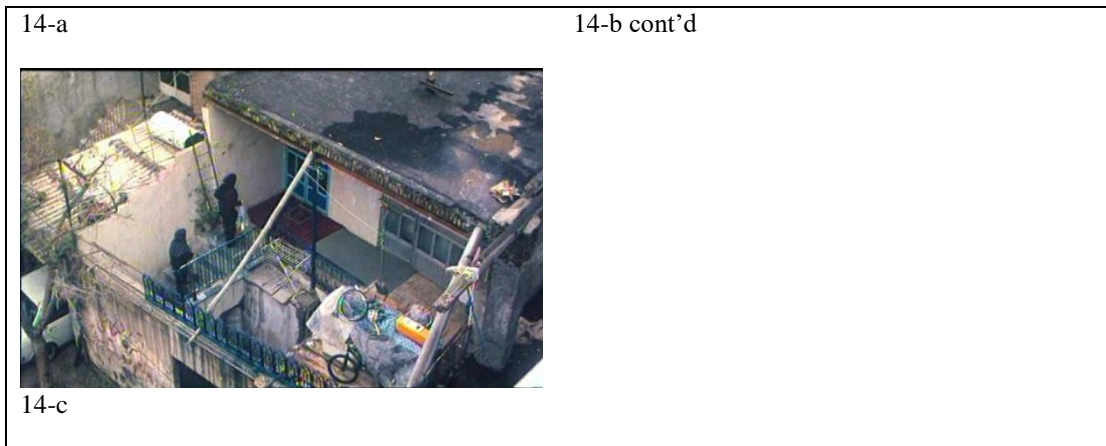
14-a	14-b cont'd

14-c
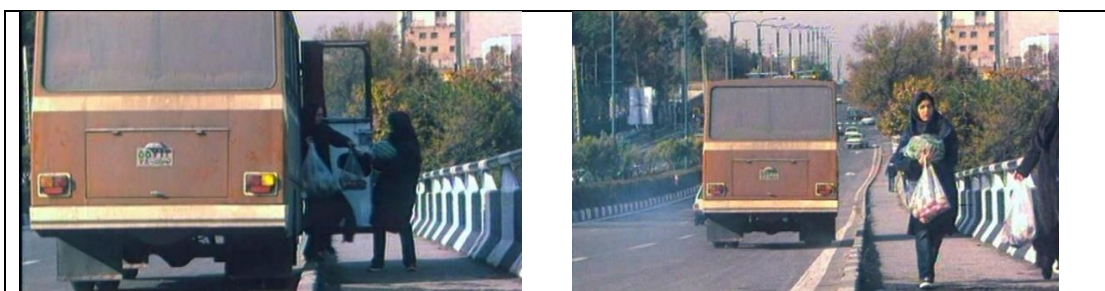
Figure 14: The first scene which depicts Reyhane's mother

The mother has no visual presence in the minibus. However, she is framed getting off the minibus after Reyhane. From the moment she steps out of the minibus (14-a), till her immediate exit from the frame (14-b cont'd), she is just visible in a long shot for 5 seconds. Reyhane and her mother are followed by Nazar who find them under the bridge. From a P.O.V. shot of Nazar, Reyhane and her mother enter their own house (14-c).

In the second scene which depicts Reyhane's mother having dialogue with Nazar, they are spatially segregated despite the fact that Nazar is now married to Reyhaneh and considered to be mahram[33] to his mother-in-law (figure 15). The full-covering gaze overlaps with mediating gaze as there is still possibility of hearing Reyhaneh mother's voice and a spatial presence, although through full-covering gaze, is defined for her.

---

[33] - According to Islamic Shari'a in regard to interactions of males and females, Mahram are those category of unmarriageable kin such as parents and siblings. The parents of spouse are categorized as mahram as well.
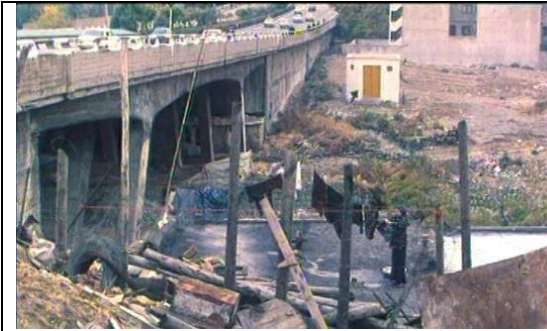
15-a

15-b

15-c

15-d

15-e

15-f

15-g

15-h

15-i   15-j cont'd

Figure 15: Dancing in the Dust- the second scene which depicts Reyhane's mother

The first shot of this scene reveals Reyhane's mother from distance in a very long shot, hanging up the laundry on the roof of her house which is in the same level with the highway and the bridge. In this scene, she is framed from behind the barbed wire (15-a). The following shot reveals Nazar approaching the barbed wire in a medium shot (15-b). The rest of the scene continues depicting Reyhaneh's mother from behind the pieces of laundry while having dialogue with Nazar who is framed in medium close-up and close-up shots, still from behind the barbed wire (15-c to 15-h). The last shot of this scene, however, spatially positions Nazar and Reyhane's mother in one shot; in a medium over-the-shoulder shot, Nazar is framed alone on the left (15-i) and after a second, Reyhane's mother enters the frame from the right side with her face turned from the camera (15-j cont'd). Nazar remains the favored subject of this shot to the end of the scene.

While the last analyzed scene integrates the elements of all three forms of buttressing gaze, it still keeps Reyhane's mother fully-veiled. A very similar scene appears in *Beautiful City* in which Firuzeh, Akbar's sister, and her house is depicted for the first time (figure 16). However, it is not a full-covering gaze and constructs a form of mediating gaze through which Firuzeh's presence is deferred.

109

After being released from the rehabilitation center, A'la receives a ride to the house of Akbar's sister by the manager of the center. In the first shot after his release, the manager's old jeep car is depicted in a pan shot from behind the fence (16-a) which separates the railroad zone from the rest of the city. Firuzeh's house is on the other side of the fence. Her house is separated from both the rest of the urban area and the world of rehabilitation center as a male-dominated sphere of a prison. Therefore, A'la has to trespass this boundaries in order to enter into the realm of Firuzeh's house.

The following shot is a P.O.V. shot from Firuzeh's house from behind the fence (16-b). It's an old two-story house with a blue entrance door. A small shabby kiosk is on the right side of the frame next to the house, which happens to belong to Firuzeh's addicted husband (yet not revealed that they are actually divorced). Unlike Reyhane's mother's house, inside Firuzeh's house is not observable. The most apparent features are a line of laundry clothes on the balcony of the second floor and also a blue wooden window through which a lace white curtain is moving in the wind. The latter feature is emphasized on in the second shot of Firuzeh's house (16-c). Despite its apparent shabby status, Firuzeh's house is feminized through some choices of mise-en-scene such as a lively tall tree in the yard, plant vases on the staircase and on both sides of the window, elegant lace curtain, line of the laundry and the choice of blue color for the door, the window and also as the color of Firuzeh's scarf when she appears on screen for the first time in this scene.

The trespassing of A'la to the feminized world of Firuzeh does not happen instantaneously but through a deferring/mediating gaze. The directorial decisions to emphasize the act of pressing the doorbell in an insert shot (16-d), followed by a

medium shot of A'la knocking on the door (16-e) defer the flow of narrative and stress the spatial segregation of Firuzeh and A'la.

Figure 16: Beautiful City- The first scene of Firuzeh's house

The spatial-segregating gaze in Farhadi's films is not limited to sex-segregation but as it is manifested in the above-mentioned scene, it demarcates private and public sphere.

Iranian society has a long tradition of experiencing segregation among sexes. "Every social sphere and every artistic expression must be gendered and segregated by some

sort of veil or barrier inscribing the fundamental separation and inequality of the sexes" (Naficy, 2012, p. 102). After the revolution, the sex-segregation of public spaces such as schools, beaches, sport centers, public transportation (buses), etc. have been ordered and reinforced. Gender segregations "deprived Iranian women of access to high-ranking positions, such as the presidency and judgeships. Women are also barred from attending certain public spaces such as sports stadiums" (Mouri, 2014).

This gender-based dichotomization of space is apparent in traditional Iranian architecture which, as Mottahedeh discusses, "are symptomatic of cultural perception of veiling and visuality" (2008, p. 3). Mottahedeh refers to the Traditional Iranian style of homes according to which two distinct arenas simultaneously exist: 'exterior' space (*biruni*), and 'interior' (*andaruni*). While *andaruni* has a function of haram to separate the privacy of women, *biruni* was considered as public sphere within the private sphere of home in which the outsider could had been received.

In *Firework Wednesday*, Along with the arrival of Ruhi to Mojdeh and Morteza's building, the first shot depicts the building in a developing shot (17-a) in which camera simultaneously tracks in and tilts down to frame the building in an eye-level full shot of Ruhi who enters the shot from the left towards the entrance door (17-b cont'd). The building does not have actual break wall but there are barred walls as analogous to that of previously mentioned fenced wall in *Beautiful City* and barbed wire in *Dancing in the Dust*. The following shot is a medium close up of Ruhi from behind the bar pressing the ring (17-c). Similar to A'la's deferred entrance into Firuzeh's world, the door of Mojdeh and Morteza's building is not easily opened for Ruhi as the door bell is broken. The lack of a door bell fosters the segregation of the

couple from outside world and hinders any communicative possibility. This deferring/mediating gaze, although postpones entrance, provides Ruhi with a chance of having a closer look at the broken window of Mojdeh and Morteza's apartment from behind the bars (17-d/ 17-e). This is the first sign of their turbulent life which Ruhi is encountered with.

17-a

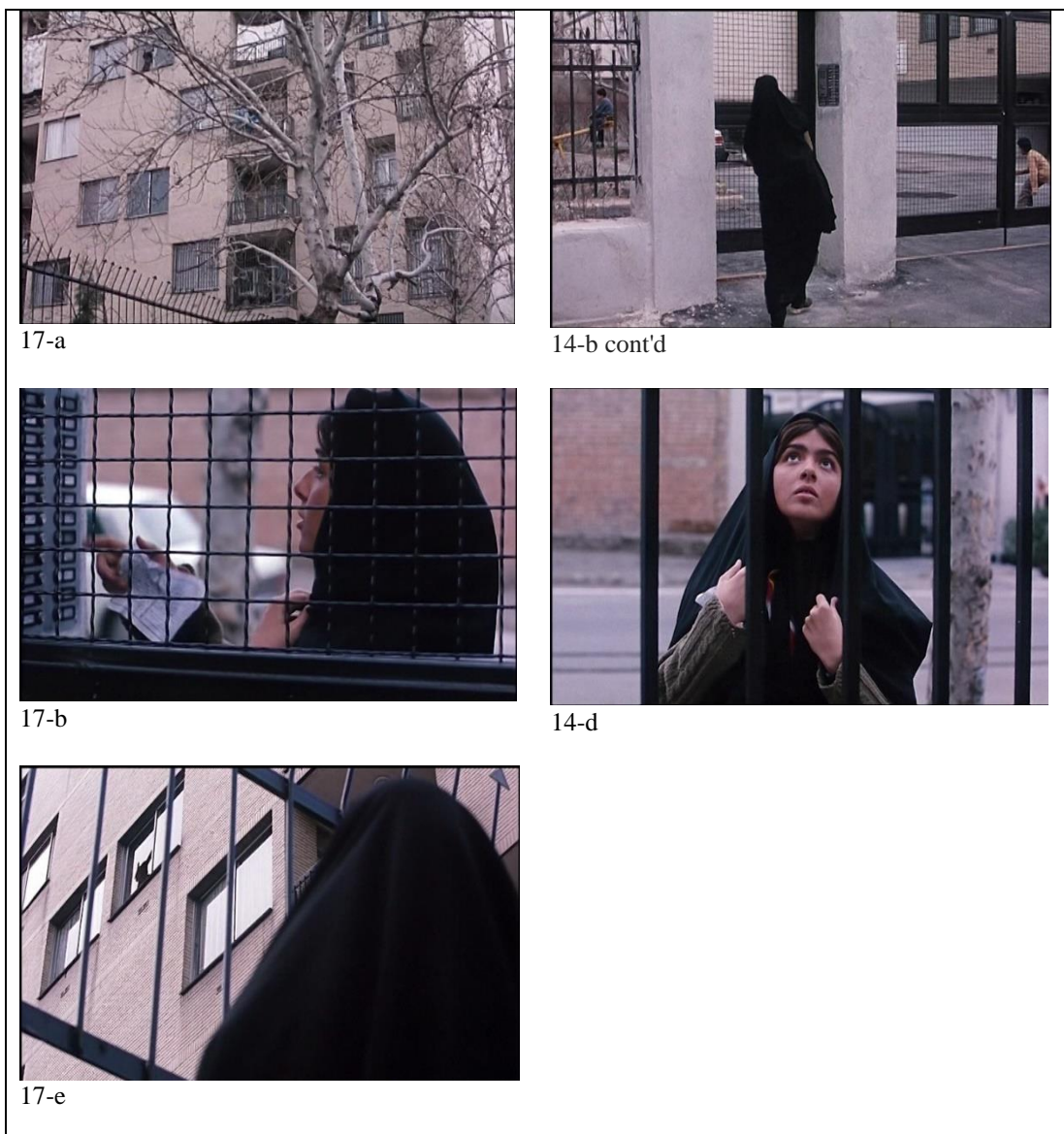14-b cont'd

17-b

14-d

17-e

Figure 17: The first scene of Mojdeh and Morteza's house

Despite the analyzed scene from *Beautiful City* and *Dancing in the Dust,* in the current scene from *Firework Wednesday*, Ruhi is segregated from Morteza and

Mojdeh through her class differences. Except *About Elly* which takes a group of Tehranian people to the remote area in the north of Iran, the analyzed films are all set in Tehran; a city rich in connotations about contemporary Iranian society; the site of political conflicts and societal changes.

In the last decades, with the increase in population, societal relocations and urban growth Iranian society has gone through fundamental changes regarding the class systems. With its large population of immigrants from other provinces, Tehran is a metropolis that exhibits the sharp class hierarchy based on cultural, economic and social elements that are manifested through spatial segregation. 'Segregation in Tehran has taken different shapes in different ways, evolving hand in hand with certain social changes' (Mehryar & Sabet, 2012). Although changing dramatically during time, the geophysical pyramid of Tehran has still structured according to the socio-spatial segregation.

This segregated mise-en-scene enables Farhadi to tell his story of separations. In *A Separation*, while Nader and Simin as a middle-class couple live in the main district of Tehran which is inhabited by their societal class, Razieh and Hodjat live in a small and undoubtedly rental house in a poor area of suburbia. Farhadi successfully depicts physical and psychological abuses suffered by Razieh because of this urban segregation. She is a pregnant woman who has to come a long way from a suburb with her little daughter every day in order to support her unemployed indebted husband financially. She also suffers psychologically as Hodjat, her hot-tempered husband not only show any sign of appreciation but also gets angry when it is revealed that she had miscarriage while she was secretly working.

This spatial segregation is therefore, becomes a site of deep-rooted economic, cultural and societal separation between men and women, wife and husband, citizens and society, parents and children, tradition and modernity, lower class and middle class, and right and wrong.

In regard to the spatial-segregating gaze, Farhadi offers a critical perspective in *Firework Wednesday*. In the scene which is composed of three shots, Ruhi gets on a bus to her work place (figure 18). In the first shot, the camera is poised stably inside a bus framing the bus door in a symmetrically-composed shot.

18-a

18-b

18-c cont'd

18-d cont'd

Figure 18: Criticism of sex-segregation in public bus

Ruhi from behind the glass door running to get on the bus in the moment of its arrival to the station (18-a). When the bus stops there are people including Ruhi waiting in the station. The following jump cut depicts the door open and people start

getting on the bus through the sex-segregating entrance. There are both male and female passengers who touch the segregating bar in the middle while getting on the bus (18-b/ 18-c cont'd). Although unintended, touches of the male and female passengers on the segregating metal bar signify the vulnerability of the boundary and suggest a possibility of trespassing. When all the passengers get on the bus, the door is closed and the trip starts (18-d). The following shot is previously-mentioned shot (figure 6) in which Ruhi pushes the bus window open and puts her hand alongside part of her scarf and chador out of the window of the bus floating in the air. The compositional similarity between these two shots in the way the frames in both shots are vertically divided into two parts (representing the segregated spheres), furthers the critical trespassing reading of the scene; the act of purposefully pushing the window –as a segregating barrier- open is emphasized on. Having rich reference to the issue of freedom of women, the juxtaposition of these shots from Ruhi's urban trip offers a critical representation on the issue of sex-segregation in Iranian society.

What needs to be mentioned here is that although the private and public spheres are segregated through gender and/or class differences, the ways female characters deal with this segregation are not identical in different films. While the sex-segregating gaze in *Dancing in the Dust* renders Reyhaneh's mother to absent and marginalization, it empowers Firuzeh to define and redefine the boundaries of her own private sphere and control the others' presence in it.

As the above-mentioned scene (figure 16) in *Beautiful City* continues, nobody opens the door (figure 19). The man in the kiosk, Firuzeh's ex-husband, who is interestingly segregated from Firuzeh's house through the fenced window (19-a), questions A'la and claims that Firuzeh is not at home. A'la buys a drink from him

116

and after a short time, Firuzeh opens the door when her baby, who was left by his father, starts crying (19-b). While she is taking her child inside the house she keeps blaming the father for leaving the baby under the sun. A'la asks if she is Akbar's sister. Firuzeh's ex-husband interferes and picks a quarrel with A'la. He tries to take the role of the guardian of Firuzeh's house without whose consent no one would be in touch with her. However, soon it will become clear that this is Firuzeh who breaks the boundaries of her private sphere. No one, including A'la, cannot transgress her territory as she is the one who is moving within the setting and redefine the spatial boundaries.

Figure 19: Beautiful City- Firuzeh's first appearance

In a three-shot of the two men and Firuzeh, she is framed in between them and subjectively fight against his ex-husband and tells her that it has nothing to do with him (19-c cont'd). In the same shot, she forces him to go back to his kiosk and continues her dialogue with A'la in the two-shot frame (19-d cont'd).

117

There are other examples on the way Firuzeh controls and redefines her private and public boundaries. The lace curtain on her window provides Firuzeh with a panoptical view through which she is able to see the outside world without being seen by the outsiders. While the curtain erects a permeable veil through which the gaze of the veiled subject, Firuzeh, penetrates and surveils (figure 20-a/b), leaving it open offers a communicative possibility to break public/private dichotomy.

20-a   20-b

Figure 20: Firuzeh's break of public/private dichotomy

This inscription of female figures to invisibility through buttressing gaze complies with the suspicion of psychoanalysis towards the realm of the visible. Mulvey asserts that "cinema is 'about' seeing and the construction of the visible by filmic convention. What is represented is inevitably affected" (2002, p. 257). What is not represented is also affected and has the function as affective as the represented one. The absent is more prone to stimulate curiosity and connotations. That's how women in Farhadi's cinema turns into enigma and fathomless.

Doane (1991) refers to the suspicion of psychoanalysis towards the realm of the visible and suggests that "psychoanalysis' distrust of the visible", does not necessarily function in favor of feminist concerns. For, the precariousness of vision is attached to the image of women or feminine:

The veil functions to visualize (and hence stabilize) the instability, the precariousness of sexuality. At some level of the cultural ordering of the psychical, the horror or threat of that precariousness (of both sexuality and the visible) is attenuated by attributing it to the woman, over and against the purported stability and identity of the male. The veil is the mark of that precariousness (Doane, 1991, p. 46).

Reyhane's mother, Elly, and other buttressed female figures are mysterious ciphers who raise curiosity. In themselves women are of slightest importance as their desires and feelings have no place within the diegesis. They are faceless female figures whose presence provokes a strong feeling, a haunting mystery. Mulvey draws on Budd Boetticher, the American film director, to summarize this view thus: "what counts is that the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. İn herself the woman has not the slightest importance" ([1975]1990, p. 33). As in *About Ely*, Elly and who she was do not matter. What counts is that her absence provokes the narrative. Film narcissistically eliminates subjective presence of Elly and her point of view.

Elly is constantly being segregated from the rest of the group. While everybody get together on the picnic mat (21-a), Elly takes care of children (21-b). While the group start talking about the match-making purpose of the trip and each of them shares their ideas and judgments about Elly, Elly is depicted returning to the group. However, she is framed through mediating gaze from behind the barrier of bushes.

Figure 21: Elly's segregation from the group

In the volleyball scene, Elly is the only female character who attends the game. The camera mostly focuses on her, although through a mediating gaze (figure 22); in the first shot of the volleyball scene, the camera tilts down from the sky, following the ball, to the medium shot of Elly jumping for it (22-a).

Figure 22: Elly's mediating gaze in the Volleyball scene

In a series of shot, Elly depicted from behind the volleyball net without fully visible framing of her face (22-b to 22-d). When she announces that she has to go and there is something she needs to do, the camera follows her in a long shot until she gets out of the yard (22-e to 22-g cont'd). This lengthy veiled image of Elly has double functions; in the first level, it invites audience to discover and decode Elly as an enigma; in the second level, it creates a warning moment of aposiopesis which is discussed later in section 5.5 along with another examples of it.

Drawing on Susan Stewart, Doane discusses the proliferation of close-ups of women in cinema as the possession of the male gaze according to which the women's face turn into a text to be read by others. However, she furthers this arguments by referring to the process by which women's faces in close-ups are frequently being "masked, barred, shadowed, or veiled, introducing a supplementary surface between the camera and spectator and the contents of the image" (1991, p. 48). She identifies

different functions of this veil. According to Doane, veil has "protective" and "hiding" functions. It protects women's face against light, heat, and the gaze. It conceals a secret, an undesired remarks such as aging, scar, etc., and also hides an absence. In the above-mentioned scene, the mediating gaze although veils the female image, entails discovering of the secret which she hides, to decipher the mystery, to offer a voyeuristic desire to be unfolded. As Doane affirms "the question of whether the veil facilitates vision or blocks it can receive only a highly ambivalent answer inasmuch as the veil, in its translucence, both allows and disallows vision" (1991, p. 49).

What Doane called a "second screen" can be found in Farhadi's cinema. In Farhadi's films this act of veiling women behind the wall through the mediated gaze, is attached to the buttressing strategy according to which women's are associated with dangerous tendency to be corrupted. "The veil incarnates contradictory desires –the desire to bring her closer and the desire to distance her. Its structure is clearly complicit with the tendency to specify the woman's position in relation to knowledge as that of the enigma" (p. 54).

Through women's veiled visuality which encourages the deciphering of women's secrets and finding the truth, Farhadi fails to dismantle women/knowledge association, and his female characters are left unknown, unrecognized and too dangerous to be discovered. The veiled figure is the women who is deprived from subjectivity and voice, the one whose presence and demands, under the strategy of buttressing, entails catastrophe, and therefore, is doomed to be punished. The veil, as the "second surface", through the strategy of buttressing, destroys the profundity of women's existence and motivations, and hinder the incarnation of its agency.

5.5 "A Bitter End is better than an Endless Bitterness": A Reading on Farhadi Films' Endings

As it has been discussed in section 5.1, when being inscribed into the filmic representation in the level of narrative, the 'corrupted-to-be' conceptualization of women, necessitates the depiction of female characters as the source of disequilibrium. How the filmic narrative deals with this threat leads into further investigation on the way they are being treated narratively toward the end of the films. Farhadi's female characters breaks the confines of patriarchal discourse. How these unveiled/empowered characters are being treated within the diegetic world of the film is an important dimension in regard to buttressing strategy.

While the narrative moves toward the state of reparation and the new state of orders is established, the female empowered characters are buttressed and controlled. The 'corrupted-to-be threats' suffer from the consequences of their rebellious/empowering desires. This narrative strategy enable neopatriarchal unconscious to deactivates the threat through utilizing the same voyeuristic/sadistic voyeuristic mechanism. However, as it has been discussed, punishing of female figure aims to deactivate the threat of moral corruption and humiliation of male figures and their male-dominated society.

Analyzing the film *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, Kaplan (1983) recognizes the contradictory discourses in the film toward its heroine; contradiction between ideological conservative discourse of patriarchy towards women and a construction of image of a 'liberated' woman. The same contradictory discourse is apparent in regard to the way Farhadi deals with female characters. Although none of the

analyzed films ends with reassuring closure, the female character still pay off for their actions and desires.

Farhadi creates some moments of warning aposiopesis in which the story is unable/unwilling to proceed. It left the audience to decipher the image and its implication. However, it offers a conclusive narrative reading on that moment through reifying the predicted threat implied in that narrative break. In a volleyball scene which is discussed previously (figure 22), Elly is depicted playing volleyball. After she leaves the game, the camera keeps framing her in a long shot until she gets out of the yard (22-e to 22-g cont'd). This lengthy veiled image offers a moments of warning aposiopesis; a pregnant moment which reveals its predicted threat later.

Also in a scene before the disappearance of her, Elly is depicted playing with a kite (figure 23). This scene starts with a full shot of Elly sitting on the outside steps in the foreground, while looking out of the frame (23-a). She is watching the female child trying to make her kite fly. There is male child on the right side of the frame in the background who is playing in the sea. Elly left the frame from the right side to help the female child, leaving the male child unattended. The upcoming threat is being emphasized through the postponed cut to the next shot and lengthy depiction of lonely male child in the background (23-b cont'd).

23-a   23-b cont'd

Figure 23: Elly's moments of warning aposiopesis

In a series of jump-cut shots (23-c to 23-h), Elly is depicted playing with the kite, running along the shore, and laughing loudly and freely. In the last shot of the series of jump-cut shots, the camera starts shaking and its unsettling movements constantly outframe Elly. This is when Elly suddenly starts getting worried (23-i). "I have to go!" she says as if she has just remembered something. She is summoned back from the world of imaginary. The next shot depicts the red kite floating in the background of the blue sky (23-j).

The choice of red color for both the kite and Elly's scarf and the compositional similarity according to which Elly and the kite are both framed in blue backgrounds signify the moment of freedom which Elly experiences along with the kite she is playing with. However, she is simultaneously hemmed by the tight-framing composition of the jump-cuts. The restrictive and threatening style of composition leaves Elly with no place to go other than the sea behind her. Elly, who can only pursue her desire through utilizing mistaken identity, is punished at the end; she not only lost her existence but also her honesty and reputation.

While analyzing the film *Sigmund Freud's Dora* as an avant-garde theory film, Kaplan wrote "the traditional (male) idea of history as a search for the past, for what is missing, is connected to the traditional notion of narrative (demonstrated in the Freud–Dora section of the film) as starting with a lack and involving the search for the hidden secret, usually linked to women's sexuality." (1983, p. 152) The same way, when Elly disappears, the male-dominated investigation launches. Men take leading position as problem-solvers in a masculine aggressive and manipulative way. Attempting to resolve problem, they create their own truth; the truth which has nothing to do with Elly's life and experiences. They forcefully dragged Sepideh to

complicit with their traditional notion of narrative to provide ending and warp the story up. Not surprisingly, Sepideh doesn't leave their phallocentric discourse and at the end she complies with their rules of the game.

Elly becomes an image, an empty signifier; this is how patriarchal structure takes revenge for her attempts to break its confining boundaries. Her lost is a return to the realm of the symbolic, an end to the enmeshment of these people in the realm of the imaginary. Not only filmic characters but the spectators are woken up from the dreamy world of the imaginary to the symbolic world.

In *A Separation,* despite the fact that Simin doesn't file her divorce to actually separate from her husband but with the hope of convincing him to immigrate, she is finally dragged into an irresolvable problem with her family. Simin launches her rebellion with the hope of reconciliation and peace. However, she is destined to be destroyed and lose her family and her desires all together. In the same way, Razieh is the one to blame for the challenges that both families went through as she hides the truth. All her efforts to alter the financial condition of her family are doomed to failure.

Similarly, *Firework Wednesday*'s Mojdeh and Simin are doomed to failure. In the last scene of the film, Mojdeh pretends being sleep in her son's bed in order not to reunite with Morteza in their room. Unable to break the patriarchal confinements, she is doomed to leave a life with her unfaithful husband. While analyzing figure 8, it is mentioned how Simin gets harassed after leaving Morteza. Living a lonely life in an insecure and threatening male-dominated society is Simin's destiny.

Ahmad and Elly who are trying to know each other better, are depicted in a scene talking inside a car. Elly shows curiosity about the reason of Ahmad's divorce from his ex-wife, a German woman. "A bitter end is better than an endless bitterness", this is what in an ordinary day his ex-wife told Ahmad simply after having breakfast together; her desire to put an end to their relationship.

The way Farhadi negotiates with empowered female characters towards the end of his films resembles metaphorically to the above-mentioned dialogue. Although this statement refers to a different context, it summarizes the association of empowered women to 'endless bitterness' which is better to be ended as soon as possible before it turns into an unsettling threat to neopatriarchal dominative structures.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Farhadi' cinema shows that Farhadi's portrayal of patriarchy is pervasive insomuch that he succeeds to address the complex network of dominative mechanisms of patriarchy in the economic and political levels. However, his desire to move beyond patriarchy fails to reach its object of desire, and reproduces its very core of criticism within in accordance with symbolic culture and the sustainable buttressing unconscious of Iranian society/cinema, and forwards an ambivalent diegetic representation of Iranian women.

Khosrokhavar (2011) proposes ambivalence as an undeniable positive feature in Iranian society. He introduces two major models in regards to modernization of youth in Iran: first, the complete secularization which undermines religious norms, and second, the change through reinterpreting religious norms and adapting new ideas. He attributes ambivalence to the second model of modernization. In regard to positive dimensions of the new culture of ambivalence, Khosrokhavar writes:

> It lessens the guilt feelings caused by the transgression of religious taboos among youth who are predominantly attached to the Islamic frame of reference. It tears down the walls that were erected in the name of patriarchy within the Islamic religion. It gives new leeway to the individual who can accomplish his aspirations without feeling oppressed by the sense of calling into question God's prohibitions (2011, p. 117).

In Iranian cinema, the ambivalence which is rooted in ambivalent model of modernization, seems to have the same function. This ambivalent new language of

Iranian cinema, provides a leeway for the filmmaker to tear the walls of censorship and restricted codes without being condemned and detained. The ambivalence has two functions in Iranian post-revolutionary cinema: first, it has served as the surviving strategy under the restrictive confinement, and second, it keeps pushing back these confinements and boundaries step by step, widening the allowed norms and codes, and opening a leeway for the newly-emerged themes in the cinema.

While the allegorical language of allusion of post-revolutionary Iranian cinema enables Iranian filmmakers to survive under restrictive censorship codes and to penetrate the body of its ideological machine, it nurtures buttressing perspective on femininity and encourages application of buttressing strategies through erecting veiled/buttressed visuality of women. As a constructed "interpellated subject" (Althusser, 1971) by the neopatriarchal ideology, despite his claim of "multiplicity of voices", Farhadi contributes to the ambivalent diegetic representation of women. For, his cinematic representation, while striving to survive under censorial codes, and offering a critical perspective on socio-economic and political problems, still reproduces, even unconsciously, buttressing perspective on femininity.

This research embarks from an inquiry into Asghar Farhadi's cinema through feminist concerns. However, soon the necessity of a contextual bound theory and the inefficiency of contemporary critical vocabularies for analysis of Iranian cinema in regard to its representation of women were recognized. In order to avoid the essentialist monolithic perspective of Lacanian portrayal of patriarchal unconscious, buttressing neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society is introduced and theorized. Later, the way it is inscribed into the silver screen in order to deal with the female characters' putative threat is discussed, and analyzed respectively in Farhadi's films.

130

Buttressing perspective on femininity entails that female characters, whether visually absent or present, are responsible for breaking of the initial equilibrium. This unconscious choice is rooted in the neopatriarchal unconscious of Iranian society according to which women are prone to be corrupted and subsequently corrupt the whole male-dominated society. Therefore, in regard to the first question of this research, analysis indicates that in Farhadi's cinema, the empowered/unveiled woman who tries to break through the confines of patriarchal structures, is the one who breaks the initial state of equilibrium and her presence and demands continuously entail problems and catastrophe.

In regard to the sartorial practice of veiling as the first and the most manifest function of veiling in Iranian cinema, addressing the second question of this research, the analysis shows that Farhadi's films abundantly suggest a critical perspective on obligatory sartorial practice of veiling. His representation of veiling creates parodies of the conventional propriety in regard to the issue of obligatory hejab: first, through associating the officially promoted "superior" hejab of chador to lower class characters; second, through problematizing chador by depicting the threat it imposes on characters or by the way it renders them to invisibility; and third, through transforming chador into an empowering veiling tool by which a sign of oppression of women is used purposefully by women to reach their objectives. Although the mere transforming usage of chador has an empowering potential, unfortunately Farhadi's usage of narrative tropes deal ambivalently with these empowered female characters in the way that they do not succeed to reach their objectives and surprisingly, in all the cases they are beaten and failed.

The second function of veiling in Iranian cinema is analyzed to answer the third question. The function of behavioral code of modesty is explored from different perspectives including women's occupation, their diegetic goals and the gendered dichotomization of activities. The current analysis indicates that most of the female characters in Farhadi's films have occupations. However, their occupations are traditional or oppressive and these occupations are not depicted as self-realizing opportunities for women to reach the equal power or autonomy within the realm of public.

Farhadi's cinema deals with the distressed marriage of middle class and educated couples. Therefore, the female characters' objectives are exclusively portrayed within the private sphere and are limited to the familial issues. Although the objectives of women are exclusively defined within the realm of family and privacy, family is not depicted as the basic unit of the society, or the source of love and support but it is constructed as the source of tension and conflicts. Farhadi uses melodrama to narrate the untold emotions beyond the family relations and idealized parenthood and parental love. Therefore, his films tell the story of common people with their unsettling relationships in the realm of insecure family. Ideal nuclear family are undercut in Farhadi's film. However, this subversive representation, while breaking the ideal image of motherhood, fails to rephrase "mothering" in a more balanced parental relationship to differ it from that of the dominant discourse.

The function of sex-segregation as the third function of veiling in Iranian cinema is explored to answer the fourth question of this research. Buttressing gaze of Iranian cinema with all its different forms of full-covering, mediating/deferring, and spatial-segregating gaze are introduced and analyzed in Farhadi's films. The finding shows

that Farhadi's aesthetic engendered the mise-en-scene. Women are hemmed in frames, walls, windows, bars and fences. The buttressing gaze is the extension of the male gaze to objectify women and to inscribe them into silence.

Farhadi's female characters endeavor to break the confines of patriarchal discourse. The last question of this research tries to find out how the filmic narrative deals with this threat towards the state of reparation and the establishment of the new state of orders. The analysis shows that the "corrupted-to-be threats" suffer from the consequences of their rebellious/empowering desires. This narrative strategy enables neopatriarchal unconscious to deactivate the threat through utilizing the same voyeuristic/sadistic voyeuristic mechanism. However, as it has been discussed, punishing of female figure aims to deactivate the threat of moral corruption and humiliation of male figures and their male-dominated society. Although none of the analyzed films ends with reassuring closure, the female character still pay off for their actions.

Asghar Farhadi's films have some subversive aspects in destruction of ideal sentimental image of women, in destruction of the male protagonist, in deconstruction of the ideal nuclear family. Also, Farhadi's portrayal of patriarchy is pervasive insomuch that he succeed to address the complex network of dominative mechanisms of patriarchy in the economic and political levels. In this sense, patriarchy is not a general shapeless concepts in his film. However, Farhadi's confrontation with the patriarchal paradigm does not transgress the very root of it subversively and fails to dislodge it transgressively due to his ambivalent narrative.

In his valuable book, *Iranian Cinema; A Political History,* Hamid Reza Sadr argues that the images of women in Iranian cinema during 1990s and early 2000s had been advanced from a passive cipher to a more fully formed, molded character with clear convictions (2006, p. 266). However, he indicates the cinema's ambivalence towards the new Iranian women: "a mixture of idealism and misogyny". It seems that Farhadi's cinema is unable to separate itself from this ambivalent misogynistic approach of film makers towards the presumed threat of educated non-traditional new Iranian women. Whether visually present or absent, female characters, as the source of disequilibrium, lack subjectivity and are not portrayed seeking their own desires and goals. Farhadi's veiled language hinders the possibility of any form of encroaching omnipotence over women's sexuality and privacy. However, it deprived them from being heard. Female characters are "subaltern" (Spivak, 2006 (1995)) whose lives, experiences, motivations, subjectivity and desires find no chance to be voiced. Farhadi shows no interest to break the impasse of an unproblematic constitution of these subalterns' identities.

His depiction of men-women relationship is not in accordance to dominance/submission dichotomy. However, in addressing their entangled relationship, the characters get trapped in an impasse from which there seems to be no way out. Therefore, his narrative suggests impossibility in breaking through the hard situations. The desire of Farhadi to move beyond patriarchy fails to reach its object of desire and reproduces its very core of criticism within in accordance to symbolic culture.

REFERENCES

Ackelsberg, M. A., & Shanley, M. L. (2010). Privacy, Publicity , and Power: A Feminist Rethinking of the Public-Private Distinction. In M. A. Ackelsberg, *Resisting Citizenship: Feminist Essays on Politics, Community, and Democracy* (pp. 70-85). New York and London: Routledge.

Afary, J. (2009). *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Afkhami, M. (1994). Women in Post-Revolutionary Iran: A Feminist Perspective. In M. Afkhami, & E. Friedl (Eds.), *In the Eye of the Storm: Women in Post-revolutionary Iran* (pp. 5-18). Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Agger, B. (1991). Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: Their Sociological Relevance. *Annual Review of Sociology, 17*, 105-131.

Ahupa, K. (2012, January 17). *Negahi Be Jame'e Shenasi Tabagheye Motevasset Dar Cinemaye Iran Goriz Az Mianmayegi (A Look at Sociology of the Middle class in Iranian Cinema: To Avoide Being in the Middle.* Retrieved January 26, 2016, from Sociologists SOB: http://mayyar.blogfa.com/post/26/ نگاهی به جامعه شناسي طبقه متوسط در سينماي ايران گريز از ميان مايگي

Alaedini, P., & Razavi, M. (2005). Women's Participation and Employment in Iran: A Critical Examination. *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies, 14*(1), 57-73.

Algar, H. (1990, December 15). cador. In E. Yarshater (Ed.), *Encyclopedia Iranica* (Vol. IV, pp. 609-10). New York: Routledge & Regan Paul. Retrieved from Encyclopedia Iranica.

Allen, J. T. (1985). The Representation of Violence to Women: Hitchcock's "Frenzy". *Film Quarterly, 38*(3), 30-38.

Al-Mahadin, S. (2003). Gender Representations and Stereotypes in Cartoons: A Jordanian Case Study. *Feminist Media Studies, 3*(2), 131-151.

Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation. In L. Althusser (Ed.), *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (pp. 127-186). New York: Monthly Review Press.

Armstrong, C., & Squires, J. (2002). Beyond the Public/Private Dichotomy: Relational Space and Sexual Inequalities. *Contemporary Political Theory*, 261–283.

Atkinson, M. (2012, 2 23). *Lifting the Veil on Iranian Censors.* Retrieved 1 10, 2016, from In These Times: http://inthesetimes.com/article/12696/lifting_the_veil_on_iranian_censors

Atkinson, M. (2015, 4 21). *Asghar Farhadi's Early Masterpiece.* Retrieved 1 10, 2016, from In These Times: http://inthesetimes.com/article/17858/asghar-farhadis-early-masterpiece

Baharlu, A. (2002). *Sad chehreh-ye sinema-ye Iran(One hundred faces of Iranian cinema).* Tehran: Nashr-e qatreh.

Bahramitash, R., & Kazemipour, S. (2011). Women's Employment Trends: Advance or Retreat? In R. Bahramitash, & E. Hooglund (Eds.), *Gender in Contemporary Iran: Pushing the Boundaries* (pp. 136-150). London & New York: Routledge.

Bazzini, D. G., McIntosh, W. D., Smith, S. M., Cook, S., & Harris, C. (1997). The aging woman in popular film: Underrepresented, unattractive, unfriendly, and unintelligent. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 36*(7-8), 531-543.

Bencomo, C. (2008, September 10). *The LAST Holdouts: Ending the Juvenile Death Penalty in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Pakistan, and Yemen.* Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/09/10/last-holdouts/ending-juvenile-death-penalty-iran-saudi-arabia-sudan-pakistan-and

Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of Seeing.* London: Penguin.

Betz, M. (2009). *Beyond the Subtitle: Remapping European Art Cinema.* Minneapolis & London: Minnesota Press.

Beuf, A. (1974). Doctor, Lawyer, Household Drudge. *Journal of Communication, 24*(2), 142-145.

Borwell, D. (2002). The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice. In C. Fowler (Ed.), *The European Cinema Reader* (pp. 94-102). London & New York: Routledge.

Bos, W., & Tarnai, C. (1999). Content analysis in empirical social research. *Educational Research*, 659-671.

Brooks, P. (1976). *Melodramatic Imagination.* New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Brunette, P., & Wills, D. (1990). *Screen/Play: Derrida and Film Theory.* Princeton University Press.

Bunbury, S. (2012, March 2). *Home Truth.* Retrieved from The Sydney Morning Herald: http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/home-truths-20120301-1u3y9.html

Burke, J. (2011, December). *"Rediscovering Morality through AshgaRediscovering Morality Through Ashgar Farhad'S A Separation.* Retrieved 2013, from senses of cinema: http://sensesofcinema.com/2011/feature-articles/rediscovering-morality-through-ashgar-farhadi%E2%80%99s-a-separation/

Burks, B. K. (2006). Emotional Abuse of Women. In P. K. Lundberg-Love, & S. L. Marmion (Eds.), *"Intimate" Violence Against Women: When Spouses, Partners, Or Lovers Attack* (pp. 15-30). Westport: Praeger.

Buscombe, E., Gledhill, C., Lovell, A., & Williams, C. (1975). Statement: Psychoanalysis and Film. *Screen, 16*(4), 119-130.

Butler, A. M. (2005). *The Pocket Essential Film Studies.* Pocket Essentials.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York: Routledge.

Calloway, C. (2010, November). Local news representations of women in Hurricane Katrina. *Media International Australia, 137*, 120-129.

Casetti, F. (1998). *Inside the Gaze:The Fiction Film and Its Spectator.* (N. ANDREW, & C. O'BRIEN, Trans.) Bloomington: INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS.

Chehabi, H. E. (2003). The Banning of the Veil and Its Consequences. In S. Cronin (Ed.), *The Making of Modern Iran: State and society under Riza Shah, 1921– 1941* (pp. 203-221). London & New York: Routledge.

Cohen, R., & O'Byrne, S. (2013). "Can You Hear me Now...Good!" Feminism(s), the Public/Private Divide, and Citizens United v. FEC. *UCLA Women's Law Journal*, 39-70.

Corliss, R. (2012, April 18). *The World's 100 Most Influential People: 2012.* Retrieved 2013, from Time:

http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2111975_211
1976_2112155,00.html

Coyne, S. M., Linder, J. R., Rasmussen, E. E., Nelson, D. A., & Col, K. M. (2014).
It's a Bird! It's a Plane! It's a Gender Stereotype!: Longitudinal Associations
Between Superhero Viewing and Gender Stereotyped Play. *Sex Roles, 70*,
416–430.

Croucher, S. M. (2008). French-Muslims and the Hijab: An Analysis of Identity and
the Islamic Veil in France. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research,
37*(3), 199–213.

Dabashi, H. (2001). *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future.* Londen,
New York: Verso.

Danil, L. R. (2013, 8 23). *Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy:
Godden's Tort Law, Human Rights and Rape: Beyond the Enforcement of
Criminal Justice.* Retrieved 10 9, 2015, from Word Press:
https://publicprivatelaw.wordpress.com/2013/08/23/feminist-critiques-of-the-
publicprivate-dichotomy-goddens-tort-law-human-rights-and-rape-beyond-
the-enforcement-of-criminal-justice/

Das, P., & Shirvani, S. (2013). Discourse of Muslim Identity in the Context of the
French Hijab Ban. *Ohio Communication Journal, 51*, 257-276.

Dehghan, S. K. (2012, February 6). *Oscar-nominated Film Provokes Regime Backlash.* Retrieved January 27, 2016, from Nzherald.co.nz: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c_id=1501119&objectid=10783616

Derayeh, M. (2010). Depiction of women in Iranian cinema, 1970s to present. *Women's Studies International Forum, 33*, 151–158.

Derrida, J. (1997). Exergue . In *Of Grammatology* (pp. 3-5). Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Devereux, E. (2007 [2003]). *Understanding the Media* (second ed.). Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage Publications.

Dion, K., Berscheid, E., & Hatfield, E. (1972). What is beautiful is good. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 24*(3), 285- 290.

Doane, M. A. (1987). *The Desire to Desire.* B loomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Doane, M. A. (1991). *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory.* New York: Routledge.

Droogsma, R. A. (2007). Redefining Hijab: American Muslim Women's Standpoints on Veiling. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 35*(3), 294-319.

Durkheim, E. (2013 [1982]). *The Rules of Sociological Method: And Selected Texts on Sociology and Its Method.* (S. Lukes, Ed., & W. D. Halls, Trans.) New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, New Delhi: Free Press.

Eaton, A. (2008). Feminist Philosophy of Art. *Philosophy Compass, 3*(5), 873–893.

Eisenstadt, S. (2003). *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities* (Vol. 1). Leiden, Boston: Brill.

Eisenstadt, S. N. (2000). Multiple Modernities. *Daedalus, 129*(1), 1-29.

Elam, K. (2002). *The Semiotica of Theatre and Drama* (second ed.). New York: Routledge.

Elmjouie, Y. (2014, June 19). *Iran's Morality Police: Patrolling the Streets by Stealth.* Retrieved March 10, 2016, from The Guardian: www.theguardian.com/world/iran-blog/2014/jun/19/iran-morality-police-patrol

Emons, P., Wester, F., & Scheepers, P. (2010). "He Works Outside the Home; She Drinks Coffee and Does the Dishes" Gender Roles in Fiction Programs on Dutch Television. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 54*(1), 40-53.

Encyclopedia Iranica. (1990, December 15). *Chador.* Retrieved September 2, 2014, from Encyclopedia Iranica: http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/cador-a-loose-female-garment-covering-the-body-sometimes-also-the-face

Erdbrink, T. (2011, June 24). *Iran's political struggle hits the box office.* Retrieved 2013, from Washington Post: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/irans-political-struggle-hits-the-box-office/2011/05/01/AGiRkxiH_story.html

Erens, P. (1990). Introduction. In P. Erens (Ed.), *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Eschholz, S., Bufkin, J., & Long, J. (2002). Symbolic Reality Bites:Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities in Modern Film. *Sociological Spectrum, 22*, 299–334.

Fair. (2010, September 22). *The Longest War-Never Again.* Retrieved February 1, 2016, from Iranian.com : http://iranian.com/main/blog/fair/longest-war-never-again.html

Fairhurst, G. T., & Grant, D. (2010). The Social Construction of Leadership: A Sailing Guide. *Management Communication Quarterly, 24* (2), 171–210.

Farhadi, A. (Director). (2003). *Dancing in the Dust* [Motion Picture].

Farhadi, A. (Director). (2004). *The Beautiful City* [Motion Picture].

Farhadi, A. (Director). (2006). *Fireworks Wednesday* [Motion Picture].

Farhadi, A. (Director). (2009). *About Elly* [Motion Picture].

Farhadi, A. (Director). (2012). *A Separation* [Motion Picture].

Farhadi, A. (Director). (2013). *The Past* [Motion Picture].

Farhadi, A. (Director). (2016). *The Salesman* [Motion Picture].

Foucault, M. (1990). *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction.* New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (1994). Genealogy and Social Criticism . In S. Seidman (Ed.), *The Postmodern Turn* (pp. 39-45). Cambridge.

Franz-Balsen, A. (2014). Gender and (Un)Sustainability—Can Communication Solve a Conflict of Norms? *Sustainability, 6*, 1973-1991. Retrieved from http://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/6/4/1973 (accessed on 2 Septemberber 2017)

Fraser, N. (1989). introduction. *Hypatia, 3*(3), 1.

Freud, S. (1917). Mourning and Melancholia. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, 237-258.

Friedan, B. (1963). *The Feminine Mystique.* New Year: W.W. Norton and Co.

Gaines, J. (1990). 'Costume and Narrative: How Dress Tells the Woman's Story. In J. Gaines, & C. Herzog (Eds.), *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body* (pp. 180-211). London: Routledge.

Gallagher, M. (2003). Feminist Media Perspective. In *A Companion to Media Studies* (pp. 19-39). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Ghorbankarimi, M. (2012). A Colourful Presence: An Analysis of the Evolution in the Representation of Women in Iranian Cinema since the 1990s. *Doctoral Dissertation*. UK: University of Edinburgh.

Giddens, A. (1979). *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis.* Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Gillis, S., & Hollows, J. (2009). Introduction. In *Feminism, Domesticity and Popular Culture* (pp. 1-14). New York: Routledge.

Gilpatric, K. (2010). Violent Female Action Characters in Contemporary American Cinema. *Sex Roles*, 734-746.

Gow, C. (2011). *From Iran to Hollywood and Some Places In-Between: Reframing Post-Revolutionary Iranian Cinema.* London: I. B. Tauris.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks.* (Q. Hoare, & G. N. Smith, Eds.) New York: International Publishers.

Grothues, C. A., & Marmion, S. L. (2006). Dismanteling the Myths about Intimate Violence Against Women. In P. K. Lundberg-Love, & S. L. Marmion (Eds.), *"Intimate" Violence Against Women: When Spouses, Partners, Or Lovers Attack* (pp. 9-14). Westport: Praeger.

Habibi, M., Farahmandian, H., & Mojdehi, R. B. (2016). Reflection of urban space in Iranian cinema. *Cities, 50*, 228–238.

Hakimzadeh, S. (2006, September 1). *Iran: A Vast Diaspora Abroad and Millions of Refugees at Home.* Retrieved 2014, from MPI: Migration Policy Institute: http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/iran-vast-diaspora-abroad-and-millions-refugees-home

Hall, S. (1980 [2005]). Encoding/Decoding. In S. H. al. (Ed.), *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79* (pp. 117-127). London: Routledge.

Hamidpour, R. (2016). *Persia with Love.* Singapore: Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.

Hammer, T. R. (2010). A Content Analysis of Women's Career Choices in Film. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 5*, 260–274.

Hamzehei, P. (2014, December). Doctoral dissertation. *Iranian Women's Experience of Mandatory Hijab: A Case Study of a Campaign on Facebook*. Stockholm: Stockholm University. Retrieved from http://su.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A780122&dswid=9154

Haskell, M. (1974). *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Movies* . New York: New English Library .

Hassannia, T. (2014). *Asghar Farhadi: Life and Cinema.* USA: The Critical Press.

Hein, W., & O'Donohoe, S. (2014). Practising gender: The role of banter in young men's improvisations of masculine consumer identities. *Journal of Marketing Management, 30*(13-14), 1293-1319.

Hollinger, K. (2012). *Feminist Film Studies.* London & New York: Routledge.

Holman, R. (2006). "Caught Between Poetry and Censorship": The Influence of State Regulation and Sufi Poeticism on Contemporary Iranian Cinema. *Film & History Conference Papers. 41.* Melbourne: XIIIth Biennial Conference of the Film & History Association of Australia and New Zealand.

Honarbin-Holliday, M. (2010). *Becoming Visible in Iran: Women in Contemporary Iranian Society.* New York: Tauris Academic Studies.

Howie, G. (2010). *Between Feminism and Materialism: The Question of Method.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ilter, T. (1995). Disciplinary Sociology in the United Methods of Empiricism: Marking the Boundaries to Keep the 'Poachers' out. *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, 1-31.

Islamic Parliament Research Center of The Islamic Republic of Iran. (2013, April 21). *Islamic Panel Code*. Iran: Islamic Parliament Research Center of The Islamic Republic of Iran. Retrieved from http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/print_version/845048

Islamizing Film Culture in Iran: A post-Khatami Update. (2002). In R. Tapper (Ed.), *The New Iranian Cinema: Politics, Representation and Identity* (pp. 26-65). London & New York: I.B.Tauris.

Jacobs, L., Claes, E., & Hooghe, M. (2015). The Occupational Roles of Women and Ethnic Minorities on Primetime Television in Belgium: An Analysis of Occupational Status Measurements. *Mass Communication and Society, 18*(4), 498-521.

Jahed, P. (2011, February 21). *Farhad's Camera and the Display of the Iranian Modern Middle Class (دوربین فرهادی و نمایش چهره طبقه متوسط مدرن)*. Retrieved January 26, 2016, from Mardomak: https://www.mardomak.org/story/60505

Jahed, P. (2012). *Directory of World Cinema: IRAN*. Intellect Books.

148

Jenkins, D. (2012). Asghar Farhadi: 'Censorship in Iran is like the British weather'. (A. Farhadi, Interviewer) http://www.timeout.com/london/film/asghar-farhadi-censorship-in-iran-is-like-the-british-weather-1.

Kaplan, E. A. (1974). Popcorn Venus Analyzing the fantasy. *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media, 3*, 21-22.

Kaplan, E. A. (1980). Integrating Marxist and psychoanalytical approaches in feminist film criticism. *Millenium Film Journal, 6*, 8–17.

Kaplan, E. A. (1983). *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera.* New York and London: Methuen.

Kapur, J., & Wagner, K. B. (Eds.). (2011). *Neoliberalism and Global Cinema: Capital, Culture, and Marxist Critique.* New York: Routledge.

Kaufer, D., Parry-Giles, S. J., & Klebanov, B. B. (2012). The "image bite," political language, and the public/private divide: NBC News coverage of Hillary Clinton from scorned wife to Senate candidate. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 336–356.

Kazemi, R. (2011, July 28). *Asghar Farhadi and the Syndrom of the Middle Class* (طبقه‌ی متوسط و سندرم اصغر فرهادی) . Retrieved January 26, 2016, from Postmodern Nightmares: http://www.rezakazemi.com/wp/?p=883

Kehily, M. J., & Nayak, A. (1997). 'Lads and Laughter': Humour and the production of heterosexual hierarchies. *Gender and Education, 9*(1), 69-88.

Kharazmi, A., Armanmehr, V., Moradi, N., & Bagheri, P. (2015). Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Lifetime Prevalence of Domestic Violence against Women in Iran. *Asian Women, 31*(4), 77-.

Khezerloo, R. (2010). WINKING AT DERRIDA: THE HAPPY UNION OF DECONSTRUCTION AND FEMINISM. *An Ambilingual Interdisciplinary Journal, 5*(1), 123 – 137.

Khosrokhavar, F. (2011). Post-revolutionary Iranian Youth: The Case of Qom and and the New Culture of Ambivalence. In R. Bahramitash, & E. Hooglund (Eds.), *Gender in Contemporary Iran: Pushing the Boundaries* (pp. 99-120). New York & London: Routledge.

Khosrowjah, H. (2011). Neither a victim nor a crusading heroin: Kiarostami's Feminist Turn in 10. *Situations: Project of Radical Imagination, 4*(1), 53-65.

King, c. R. (2006). *Media Images and Representation: Contemporary Native American Issue.* Philadelphia: Chelsea House.

Király, H. (2010). Abbas Kiarostami and a New Wave of the Spectator. *Film and Media Studies, 3*, 133–142.

Koçan, G. (2008). *Models of Public Sphere in Political Philosophy.* Retrieved 11 1, 2015, from Eurospheres: http://eurospheres.org/files/2010/08/Eurosphere_Working_Paper_2_Kocan.pdf

Kotsopoulos, A. (1996). Rethinking Critical Strategies in Feminist Film Theory and Criticism. *Dissertation*. Canada: Simon Fraser University.

Kristeva, J. (2004). Is There a Feminine Genius? . *Critical Inquiry, 30*, 493–504.

Lacey, N. (2009). *Image and Representation: Key Concepts in Media Studies* (second ed.). New York: St.Martin's Press.

Lahiji, S. (2002). Chaste Dolls and Unchaste Dolls: Women in Iranian Cinema Since 1979. In R. Tapper (Ed.), *The New Iranian Cinema: Politics, Representation and Identity* (pp. 215-226). London & New York: LB. Tauris.

Lahiji, S. (n.d.). *Portrayal of Women in Iranian Cinema: A historical overview.* Retrieved March 3, 2016, from Iran-bulletin: http://www.iran-bulletin.org/art/CINEMA2.html

Larsen, P. (1991). Media Contents: Textual Analysis of Fictional Media Content. In K. B. Jensen, & W. J. Nicholas (Eds.), *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Reasearch* (pp. 121-134). London: Routledge.

Laura Mulvey, ". ,.–6. (1976–7). Notes on Sirk and melodrama. *Movie, 25*(6), 54.

Lauzen, M. M., & Dozier, D. M. (2005, April). Maintaining the Double Standard: Portrayals of Age and Gender in Popular Films. *Sex Roles, Vol. 52, Nos. 7/8,, 52*(7/8), 437-446.

Levy, E. (2011, November 30). *A Separation: Interview with the Director Asghar Farhadi.* Retrieved 2013, from EMANUEL LEVY, CINEMA 24/7: http://emanuellevy.com/interviews/a-separation-interview-with-the-director-asghar-farhadi/

Levy, E. (2011, December 2). *A Separation: One of 2011 Best Films.* Retrieved 2013, from EMANUEL LEVY, CINEMA24/7: http://emanuellevy.com/comment/a-separation-one-of-2011-best-films/

Lusher, A. (2018, January 29). *Girl of Enghelab Street: Iranian Woman Who Stood in Tehran Street Without a Hijab Released from Custody, Says Lawyer.* Retrieved Fabruary 19, 2018, from Independent: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/girl-of-enghlelab-street-iran-woman-tehran-street-no-hijab-headscarf-custody-release-nasrin-sotoudeh-a8183716.html

Macdonald, M. (2006). Muslim Women and the Veil: Problems of Image and Voice in Media Representation. *Feminist Media Studies, 6*(1), 7-23.

Mahdavi, S. (2003). Reza Shah Pahlavi and Women: A Re-evaluation. In *The Making of Modern Iran: State and society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941* (pp. 190-202). London & New York: Routledge.

Malm, S. (2018, January 31). *Women Who Willingly Wear the Hijab Bravely Defy Iranian Authorities to Oppose the Compulsory Headscarf as the Regime Cracks Down on Growing Protests.* Retrieved February 19, 2018, from Mail Online: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5334343/Iranian-women-chador-supports-anti-hijab-protests.html

Maneck, S. (1994). Women in the Bahá'í Faith. In A. Sharma (Ed.), *Religion and Women* (pp. 211-). Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

Martín, P. T. (2011). Love Goddesses: angels and demons in Mexican cinema. *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas, 8*(1), 19-35.

Martín, P. T. (2011). Love Goddesses: angels and demons in Mexican cinema. *Intellect Limited, 8*(1), 19-35.

Martín, P. T. (2011). Love Goddesses: angels and demons in Mexican cinema. *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas, 8*(1).

Massoumi, N. (2005, September). *Iran: A Cinema Born Out of Poetry and Resistance.* Retrieved 2012, from Socialist Review: http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=9511

Mayes, S. L., & Valentine, K. B. (1979). Sex role stereotyping in Saturday morning cartoon shows. *Journal of Broadcasting, 23*(1), 41-50.

Mayne, J. (1981-1982). Female Narration, Women's Cinema: Helke Sander's the All-Round Reduced Personality/Redupers. *New German Critique*, 155-171.

Mayne, J. (2004). Marlene, Dolls, and Fetishism. *Signs, 30*(1), 1257–1264.

McCabe, J. (2004). *Feminist Film Studies: Writing the Woman into Cinema.* London & New York: Walflower.

McKee, A. (2003). *Textual Analysis: A Beginners' Guide.* London: Sage Publication.

Mehryar, S., & Sabet, S. (2012, November 8-9). *Socio-Spatial Segregtion Dimentions in the City of Tehran: Measurement and Evaluation of Current Segregated Areas, Presented in The Internationl Conference "Urban Change in Iran".* Retrieved 2014, from academia.emu: http://www.academia.edu/2703618/Socio-Spatial_Segregation_Dimensions_in_the_city_of_Tehran

Mellen, J. (1974). *Women and Their Sexuality in the New Film.* New York: Horizon Press.

Mernissi, F. (1985). *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Muslim Societies* (ebook- 2011 ed.). London: Al-Saqi.

Metz, C. (1977). *The Imagining Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Mir-Hosseini, Z. (2003). The Construction of Gender in Islamic Legal Thought and Strategies for Reform. *Hawwa, 1*(1), 1-28.

Mir-Hosseini, Z. (2007). Negotiating the Forbidden: On Women and Sexual Love in Iranian Cinema. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, 27*(3), 673-679.

Mir-Hosseini, Z. (2010). Sharia and national law in Iran. In J. M. Otto (Ed.), *Sharia Incorporated: A Comparative Overview of Legal Systems in Twelve Muslim Countries in Past and Present* (pp. 318-371). Leiden: Leiden University Press.

Mohammadi, A., & Egan, E. (2001). Cinema and Iran: Culture and Politics in the Islamic Republic. *Asian Cinema, 12*(1), 14-28.

Momen, M. (2008). The Baha'is and the Constitutional Revolution: the Case of Sari, Mazandaran, 1906-13. *Iranian Studies, 41*(3), 343-363.

Moore, C. (2003). Women and domestic violence: the public/private dichotomy in international law. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 93-128.

Moore, L. (2005). Women in a Widening Frame: (Cross-)Cultural Projection, Spectatorship, and Iranian Cinema. *Camera Obscura, 20*(2), 1-33.

155

Moradiyan Rizi, N. (2015). Iranian Women, Iranian Cinema: Negotiating with Ideology and Tradition. *Journal of Religion & Film, 19*(1), 1-26.

Mostaghim, R., & Daragahi, B. (2009, 9 6). *Iran: famous singer shajarian decries language of fire.* Retrieved 2014, from Los Angeles Times: http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2009/09/iran-famous-singer-shajarian-decries-language-of-fire.html

Mottahedeh, N. (2006). New Iranian Cinema: 1982-Present. In R. B. Linda Badley (Ed.), *Traditions in World Cinema* (pp. 176- 189). New Brunswick & New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Mottahedeh, N. (2008). *Displaced Allegories: Post-Revolutionary Iranian Cinema.* Duke University Press.

Mottahedeh, N. (2008). *Representing the Unpresentable: Historical Images of National Reform from the Qajars to the Islamic.* New York: Syracuse University Press.

Mottahedeh, N. (2009). Iranian Cinema in the Twentieth Century: A Sensory History. *Iranian Studies, 42*(4), 529-548.

Mouri, L. (2014, September 3). *Gender Segregation Violates the Rights of Women in Iran.* Retrieved April 5, 2016, from International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran: https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2014/09/gender-segregation/

Mulvey, L. ([1975]1990). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. In P. Erens (Ed.), *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism* (pp. 28-40). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Mulvey, L. (1989). *Visual and Other Pleasures.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Mulvey, L. (2002). Afterword. In R. Tapper (Ed.), *The New Iranian Cinema: Politics, Representation and Identity* (pp. 254-261). London & New York: I.B.Tauris.

Naficy, H. (1987). "The Development of an Islamic Cinema in Iran. *Third World Affairs*, 447-63.

Naficy, H. (1991). The Averted Gaze in Iranian Postrevolutionary Cinema. *Public Culture, 3*(2), 29-40.

Naficy, H. (1994). Veiled Vision/Powerful Presences: Women in Post-Revolutionary Iranian Cinema. In M. Afkhami, & E. Friedl (Eds.), *In the Eye of the Storm: Women in Post-revolutionary Iran* (pp. 131-). Syracus: Syracus University Press.

Naficy, H. (1998). Iranian Cinema Under the Islamic Republic. In S. Zuhur (Ed.), *Images of Enchantment: Visual and Performing Art of the Middle East* (pp. 229-246). Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Naficy, H. (2002). Islamizing Film Culture in Iran: A Post-Khatami Update. In R. Tapper (Ed.), *The New Iranian Cinema: Politics, Representation and Identity* (pp. 26-65). London & New York: I.B.Tauris.

Naficy, H. (2011). *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 1: The Artisanal Era, 1897–1941.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Naficy, H. (2011). *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 2: The Industrializing Years, 1941–1978.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Naficy, H. (2012). *A Social History of Iranian Cinema: Volume 4.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Nafisi, A. (2003). *The Quest for the "Real" Woman in the Iranian Novel: Representations of Privacy in Literature and Film.* Retrieved March 16, 2016, from Iran Chamber Society: http://www.iranchamber.com/literature/articles/quest_real_woman_iranian_novel1.php

Najmabadi, A. (1998). Reading for Gender Through Qajar Paintings. In L. Diba (Ed.), *Royal Persian Paintings: the Qajar Epoch 1785-1925: Two Hundred Years of Painting from the Royal Persian Courts* (pp. 76-89). London: l.B. Tauris in association with Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Nault, C. (2013). The Cinematic Quiet Girl from the Breakfast Club to the Badlands. *Feminist Media Studies, 13*(2), 303–320.

Nelmes, J. (Ed.). (2012). *Introduction to Film Studies* (Fifth ed.). New York: Routledge.

Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Neuendorf, K. A., Gore, T. D., Dalessandro, A., Janstova, P., & Snyder-Suhy, S. (2010). Shaken and Stirred: A Content Analysis of Women's Portrayals in James Bond Films. *Sex Roles*, 747–761.

Nicholes, B. (2006). Violence Against Women: The Extent of the Problem. In P. K. Lundberg-Love, & S. L. Marmion (Eds.), *"Intimate" Violence Against Women: When Spouses, Partners, Or Lovers Attack* (pp. 1-8). Westport: Praeger .

Nichols, B. (1994). Discovering Form, Inferring Meaning: New Cinemas and the Film Festival Circuit. *Film Quarterly, 47*(3), 16-30.

Nwabueze, C. (2012). Fact or farce? Female journalists' perceptions os gender relations and under-representation in the Nigerian cinema. *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies, 4*(2), 221–237.

Ortín, S. P. (2009). A Doll's House: A Victorian or a Present-Day Toy? *Odisea*, 131-141.

öztürk, R. (2003). Besieged and Liberated Women in 'Art' Films: The Problem of Private Sphere. *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi*, 153-176.

Pateman, C. (1989). *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Philips, J. (2000). *Contested Knowledge.* Londen ND New York: Zed Books.

Pilcher, J., & Whelehan, I. (2004). *Fifty Key Concepts in Gender Studies.* London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Pribram, D. E. (1988). Introduction. In D. E. Pribram (Ed.), *Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television.* London and New York: Verso.

Prokhovnik, R. (1998). Public and Private Citizenship: From Gender Invisibility to Feminist Inclusiveness-Feminist Ethics and the Politics of Love. *Feminist Review*, 84-104.

Quran. (n.d.). *Muslim Holy Book.*

Rahimieh, N. (2009). Divorce Seen through Women's Cinematic Lens. *Iranian Studies, 42*(1), 97-112.

Rahmandoust, M., Ahmadian, S., & Shah, I. M. (2011). Iranian Entrepreneurs in Malaysia: Reasons for Their Migration. *World Applied Sciences Journal, 13*(9), 2075-2081.

Recknagel, C. (2014, January 10). *Islamic Revolution Can't Upstage Iranian Cinema.* Retrieved 1 8, 2016, from Radio Free Europe: Radio Liberty: http://www.rferl.org/content/iran-islamic-censorship-cinema/25259188.html

Rezai-Rashti, G. M. (2007). Transcending the Limitations: Women and the Post-revolutionary Iranian Cinema. *Critical Middle Eastern Studies, 16*(2), 191-206.

Richardson, D., & Robinson, V. (Eds.). (1993). *Introducing Women's Studies: Feminist Theory and Practice.* London: Macmillan.

Rosen, M. (1973). *Popcorn Venus; women, movies & the American dream.* New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan.

Rostam-Kolayi, J. (2003). Expanding Agendas for the 'New' Iranian Woman: Family Law, Work, and Unveiling. In *The Making of Modern Iran: State and society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941* (pp. 164-189). London & New York: Routledge.

Sadr, H. R. (2002). Children in Contemporary Iranian Cinema: When we were Children. In R. Tapper (Ed.), *The New Iranian Cinema: Politics, Representation and Identity* (pp. 227-237). London & New York: I.B.Tauris.

Sadr, H. R. (2006). *Iranian Cinema; A Political History.* London, New York: I.B.Tauris.

Sadughi, N. (2011). *The Representatioon of Women in Iranian Popular cinema after the Revolution (1979).* Retrieved from Eastern Mediterranean University: Institutional Repository: http://hdl.handle.net/11129/256

Sahraei, F. (2012, September 22). *Iranian University bans on Women Causes Consternation.* Retrieved March 10, 2016, from BBC Persian: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19665615

Saul, H. (2014, May 13). *Iranian Women Discard Their Hijabs for 'Stealthy Freedom' Facebook Page. .* Retrieved 10 16, 2014, from The Independent: http:// www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/ iranian-women-discard-their-hijabs-for-stealthyfreed

Sharabi, H. (1988). *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Sheibani, K. (2011). *The Poetics of Iranian Cinema: Aesthetics, Modernity and Film After the Revolution.* London & New York: I.B.Tauris Publishers.

Sherafat, S. (2013). The Representation of Women's Political and Social Identity in Hollywood, Bollywood and Iranian Cinema after 1990- A Comparative Study. *PhD Dissertation*. Hyderabad, India: Department of Political Science, Osmania University.

Shirazi, F. (2010). The Islamic Republic of Iran and Women's Images: Masters of Exploitation. In f. shirazi (Ed.), *muslim women in war and crisis: Representation and Reality* (pp. 109-138). Austin: university of texas press.

Shirazi, M., Duncan, P., & Freehling-Burton, K. (2015). Gender, Nation, and Belonging: Representing Mothers and the Maternal in Asghar Farhadi's A Separation. *Atlantis, 37*(1), 84-93.

Shirvani, S. (2007). The Politics of Hijab: Culture Tradition or Weapon and Power. *Ohio Communication Journal, 45*, 107-129.

Signorielli, N. (1989). Television and Conceptions About Sex Roles: Maintaining Conventionality and the Status Quo. *Sex Roles, 21*(5/6), 341-360.

Signorielli, N., & Kahlenberg, S. (2001). Television's World of Work in the Nineties. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 45*(1), 4-22.

Simons, M. A. (1989). Two Interviews With Simone de Beauvoir. *Hypatia, 3*(3), 11-27.

Smelik, A. (1995). What Meets the Eye: Feminist Film Studies. In R. Buikema, & A. Smelik, *Women's Studies and Culture: A Feminist Introduction to the Humanities* (pp. 66-81). London: ZED Books.

Smelik, A. (1995). What Meets the Eye: Feminist Film Studies. In R. Buikema, & A. Smelik, *Women's Studies and Culture: A Feminist Introduction* (pp. 66-81). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Smith, S. (1972). The Image of Women in Film: Some Suggestions for Future Research'. *Women and Film, 1*, 13-21.

Smith, S. L., Pieper, K. M., Granados, A., & Choueiti, M. (2010). Assessing Gender-Related Portrayals in Top-Grossing G-Rated Films. *Sex Roles, 62*, 774–786.

Spivak, G. C. (2006 (1995)). Can the Subaltern Speak? In B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, & H. Tiffin (Eds.), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (2nd Edition ed., pp. 28-38). London & New York: Routledge.

Sreberny-Mohammadi, A., & Mohammadi, A. (1994). *Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication, Culture, and the Iranian Revolution.* Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.

Stam, R., Burgoyne, R., & Flitterman-Lewis, S. (Eds.). (1992). *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Beyond.* New York: Routledge.

Starr, P. (2007). *Freedom's Power: The True Force of Liberalism.* New York: Basic Books.

Steinke, J. (2005). Cultural Representations of Gender and Science: Portrayals of Female Scientists and Engineers in Popular Films. *Science Communication, 27*(1), 27-63.

Ţabrea, D. (2010). From Private to Public: Is the Public/Private Distinction Gender Discrimination? *META: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy*, 562-567.

Taheri, J. (2011). Areas of Iranian Women's Voice and Influence. In R. Bahramitash, & E. Hooglund (Eds.), *Gender in Contemporary Iran: Pushing the Boundaries* (pp. 83-98). London & New York: Routledge.

Talattof, K. (2011). *Modernity, Sexuality, and Ideology in Iran: The Life of a Popular Female Artist.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Tapper, R. (2002). Introduction. In R. Tapper (Ed.), *The New Iranian Cinema: Politics, Representation, and Identity* (pp. 1-25). London & New York: I.B.Tauris.

Thanouli, E. (2009, August 27). "Art Cinema" Narration: Breaking Down a Wayward Paradigm. *Film Studies , 14*.

Thornham, S. (1999). Introduction (Part 1). In S. Thornham (Ed.), *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader* (pp. 9-14). New York: New York University Press.

Thornham, S. (2007). *Women, Feminism and Media.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Turner, G. (1999). *Film as Social Practice* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Turner, G. (2005). *British Cultural Studies* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Vanzan, A. (2014). Family Law in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Closing the Door of Ijtihad? In E. Giunchi (Ed.), *Adjudicating Family Law in Muslim Courts* (pp. 136- 146). Oxon & New York: Routledge.

Vasseleu, C. (1993). Not Drowning, Sailing. In P. Patton (Ed.), *Nietzsche, Feminism and Political Theory* (pp. 71-87). London & New York: Routledge.

Walters, S. D. (1995). *Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory.* Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press.

Weber, R. P. (1990). *Basic Content Analysis (Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences)* (SECOND EDITION ed.). London: SAGE PUBLICATIONS.

Weinberger, S. (2009). Joe Breen, The Ayatollah Khomeni, and Film Censorship. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video,*(26), 206–215.

Weintraub, J. (1997). The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction. In *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (pp. 1-42). Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

White, J. (2002). Children, Narrative and Third Cinema in Iran and Syria. *Canadian Journal of Film Studies, 11*(1), 78-97.

Yong, W. (2010, Octobor 3). *Iran Lifts Ban on Director, Saying He Issued an Apology.* Retrieved January 27, 2016, from The New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/04/world/middleeast/04iran.html?_r=0

Zeiny, E. (2013). Powerful Veiled Visions in a Neo-patriarchal Iranian Cinema: A Study of Tahmine Milani's Fifth Reaction (2003). *Journal Of Humanities And Social Science, 8*(5), 94-99.

Zeydabadi-Nejad, S. (2010). *The Politica of Iranian Cinema: Films and Society in the Islamic Republic.* New York: Routledge.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Asghar Farhadi's Filmography and Awards

Name of the film	Year	Awards
Dancing in the Dust (*Raghs dar ghobar*)	2003	Tehran International Fajr Film Festival: Spesial Jury Award. Asia-Pacific Film Festival: Best Director, Best Screen Play
The Beautiful City (*Shah-re Ziba*)	2004	International Film Festival of India: Golden Peacock. Split Film Festival, FIPRESCI Prize. Warsaw International Film Festival: Grand Prix.
Fireworks Wednesday (*Chaharshanbe-soori*)	2006	Chicago International Film Festival: Gold Hugo for Best Feature. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria International Film Festival: Golden Lady Harimaguada. Tehran International Farj Festival: Crystal Simorgh for Best Director
About Elly (*Darbareye Elly*)	2009	Asia Pacific Film Festival: Best Screen Play and Jury Special Award. Berlin Film Festival: Silver Bear for Best Director. Brisbane International Film Festival : Netpac Award. Tribeca Film Festival : Best Narrative Feature.

		International Film Festival of Kerala: Golden Crow Pheasant. Tehran International Farj Festival: Crystal Simorgh for Best Director, and Audience Award.
A Separation (*Jodaeiye Nader az Simin*)	2012	Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Asia Pacific Screen Award: Best film and best screen play. Asian film award: Best Director and best screen play. Berlin International Film Festival: Golden Bear for best film. Durban International Film Award: Best Film and Best Screenplay. Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film. Sydney Film Festival: Official Competition Award for Best Film Tehran International Farj Festival: Crystal Simorgh for best film, best director and best screen play.
The Past	2013	Cannes Film Festival: Prize of the Ecumenical Jury
The Salesman	2016	Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Cannes Film Festival: Best Screenplay Award Asian Film Awards: Best Screenplay

Appendix B: Dancing in the Dust- Narratives

Nazar, an Azarbaijani émigré (Yousef Khodaparast) and Reyhaneh (Baran Kosari) meet in a bus for the first time, fall in love and get married soon. However, shortly after their marriage, Nazar's parents force him to divorce his wife because of the rumors suggest that Reyhaneh's mother is a prostitute. Although being in love, Nazar and Reyhane decided to divorce as neither Reyhane is able to leave her mother nor Nazar wants to break his parents' heart. All Nazar can do for his wife is to insist to pay her marriage dowry. Reyhaneh who is aware of Nazar's financial status, insists that she doesn't want it but Nazar arranges to pay it on installment as he is worried about the hardship Reyhaneh would go through after divorce.

Nazar encounters difficulties in raising money and is forced to work double shifts in a company where antidote is manufactured through injecting snake venom into horses and extracting their blood which contains antibodies. While running from a creditor and the police, Nazar haphazardly hides in a back of a van whose owner is an elderly snake hunter (Faramarz Gharibian). Hidden in the van, Nazar finds himself in the middle of a desert where the elderly man hunts poisonous snakes to sell their venom.

The elderly snake hunter is a weird lonely man with a devastated face who scarcely speaks in the film. Despite the man unwillingness to communicate, Nazar refuses to go back to the city and insist to stay as he finds snake hunting a profitable job which enable him to settle his loans. Nazar finds himself unable to communicate with the reticent man and decides to start hunting on his own. Being unfamiliar with the skills of snake hunting, Nazar is bitten by a poisonous snake. The elderly man cuts his

bitten finger and stores it in a jar of ice. In order to distract Nazar from his pain, the old man tells the story of his life on the way to the hospital; he killed a man for the sake of his wife and was imprisoned. The old man provides the money for Nazar to have the emergency surgery on his cut finger. Nazar decided to sacrifices his finger and instead of paying money for his treatment, he flees from the hospital and hand the money to his beloved ex-wife. Later, he finds out that the snake hunter sold his van in order to pay money for his surgery.

Appendix C: The Beautiful City- Narratives

A'la (Babak Ansari), a juvenile burgler is a close friend of Akbar in a rehabilitation center. Akbar killed Malihe, the girl he was in love with, when he was sixteen. He has just turned eighteen, reaches the legal age of responsibility so the death penalty he convicted to can be now carried out. Akbar is transferred to adult prison to await the execution day while A'la gets released with the help of one of the prison managers in order to gain consent of Akbar's plaintiff. A'la and Firuzeh (Taraneh Alidusti), Akbar's sister, approach Abol-Ghasem (Faramarz Gharibian), Malihe's father. He is a religious bad-tempered man working at home as an unofficial therapist. It's several years that Firuzeh desperately has been trying to win his consent.

When encountering A'la and Firuzeh's perseverance, Abol-Ghasem turns to the court and requires immediate execution of Akbar. However, he has been told that the difference of the diyeh (difference between the diyeh of men and women) must be paid by him to Akbar's family beforehand. He is unable to pay this amount of money. Abol-Ghasem's wife insists him to give consent and receive the diyeh of the murdered daughter and spend it on the medical treatment of her own disabled daughter. Abol-Ghasem disagrees and decides to sell his house in order to pay the diyeh but A'la dissolves the deal and prevents the selling of his house. Finally, Abol-Ghasem agrees to give consent and receives her daughter's diyeh in return. However, now Firuzeh is unable to pay the diyeh. Abol-Ghasem's wife, in consultant with her brother, asks Firuzeh to convince A'la to marry her disabled daughter and in return gain the consent of Abol-Ghasem without paying the diyeh. Firuzeh, who is meanwhile develops an emotional feeling toward A'la cannot talk to him directly.

When A'la realizes the story, he leaves the decision to Firuzeh. Firuzeh does not directly give any suggestion but pretends that she has no feelings towards him. A'la and the manager of the rehabilitation center talk to Abol-Ghasem and try to convince him to cancel their marriage offer. This scene finishes inconclusive. In the last scene, A'la returns to Firuzeh but she does not open the door.

Appendix D: Fireworks Wednesday- Narratives

Mojdeh (Hediyeh Tehrani) and Morteza (Hamid Farokhnezhad) are a turbulent couple whose conflict reached its climax during the last days of Persian New Year. As they have ticket for a trip to Dubai on the morning after Chaharshanbe Suri (Persian Fire Festival celebrated on the eve of the last Wednesday before Nowruz), Ruhi (Taraneh Alioosti) is employed by Morteza to finish the already started process of cleaning their house for the New Year.

Ruhi, the maid, is a bride-to-be young girl who finds herself in the middle of a domestic dispute between Mojdeh and Morteza. Along with Ruhi, we discover that Mojdeh suspects that Morteza has affair with their divorced lonely neighbor, Simin (Pante'a Bahram). Simin works as a beautician at home, which is found noisy by the neighborhood due to her costumers and she is asked to either quit her job or leave. Mojdeh asks Ruhi to spy on Simin under the disguise of a costumer who wants to have her eyebrow trimmed. In Simin's apartment, Ruhi discovers that Simin is informed of the time of their flight to Dubai on the following morning. When return home, Ruhi found that her chador was taken by Mojdeh to be used as a disguise in order to spy on Morteza. Ruhi is left responsible for taking Amirali, their son, home from school. Morteza infuriates recognizing Mojdeh under the chador and beats her in the street. Later, Mojdeh refuses Morteza's apology and decides to leave house with Amirali to her sister and brother-in-law's.

Justifying the reason why Simin knows their flight time, Ruhi tells lie about it. After the apparent settlement of dispute, Morteza offers Ruhi a ride home asking her to stay with Amirali watching firework for a short time. Meanwhile, he meets with

Simin secretly somewhere in the empty street. However, Simin surprisingly wants them to separate as she doesn't want to be responsible for the destruction of the family. After picking up Ruhi and Amirali, Ruhi sniffs Simin's perfume in the car and recognizes her musical lighter which was left there. However, she eventually decides not to reveal it to Mojdeh.

Appendix E: About Elly- Narratives

About Elly narrates the story of a group of middle-class friends who travel to the north of Iran for their three-day vacation by the Caspian Sea. Sepideh (Golshifteh Farahani) arranges the trip and invites her daughter's kindergarten teacher, Elly (Taraneh Alidoosti), to be with them with the hope of making her match with her recently-divorced friend, Ahmad (Shahab Hosseini) who is visiting Iran for a short time from Germany.

They all have wonderful dreamy vacation till one of the children is found floating in the sea and Elly is disappeared. The child is resuscitated. However, they are not sure whether Elly has drowned while saving the child or she has decided to go back to Tehran. For, she was insisting the night before to go back to Tehran and Sepideh didn't let her go. The police launches investigation and the group starts to blame each other for their misbehavior in regard to Elly. However, soon it turns out that Sepideh and Elly were telling lie and hiding certain truth; Elly was engaged to an aggressive man and was planning to break up with him. Therefore, Sepideh asked her to come on this trip and meet with Ahmad. Elly, as an engaged woman, initially refused the invitation but agreed to go eventually as Sepideh insisted.

Alireza (Saber Abar), Elly's husband, arrives from Tehran and confronts Ahmad. Finally, he asks whether Elly mentioned about her engagement and refused Sepideh's invitation to go on holiday. Sepideh under the pressure from the rest of the group, who feel threatened by Alireza, lies about Elly and confirms that Elly accepted her invitation without mentioning the truth. Elly's dead body is found and recognized by Alireza.

Appendix F: A Separation- Narratives

A Separation tells the story of Nader (Peyman Moaadi) and Simin (Leila Hatami), a couple on the verge of divorce. Simin, an English language teacher, obtains visa for her family and endeavors to emigrate abroad in spite of her husband's disagreement. For, Nader's elderly father suffers from Alzheimer disease. When Simin's divorce justification was rejected in the court, she leaves her husband and 11-year-old daughter, Termeh (Sarina Farhadi) and goes back to her parents.

Razieh (Sareh Bayat), an extremely religious woman, is hired by Nader to take care of his father. However, as the elderly man is incontinent, the job gets overwhelming for pregnant Razieh, and she prefers to substitute her husband, who was unaware of her work previously. Hodjat (Shahab Hosseini), the indebted unemployed husband, is arrested for his debt and therefore, Razieh has to go back to work again. That day, when Nader and his daughter arrive home they find the grandfather alone, unconscious on the floor with his arm tied to the bed. Nader accuses Razieh of neglecting his father. Nader shoves Razieh out of the apartment. That night Razieh suffers a miscarriage. Hodjat accuses Nader of being responsible for Razieh's miscarriage. Nader claims that he wasn't aware of Razieh's pregnancy duo to her all-covering attire of chador. In order to resolve the conflict, Simin makes an informal financial deal with Hodjat and Razieh. Finally, Nader asks Razieh to swear on the Qur'an that he was responsible for her miscarriage. Despite her husband's insistence, Razieh doesn't take an oath because she was not sure about the reason. For, while looking for Nader's father in the street she had a car accident the day before the incident. In the last scene, Nader and Simin are dressed in black as a sign of

mourning for the death of the father, waiting in the hallway of the court for their daughter, Termeh, to decide with whom she is going to stay after divorce.

Appendix G: The Salesman- Narratives

A married couple, Rana (Taraneh Alidoosti) and Emad (Shahab Hosseini) has to leave their collapsing apartment over a night due to a severe damage caused by the next door construction work. Emad is a popular school teacher. Emad and Rana are both theatre actors who recently perform in a production of Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*. Desperate to find a new flat to stay, one of their friends, Babak (Babak Karimi), offers them to stay in his apartment which has been previously rented by a single mother whose belongings are still locked in one of the rooms to be collected as soon as she finds a new place.

One day, while assuming that it's Emad who arrives home, Rana leaves the door open and goes to take a shower. Later, when Emad arrives home, she finds blood in the bathroom with no sign of Rana. She rushes to the hospital and finds out that Rana was assaulted by an unknown intruder. Talking to the neighbors, Emad discovers that the previous tenant of the apartment was a prostitute and the intruder was probably one of his customers who was not aware that she has actually left the apartment.

Being psychologically devastated, Rana refuses to report the incident to the police. Emad finds the car key and the cellphone of the perpetrator left on the sofa. Despite Rana's traumatized objection, he starts searching for his identity. Through getting help from one of his students whose father used to work in police department, Emad identifies the owner of the truck whose key was left in his apartment. He traces Majid, a to-be-married young boy who owns the truck and asks him to rent his truck for carrying his stuff with the hope of trapping him in his collapsing apartment. However, on that day, instead of Majid, his prospective father-in-law appears

180

claiming that the truck is shared. Emad reveals the story to the old man. While talking to him, it becomes gradually apparent that the culprit was the old man not the son-in-law. Emad locks him in a room and calls his family to reveal his act to them. Before the arrival of his family, the old man has heart problem and Emad asks help from Rana. She is so angry with Emad's act of revenge and threatens Emad not to reveal the truth to the old man's family. When the family arrives they show appreciation to Emad and Rana for saving their father's life. Emad asks to meet with the old man in private and settle his account with him. Being alone in the kitchen, Emad slaps the man and gives the money he had left in the apartment. Before leaving the apartment the old man has another attack and the ambulance arrives. Rana and Emad continue their performance in the theater.