

## THE ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSE OF IRANIAN HUMANIST REALISM CINEMA: THE CASE OF ASGHAR FARHADI'S WORKS

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**Abstract.** Coincided with the advent of modernity in Iran, humanism-based realism was associated with the formation of a new wave of cinema in Iran. The works of Asghar Farhadi as the third-generation of the intellectual cinema in Iran, which is the pride of world-renowned festivals, includes the components that can be called humanistic realism. Human-centeredness as the nodal point of individualism, moralism, and minus God, is an exaggerated representation of the contradictory problems and ethics of the middle class of society, which is at the heart of the transition from tradition to modernity, and has raised the western utopia of modernism as an ideal community. Negatively representing the religion and the religious group in society, he seeks to promote freedom, individualism, common ethics minus religion, tolerance, relativism and feminist thinking in society. Emphasizing the problems of Iranian society in a realistic space, he seeks social critique on the axis of humanism. The present article deals with discourse analysis of the works of Asghar Farhadi as the most prominent intellectual filmmaker after the Revolution.

**Keywords:** Humanistic Realism, Salesman, Separation, Intellectual cinema, Asghar Farhadi.

**Introduction.** Cinema is a language for the reflection of thought, and the empirical or visual laboratory of thought is a good instrument for testing meaning. Meaning is produced by the cultural frameworks of the community. The culture that governs society has meaning and thought, and the cinema is the means of transferring and consolidating and reproducing this thought and meaning. (Fayyaz & Bicharranlu, 2017, 43-41)

With the advent of sound in cinema, the tendency to realism became the foundation of social realism in the Hollywood films of the early 1930s. Subsequently, the documentary movement led by British John Grierson in the 1930s and the 1940s became the focus of attention to realism. Next, the neo-realism movement and the ideas of André Bazin as the founder of *Kay Ducinem* made France the centerpiece of the realist cinema. Cinema is nowadays considered as a cultural product and social activity. Therefore, in both cases, cinema is worthwhile in terms of information that can provide us about the systems and procedures of culture. The inclusion of the film within culture gives a better understanding of cinema as a medium (Turner, 2016, 50-63)

**Humanistic Realism.** Humanist realism consists of two terms of realism and humanism, the definition of which will be presented after the separate examination of both words.

*Realism.* Realism was shaped in the face of the two schools of romanticism and idealism (Servat, 2008, 118). The era of realism is a critical age against the superiority of the sensitivity of the mind and the imagination (idealism and romanticism) that stands with the weapon of enlightened consciousness (Seyyed Hosseini, 2005, 277)

The realist writers were divided into two classes: one class believed that art had its inherent dignity and importance. This group was called the "art for art" advocates. The other group believed that art was a means of use to achieve another ideal and promoted "art for the benefit" (Sajjadi, nodate, 61)

Realism began with painting (Seyyed Hosseini, 2005, 273). The French painter Jean Désiré Gustave Courbe was influenced by the trends of that day. He called on artists to portray their emotions in the context of their community. Courbe knew art for art as vain. In terms of social context, realism was the product of the strong bourgeois society, which brought industrial progress added to its power, and the middle class was at the center of attention, so artists such as Gustave Courbe and Honoré Daumier portrayed the urban working class, because the supporters of realism have been from the working class and bourgeoisie (Ghanimy, 1994, 512).

The most important aspects of the realism school are:

1- The problems of people: poverty and misery, illness and problems, suffering and ... and the subject of love, along with other issues. 2- Paying attention to the ethics of different classes, especially the middle class; 3- Paying attention to details for reaching the truth. (Vazinpour, 2001, 286)

The concept and background of humanism

Humanism refers the originality of human and human-orientation. The Encyclopedia of Paul Edwards says: "Humanism is a philosophical and literary movement that began in Italy in the second half of the fourteenth century and was brought to other European countries. This movement is the spirit of the new culture. Humanism is a philosophy that esteems the value of human and places him at the heart of everything. In other words, human nature and the limits and interests of human nature are taken as the subject."

Humanism is against the belief in the originality of God. It considers the human being the only truth of the world of human creation, and sits in the seat of God; it denies any metaphysical thought, such as Divine revelation and heavenly religions, and considers human to be the master of the soul and the absolute ruler of nature (Zarshenas, 2002, 38 -39; Lamont, 1997, 116).

Humanistic realism is in fact the study of the realities of society based on the school of humanism: a human-centered society, rather than a God-centered one, a conformist society rather than a religion-oriented one, a society whose human needs and desires are superior to divine values, profit-seeking rather than idealism, relativism, tolerance, and common ethics. ..

Humanistic Realism in Iran. The flow of Iranian realism and humanism emerged in literature, and then in the arts and cinema. The new wave filmmakers noticed a trend of thinking that could be called humanistic realism; this thought, as mixed with other schools, could not be described as a distinct thought. After the Revolution and the ups and downs that the new wave of Iranian cinema and intellectual cinema passed, a new phenomenon emerged in the Iranian cinema, and its works were considered by western festivals, which can be represented by the principles of humanistic realism cinema. The discourse of Asghar Farhadi, the initiator of the third generation of Iranian cinema's new wave, who inspired many filmmakers, is explored in this study. Therefore, the present study examines the principles governing the films of "Nader and Simin: A Separation" and "The Salesman" as the prominent films of the humanistic realism in the Iranian cinema.

*Research method.* In the method of discourse analysis, "the study of systems of thought" is important. Discourse analysis is a method that does not abandon meaning on the surface, and searches for different and hidden meanings of the text (Soltani, 2005, 10). So the discovery of discourse where the text is generated is of great importance.

This research utilizes a hybrid approach to discourse analysis with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of discourse analysis methods. It employs an approach that takes into account the nodal points of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis method in the form of Fairclough and van Dijk's discourse analysis methods to the semiotic analysis of the film.

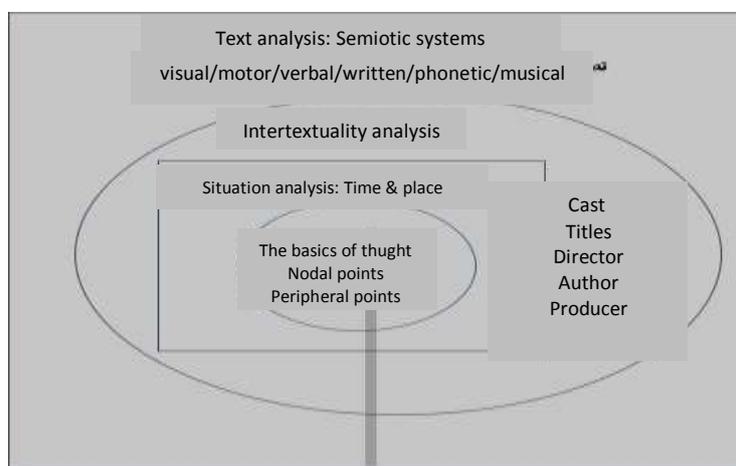


Figure 1. The combination of discourse analysis methods

Four levels are considered for this method.

First: The Basics of Thought

This layer is derived from the nodal and peripheral points of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse. Each film is based on an insight. The filmmaker produces a film based on a mental stream.

Second: Time-place Analysis:

The time and location are the containers of the formation of social events. Many of the meaningful signals of a film are selected based on the time and location of the film. Therefore, the locational coordinates of each film have an effect on the creation of its meaning (Heydari, 1987: 25).

Third: An analysis of intertextuality

Texts are always based on the texts of the past. Each text is an introduction to other texts; the independence of the text is not valid because any text associates previous texts (Zimaran, 2003: 174). Intertextuality plays an essential role in cinema that is what factors outside the film, such as the cast, the title of the film and the director's background, can help analyze the film.

Fourth: Text analysis

The level of manifestation of any film is the text of the film. The codes that are analyzed at this level include the semiotics of the film as the visual semiotic system, motor semiotic system, verbal semiotic system, phonetic and musical semiotic system (Ahmadi, 1996, 105) (kissbier, 2007: 72).

Discourse Analysis of Asghar Farhadi's Works:

Asghar Farhadi is a prominent Iranian intellectual filmmaker who has won numerous prestigious awards in the world. His films can be analyzed in relation to each other, but two distinct films including A Separation and The Salesman which won the Oscar awards are of particular importance, and this study will examine the discourse of the two films.

The story of A Separation. Simin wants to go abroad with his wife Nader and his daughter Termah. But Nader does not want to leave his patient father. These disagreements cause Simin to appeal to the court for divorce, but the court rejects her request and she returns to her father's home. Nader cannot take care of his father, so he hires an

employee named Raziyah. There are events between Nader and Raziyah, the consequences of which are not only impacting Nader's life, but his daughter's image of him changes. Eventually, Simin and Nader decide to leave her daughter the choice of living with one of her parents.

The story of *The Salesman*. Rana and Emad are a young couple who are performing a theater based on Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. They are forced to forcibly leave their apartment due to the flat damage, and by the insistence of one of their friends, Babak, they move to a new apartment that had previously been inhabited by a notorious woman called Ahou. Everything goes well first, but the next events come to an uncontrollable crisis...

Analysis of intellectual foundations (nodal and peripheral points):

Nodal point; human-centeredness. In *A Separation*, man is the centerpiece of everything, and the thing that shapes relationships and fosters the story is to preserve the interests of humans. Nader insists on staying in Iran to care for his father while Simin wants to go abroad for his daughter's future. The focal point of the story is strife on the interests of human, which forms the characters' behaviors and the events of the film in the context of the situation. Nader's claim to attend a hospital is because of humanity and is a kind of humanitarian display that is revealed by Nader's lie (of course, for the audience), but this is reminiscent of Machiavelli's advice, which a manifestation of morality and humanity is necessary (Foster, 1982, 471). Simin is the only person who does not lie and as a positive character of the film and because of her high humanity she wants to live in the West (the heaven of Humanism), not in Iran. Emad, in a dangerous situation, carries a young disabled person out the building. This action, along with his good behavior with his students and the young child, shows that he is a humanist and ethical personality. Even in response to the old man's request in the final chapter, he turns the lights up so that the old man who seems hateful to him, would be less distressed.

Abnormal behavior makes people turn into cows - human beings become deformed. The prostitute has the right to earn money, regardless of religious values and human dignity, that is to say, a human centeredness minus God.

Other points include:

Exaggerating display of problems. Showing dull houses, dirty walls, busy and tumultuous streets and courts, a lot of closeups, chain complaints (Simin and Hojjat from Nader, and Nader from Razieh), clashes in the story, complaint, court, abortion, depression, illness, and ... suggest every viewer that the society is drowned in problems and relationships of the people in Iran is unrelenting so that the most justified social classes are forced to lie, despite being ethical. The transitional society. One of the pivotal debates of realist films is the display of a society moving from a traditional stage to modernity. Displaying two modern urban middle class (Nader and Simin) and the traditional religious urban middle class (Razieh and Hojjat), and their struggle with each other and the companion of the audience to the modern family, *A Separation* instills the beginning of the end of the period of tradition and religion and the beginning of the modern period, so that the challenges of these two cultures are the product of the transition from tradition to modernity. Farhadi believes that there is a longing in the modern world that we are only moving forward, but the destination and the way is unknown, for example, Emad as the representative of the modern personality loves culture and theater, and is intellectual and liberal. Nevertheless, his reactions under the conditions are the most traditional responses that a man can have (<http://anamnews.com>).

In *The Salesman*, the rapid and hasty leaving of the flat exposed to annihilation forces humans to seek new and modern settlements, but if the choice of a new settlement is made without knowledge and awareness, then there is no other consequence than insecurity and anxiety. During the film, the rapid transformation of the transition from tradition to modernism put human beings in an unpardonable space and historical algebra, which makes anxiety and perplexity. This anxiety and perplexity that is one of the disillusioned human's components in the modern capitalist society has evolved from existing traditions about to annihilate and shows the consequences of the transitional society (Hossein Zadeh, 2016).

*Middle class ethics*. One of the characteristics of the middle class is the question of ethics- a class that, for its particular economic and cultural reasons, has little chance of thinking about ethics, politics, culture and art.

Farhadi's cinema represents the notion that morality cannot be considered in the vacuum, but our moral rules, good and bad, and our actions are all strongly intertwined with a particular context, including the social economic class. In *A Separation* and *The Salesman*, the ethics issue is linked with the classes. *A Separation* addresses the conflict between the two middle and traditional classes on the one hand and the poor and religious classes on the other hand. *The Salesman*, where a theater by Miller which is performed by the characters during the narrative of the film and whose content is also a kind of class conflict that circles around the poor man's salesman, highlights the issue of the classes. *The Salesman* begins with the collapse of a house inhabited by middle class, a house where Emad and Rana live as middle-class representatives. Farhadi tells the story from the beginning of the film: The house of the moral value of the middle class is on the verge of collapse.

*Relativism*. From Farhadi's point of view there is no absolute truth, but one can lie according to the need that he feels. As a result, necessities have led people to lie. In other words, it can not be said in a general way that it should not be lied in any circumstances, in any time, in any place or time, while it must be known that a person can lie when a higher absolute affair allows. For example, when there is a conflict between the saving a person's life and lying, as saving human life is the absolute affair higher than lying, one can lie to save human life.

On the other hand, the audience gives the right both to Nader one and to Simin, where Simin tells Nader about his father's Alzheimer, and that "your father who does not know you are his son!" But Nader replies that "I know that he is my father." In a way, the audience looks right at both of them.

*Modern Western Utopia.* A Separation tries to pretend that the West is the utopia and an ideal place to live. The hero of the story views her own shelter in the West away from the problems of his community. In the movie, Simin has a futuristic look as a positive person and is concerned about the future of her daughter. In *The Salesman* the struggle between the hero and the conditions; Emad's struggle as a teacher, a gentleman's personality, a modern, liberal, good-natured, self-respecting, kindred, etc. with the conditions of a society affected by abnormalities on the one hand and on the other hand the most traditional conditions are possible. This conflict brings him into double struggles.

*Feminist Look.* A Separation has been more successful than most of the feminist works due to its unconventional context and artistic construction. All women are upset with their condition. Simin, who is the hero of the story, is the wife of a man who does not even understand her concerns. Razia is also a battered woman who cannot see the color of happiness. The school teacher is threatened and is not safe from Iranian men. For the same reason, Termeh, as an Iranian girl, finds herself unable to have a good life in Iran because the men of this land are only paying attention to money and lie for it as much as they can.

In *The Salesman*, the men often have problems. From the rapist old man to Babak and even the Emad, there are problems. Despite being oppressed, Rana advocates humanism.

*Negative representation of religion.* In A Separation, Islam is an ineffective religion that is incapable of meeting the social needs of people. The state is responsible for the turbulent and obscure situation; the state of the courts is scary and arbitrary treatment prevails the behavior of judges. Once the judge does not agree with filing a bail due to Nader's begging, and once he accepts Razieh's plea for not issuing her husband a sentence. In the end, he does not endorse the observance of the rules of religion. In fact, he does not care about the assignment at all, and when Raziyah, the religious character of the film, asks questions from the offices of the religious authorities, she has no way but to lie, that is, a dead end to religion. He has depicted religious characters negatively.

*Ethics minus religion.* Simin is the only personality of the film to be extremely moralistic. She is willing to help the rest and lays no time for her own gain, but she is not religious at all. Simin, despite the dispute with her husband, draws up a document for his release; Simin convince Hojjat to leave his complaint, but she does not stop humanity. She even says to the teacher, who came to court as a witness and likely to testify against Nader, "Tell the truth". The reference to her moral conduct is common sense. In *The Salesman*, the basic act of the characters is the common ethics, which is formed according to the community, not based on religious ethics.

*Individualism.* In A Separation, individual is preferred to the family. Simin's family has become a secondary subject because of circumstances that she finds unbearable. Nader leaves his wife for the sake of his father. Raziyah works at Nader's house without telling her husband. Family is overshadowed by desires of the members. Family is worth and the parties are prepared to work to protect it as long as it is not an impediment to individuality. In the *Salesman*, a notorious man broke comfortably into a couple's house and rapes the young woman; but the woman invites his husband to self-control, and even when the man wants to follow the case further, the woman threatened him with separation.

*Freedom.* In A Separation, Simin seeks to escape from the unfavorable conditions for the prospect of future in the modern Western society, where freedom is the main slogan. The emphasis on freedom of expression can be seen in different scenes. When Hojjat tries to speak but Razieh forbids him, Hojjat says: "I should not talk but they can break my right?" That is to say, to have your rights, you should speak freely and do not be afraid to stand up! Simin's protest at the start of the film, "I have barely managed to get a visa", shows that there are political and administrative restrictions on leaving the country and freedom for immigration and the behavior of the judge with her proves the claim. In *The Salesman*, in addition to attempting to represent the importance of freedom in various scenes of the film, the last words of the play are called from the salesman on his gravestone: "We are free! We are free!", which is a very clear reference by Miller to freedom. And the relationship between the film and the American play by Arthur Miller is an intertextual shift to freedom.

*Tolerance.* In spite of the serious clashes that exist between the characters, we sometimes find tolerance in the positive characters of the film: Nader's temporary abandonment of his complaint for not arresting Hojjat after the insistence of Razieh, helping Simin by placing a bail to prevent Nader being prisoned, Rana's insistence on forgiving and not pursuing the revenge from rapist indicates a lack of prejudice and existence of tolerance.

*Location and time analysis. A: Location.* The films are located in the city of Tehran, crowded and deprived of the beauty of a modern city. In A Separation other movie locations include the crowded court that shows the overwhelming challenge of society. Nader's house is messed up. There is nothing on its place and the turmoil at house is certain. The director showing the turmoil with the city, the house and the court, is trying to make it clear to the audience that the situation in Iran is turbulent and that Simin has the right to leave Iran. Another location is a devastating building that the inhabitants are fleeing from there. The new house is also crowded and has made things worse than the past. Another location is the classroom with old benches and a worn texture, and of course the video projector device represents a symbol of the existence of a modern culture in the heart of a traditional society.

*B: Time.* A Separation was released in 2010. After the events of 2009 in Iran, when the claim of fraud was raised, and lies became the subject of some films, Farhadi refers to this concept in A Separation Sein. The director shows his protest to the government about how to deal with the inflammation and deterioration of the community. Farhadi wants to tell his audience that after the events of 2009, despair and disillusionment prevailed in Iran, and every intelligent and ethical person, like Simin, should move herself and her children from this space. *The Salesman* goes back to 2015, when Rouhani's government as a technocratic government seeks to modernize the society, and the

relationship with the world is the approach of the politicians of the Islamic Republic. The filmmaker points out that we are facing a new era by depicting a falling housing block at the beginning of the film.

*Intertextuality Analysis. A: Cast.* In *A Separation*, attempts have been made to use famous actors and actresses. Peyman Maadi, Leila Hatami, Shahab Hosseini, Sareh Bayat, Merila Zarei and Babak Karimi all have a background in realist and intellectual films and helped the roles to be believable. In *The Salesman*, actors and actresses have been used whose experience with Farhadi has evolved. Taraneh Aladousti acted in *Shahzad* and turned to a popular actress and Shahab Hosseini is also an actor who, in addition to acting in intellectual films, has the ability to attract a religious and revolutionary audience, for his role in the movie *Zeal to Flight*. Babak Karimi, son of Nusrat Karimi, is believable to the audience with regard to his artistic and cinematic background and his father.

*B: Titles.* The title of the film, *A Separation*, also refers to the main subject of the story. *A Separation* represents the separation of man from God (humanism), the separation of generations from one another, the separation of the modern society from traditional society, the separation of the intellectual generation from the traditional generation, the separation of the religious class from the secular stratum, and the separation of the family members from each other. The film begins with the court and ends with the court, which is a symbol of separation. The name of the movie actors is also chosen intelligently. Nader means the scarcity of such characters in today's world. Simin means brilliant and beautiful. On the other hand, it is the names of Iranian intellectual women like Simin Behbahani and Simin Daneshvar as well. Simin is an intellectual individual who cannot live in the present conditions of Iran. She is the only person who is ethical and has no interest in staying in Iran, and this distinguishes her from other film actors and actresses. The names of Hojjat and Razieh are from the poor social and religious classes. Raziyeh is the title of Hazrat Zahra, which means satisfaction, and probably because she is a subordinate she must be satisfied with the conditions. Hajjat is also the title of Imam Mahdi (aj), and on the other hand, it means the proof and the reason. As obvious, Farhadi chooses names that are very close to the concept and personality of the people who are introduced in the film. By choosing religious names for the negative characters of the story, he induces the relationship between the religion and its negative characteristics to the audience. In *The Salesman*, Rana means beautiful and pretty. Emad also means the pillar and the support. He is a husband that stops working after the accident and goes to Rana to support and protect her. Babak means a small and kind father who rescues Emad and Rana from wandering, but he has another problem and maybe even bigger. Babak is a genuine Iranian name. The originality of the name Babak could also be that a noble Persian cannot provide a safe haven for a family. The *Salesman* in Farhadi's film, in the first place, is related to two individuals, namely Willy Loman, the main character of the play *Death of A Salesman* by Arthur Miller, and the old man who entered the privacy of Rana and Emad. Both of these are salesmen; the salesman is a person who offers something and receives something. So every salesman is actually a buyer and every buyer is actually a salesman. Willie Lohmann (in the play by Arthur Miller) sells loyalty to his wife and also his eagerness to live, but at the end he sells his life for the share of insurance for his wife, compensates for his betrayal in some way, and buys himself prestige. The movie's old man is not loyal to his wife as well, and he is shocked by entering the bathroom, he buys obscenity and sells his dignity. This sale and purchase is based on a fully humanistic concept focused on the material and social pleasures of mankind.

*C: The director, author and producer's background.* Asghar Farhadi is a director who has been reporting the middle class ethics in previous works such as *Chaharshanbeh Suri* and *about Elli and Past*. He is trying to criticize social events by making a film from a human perspective. He showed himself to the highest level in the world by acquiring two Oscars. The producer and the author of *A Separation* is Farhadi as well. The *Salesman's* producers are Alexander Malaleggi, director of the French company "Momento" (who also produced Farhadi's *Past* as well), and a Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodovar who jointly produced the film.

*Text analysis. A- Visual Symbolic System.* Images are quite meaningful in *A Separation*. From the many books at Nader's house representing the intellectual class of the community, to the architecture of the house and the kitchen, indicating their financial status. The Qur'an is shown in the film by two men (Nader and Hojjat) as a means to reach money. Nader and Hojjat use the Qur'an as a tool to achieve their interests, and they both succeed. The director not only does not value the sanctity of the Qur'an, but rather invokes the Quran as a good tool for gaining money in the Iranian society. In Farhadi's films, stairs play an important role. In both movies, the stairs represents the rise and fall of humans in life and society. The first view of *The Salesman* is a picture of the bed, which is one of the main themes of the film, namely marital relationship. Then we go to a building where Emad and Rana are living; a building that is falling due to a mistake and whose inhabitants are fleeing. Emad and Rana's apartment glasses are breaking out horribly, which is a symbol of failure in their future relationship. In addition, glass is a sign of clarity and brightness, and breaking it out reflects the disappearance of this brightness in the future. As they come down, the scene is rolled up with sharp movements of the camera; a long view that doubles the feeling of anxiety, all of which are a prelude to a bad case; something contrasted with the collapse of the building. The next day, when they return the house that is falling. A view of the bedroom is shown; a room where ugly cracks are played on its walls, such as the glass window shutters that inform a future break in their marital relationship.

*B. Motor semiotic system.* The camera on the hand and the sharp movements of Farhadi's cinematic features express the realism of the image space. This occurs several times in *A Separation* and *The Salesman*.

*C. Verbal semiotic system.* The most important part of the verbal sign is the dialogue: the dialogue is full of concepts and meanings.

In *A Separation*, the dialogue is short and basic, and the film talks with the audience focusing more on characters, which are explained in the discourse points. Among the central dialogues of this film is black realism.

1-Black realism. In the first scene of the film, in the trial between Simin and Nader, there are discussions that the judge enters into. Farhadi's first and last words featured in the film by these discussions. In this dialogue, the conditions and security of the country are considered to be the reason for not staying in Iran; the judge asks a question that the continuation of the film is the answer to this question. "What are the conditions?" In another scene, which is a debate between Nader and Hojjat in the court, and the judge threatens Hojjat with arrest, Hojjat says: "Haj Agha, I worked as a shoemaker for ten years. I was fired like a dog, and said the law gives your right, I complained for one year. Finally, they said do not say anything. Go get lost. But this time I will not. Not this time. I have nothing to lose." Following on the scene in which Razieh, Hojjat's wife wants to try to dissuade the judge to give up her husband a sentence, she says: "Haj Agha, since he was unemployed, he was depressed, God knows he does not think what he does."

*Insecurity in Iran.* In a scene where Simin worries about the security of Termeh, she goes to Nader and scares him of the consequences of Nader's child, she is actually noting insecurity. In *The Salesman*, Rana is raped in her house. Phonetic and musical semiotic system: The music is not seen much in *A Separation*, and only in a scene Nader plays Shajarian's voice- A traditional Iranian singer who is the reference of Iranian intellectuals in music; A person who has an oppositional character and has talked politically against the regime of Iran. In a scene Azan is heard. In this film, the Azan is played when two religious characters Razieh and her husband are in the busy and crowded corridors of the courtroom and are contemplating their misfortunes. At the beginning of the movie *The Salesman*, we hear frightening sound effects, which we then find out they are related to the play, and prelude a catastrophe.

*Summary and Conclusion.* The works of Asghar Farhadi, which is a part of the art community and the prestigious cinematic festivals of the world and Iran, contains elements that refer to humanistic realism based on the main elements of the school of realism and humanism. Human-centeredness has been considered as center of the Farhadi cinema. The central human being is to protect the interests of the individual, focusing on morality, humanism, minus God and religion. The analysis of human behavior is narrated in the context of social realities and the intolerable conditions of Iran. With the exaggerated display of the conflicting ethics and problems of the middle class of society, which is at the crossroads of society from the tradition to modernity, he tries to bring the utopia of modern Western as an ideal society. He, representing negatively the religion and the religious group in society, seeks to promote freedom, individualism, common ethics, tolerance, and relativism and feminist thinking in society. Emphasizing the problems of the Iranian society in a realistic context, he seeks social critique on the axis of humanism.

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## **AN APPROACH TO THE COMPARATIVE PATTERNS AND FRAMEWORKS IN THE EUROPEAN TRAVELOGUES OF THE QAJAR ERA**

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**Abstract.** Travelogues are valuable historical resources communicating a significant part of the information neglected by other historical sources through a different approach and in a specific way. During Qajar era, due to the ties between Iran and Europe, some considerable travelogues were created, a vast part of which revealing various aspects of the Persian society as well as some developments within it. Along with these lines, the comparison and equalization could be observed between the Persian and the European civilizations. Sometimes the travelers compared and assessed the two explicitly. The present study aims to explore and analyze some dimensions of the explicit comparisons so that beyond the assessment of the Persian society during the Qajar era, some developments could be investigated and also apart from internal resources, the causes why some aspects of civilization in the two regions differed may be decoded. As such, the study tries to answer the questions as to which aspects of civilization had been subject to the comparison and assessment of the travelers, and also whether their images of Persia during the Qajar era could be a reasonable measure for the comparison.

**Keywords:** Qajar, Travelogue, Europeans, Comparative Frameworks.

**Introduction.** The course of developments in Persia from the Safavids toward the Qajar era has not been evolutionary. Despite the extensive developments emerging in Europe thanks to modernity, the Persian society experienced the opposite trend. Various dimensions of society instead of an onward movement were paralyzed by the political risks arising from the functions of the state elites as well as other factors. Thus, they were concerned about protecting their lives rather than developing a new design and a new course.

In addition, it seems that the behavior of the Persians in the era has been mostly affected by the way the governors took decisions and treat. Then it would be irrational to consider the social context as the origin for the formation of the next developments. The course of events confirmed that the political state had no such thinking context realizing the causes of a disquiet Persian society. Also, the dynamics of some intellectual and practical growth which at some point appeared occasionally would be quickly suppressed by authoritarian elements. Therefore the Persian society was not able to experience a favorable advancement in the civilizational dimensions. So a vast and irreparable gap was emerged in the intellectual and technical fields between the West and Persia during the Qajar era with an increasingly obvious aspects.

The present study is to explore the course of developments through a different approach. In doing so, some European travelogues during the Qajar era with a western civilization perspective on the Persian society have been selected in order to investigate their points of view. While the data within them might be offered for a particular purpose or might give a partial image of a real Persia due to the short stay of their authors, a considerable amount of which could cover some realities of the then Persia.

It should be noted that although the travelogues are not the same as to the volume of the comparison between Persia and West, given their precision regarding the different social dimensions most of them have sometimes taken a comparative attitude on the basis of settings and tried to admire or criticize. Their reactions may be a good suggestion as to the civilizational distance between Persia and the West in that era and whether it had been such that realized their particular reactions and positions. What were the effective factors contributing to the Persian developments from their perspectives?

**Western developments in recent centuries at a glance.** The West seemed to have no considerable scientific and technical advancements before the “Age of Discovery”. This significant increasingly growing event of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century brought desirable outcomes for the Europeans. Geographic explorations opened the horizons and set the stage