Breakout Session 2: Contemporary Cinema

1) Maryam GHRBANKARIMI
The Women in Frame: Representation of Women in Post-Revolutionary Iranian Cinema

Abstract
“The rise of the Islamic movement in the 1970s in Iran signified the emergence of a new political sociability and the dominance of a new discourse, within which woman-as-culture occupied a central position.” Afsaneh Najmabadi, “(Un)Veiling Feminism”

A parallel shift can be observed with the increasing number of women participating in society’s public spheres and the change in the representation of women on screen in the years following the Islamic Revolution. Women played a very significant role during the Islamic Revolution, which caused the news agencies, observers, and analysts to call it “the revolution of the chador-clad.” This sudden public exposure during the revolution was perhaps one of the reasons for what Afsaneh Najmabadi explains as the unbelievable flourishing of women’s intellectual and cultural production. Despite legal and social restrictions and the fact that many seculars and feminists still feel silenced by the dominant cultural and political climate, women have never left the public scene.

After the Iranian revolution, many predicted that the film industry would die. On the contrary, however, cinema was revived, as it was considered an educational tool. But the transition from before the revolution to after was not an easy one, as the film industry had to be stripped of everything considered to be against the Islamic ideology. As Hamid Naficy discusses, in the early years after the revolution “the incorporation of modesty at all levels of motion picture industry and in the cinematic text” helped to cleanse the film industry of any connotations of amorality, corruption, and pornography that were associated with Pahlavi’s cinema. In addition to the rebirth of cinema in the early 1980s, the number of women involved in the film industry in such roles as writers and directors significantly increased. After the revolution, the film industry lost its exclusiveness for some time and was opened up to the fresh and educated filmmakers who were ready to enter the film industry.

In the films made since the end of 1980s, female characters were for the first time given pivotal presence, no longer only fitting in one of two categories, as Shahla Lahiji explains — the chaste or the unchaste dolls. Whether this shift is due to the increasing number of female directors in particular or to the involvement of women in the social arenas in general, this paper will look at examples which convey this evolution in Iranian cinema, and will demonstrate how filmmakers have used what Susan Siavoshi calls “factionalism” of the Islamic Republic, which “provided an opportunity for intellectuals to engage the state in a process of negotiation and protest, cooperation and defiance, in pushing the boundaries of permitted self-expression.” For the purpose of this paper, some of Tahmineh Milani’s works, one of the most outspoken Iranian directors, along with some of Rakhshan Bani-Etemad’s films and some more recent films on the subject of women will be looked at.

Biography
Born and raised in Iran, Maryam Ghorbankarimi moved to Canada in 2001 to continue her education in film at Toronto’s Ryerson University. She is currently studying for her PhD in film studies at the University of Edinburgh in the UK; her research focus is on the representation of women in Iranian Cinema. Maryam is also a filmmaker and has made a number of short films, both fiction and documentary, which have been shown at festivals such as the Montreal International Film Festival, the Beijing International Short Film Festival, and the Tehran International Short Film Festival. Her research interests include women, gender, and cinema, and the cinema of developing countries in general.
2) Saranaz ABDOLLAHZADEH BARFOROUSH
Narrative analysis in Iranian popular cinema, before and after the Islamic revolution

Abstract
Social changes and their effects on cinema have been one of the main concerns of social and cultural scholars for the past few decades. Comprehending the social changes in a society can lead to important breakthroughs in sociology and cultural studies. Many nations throughout the globe have been subjected to social and cultural changes in their history. These changes have played a significant role in their social identity. Iran is considered a nation with various experience in the change issue; over the past hundred years Iran has faced a lot of political, economical, social and cultural changes; Historical movements such as the Islamic revolution in 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) created a certain type of cultural identity in cultural products.

In this article we are aiming to understand the narration analysis of Iranian popular cinema in the last forty years (before and after the revolution). In order to achieve this goal we need to fully understand the concepts of narration and narration analysis. But only comprehending these notions will not be sufficient for understanding the narration of a cultural product; therefore in this study we are also focusing on historical events that changed. Iranian lives and their perspectives forever. The method we applied in this article is analysing a text (here film) by the eight levels of narration introduced by Edward Braningan. In 2004 in this technique we were obliged to study the films with significant details thus we studied 20 films from years (1961-2008) and applied the eight levels of narration towards those films. For studying the narration analysis more thoroughly we used a table for each, movie to define the levels of narration. At the end we recognized three models of narration for Iranian popular cinema these models contained: A) stability.....instability.....stability (again) B) stability.....instability.....partial stability.....instability C) instability...instability ...stability. These models were applied in Iranian popular cinema according to different historical and social situations. At the end the most significant changes applied in popular Iranian cinema were utterly focused on the typologies of the characters and their interactions together, and the narration patterns and schema's have not changed so vividly.

Key words
Popular cinema, narration, narration analysis, social change.

Biography
My name is Saranaz Abdollahzadeh Barforoush; I was born on January 31 1982 in Tehran Iran. I lived in Iran till I was four years old and then moved to the united kingdom with my family. I spend my primary years of school and a few years of guidance school in Britain. I moved back to Iran in 1995 and have lived here ever since. I have a bachelor degree in communication studies(journalism major) From Allameh Tabatabi university. and a masters in cultural studies and media from Tehran university.

3) Saeed ZEYDABADI-NEJAD
Film censorship and the problem of reception

Abstract
The apparent contradiction between strict state control of filmmaking in Iran on the one hand and a large number of politically critical films from Iran on another has created much interest in censorship in Iranian cinema. According to research so far, the state’s ideological censorship machinery is a
barrier that filmmakers can only get through by means of symbolism, metaphor and allegory. However, this reading tells us about only a small part of the complex relationship between filmmakers and state control much of which is through face to face negotiations. These negotiations are a part of the reception of the film. Addressing the gap in the literature, the paper uses data from face-to-face interviews and focus groups with Iranian audience members to discuss film reception in Iran. The paper aims to contribute to reception studies. Currently reception studies only consider the cinema and video audiences as their subject of study. However, both in the West and in Iran, films go through various stages of being ‘seen’ before they are ever released. Drawing on illustrative examples from Iranian cinema, this paper argues that the problematic of reception starts much earlier, before film audiences see the film. It also examines how Iranian audiences negotiate meaning in the light of the films having been screened and censored by the authorities earlier.

**Biography**

Saeed did his undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Queensland, Australia in the field of anthropology. He later completed a PhD at School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. His groundbreaking research on the reception of Iranian cinema reveals how cinema is a socio-cultural and hence political practice in Iran. He is the author of a forthcoming book to be published by Routledge (2009) entitled, “The politics of Iranian cinema: films and society in the Islamic Republic”. Based on groundbreaking ethnographic research on the practices of regulation and reception of films in Iran, the book explores the politics of Iranian cinema in relation to its (post)revolutionary context. It draws on first-hand interviews with the authorities, filmmakers and audiences to examine how cinema is engaged in the dynamics of change in contemporary Iran. The book not only discusses the reception of films from major award winning directors but also important mainstream filmmakers such as Hatamikia and Tabizi. Saeed teaches at SOAS’s Centre for Media and Film Studies and the Institute of Ismaili Studies. In his postdoctoral research, Saeed has focused on the examination of the BBC World Service as a diasporic contact zone.

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3 But “they have an unmistakably active and growing presence in practically every field of artistic creation, professional achievement, education and industrial institutions, political participation, and even in sport activities.” Afsaneh Najmabadi, “(Un)Veiling Feminism.” Social Text No. 64. *World Secularisms at the Millennium* (Autumn, 2000), p. 30.


