

Persian translation of this paper entitled:  
روایت ایرانی و تقلید از روایت غربی در سینمای ایران  
is also published in this issue of journal.

## An Introduction to Iranian Narration and Imitation of Western Narration in Iranian Cinema \*

Asadollah Zare'i\*\* , Ismail Bani Ardalan, Abbas Namjoo

1. Ph.D. candidate in Art Research, Tehran University of Art, Tehran, Iran.

2. Tehran University of Art, Tehran, Iran.

3. The University of Science and Culture, Tehran, Iran.

Received 2018/07/16

revised 2018/12/11

accepted 2018/12/18

available online 2019/06/22

### Abstract

**Statement of the Problem:** Narratology and its various approaches in the past few decades and the expansion of this new knowledge to the theatrical and visual arts necessitates the addressing of Western scholars' views in this field and a search for the traditions of the narratives in the Iranian works and literature. Comparing these two categories from the anthropological and ontological point of view in the Iranian and Western Weltanschauung is necessary as the basis of these two types of narrations. Therefore, considering the importance and scope of this category in the visual narratives, especially the Iranian cinema, this article has focused on this subject and its causes and reasons. In order to have a rooted and original cinema, it is better to first consider the category of Iranian narration with its ancient and rich history.

**Purpose:** Considering whatever is displayed as a fictional narratives in the Iranian cinema, does it represent the Iranian philosophy and ontology in the narratives? Are the narrations of Iranian cinema an imitation of the Western narrations and the cinematographic patterns? Proposing these basic questions, the anthropological and ontological challenges of these two types of narratives have been addressed. Through implicit comparison of two types of Iranian and Western narratives, it was tried to find differences and oppositions. Moreover in the next stage, it has been tried to propose definitions regarding Iranian narratives and determine its position in the narratology. This was considered as an introduction to the Iranian narratology.

**Research methodology:** This article has been written with a descriptive analytical approach through theoretical documentations.

**Conclusion:** It seems that what is observed in Iranian cinema in the form of visual narratives is often an imitation of the western literary and visual narratives. Except for a few movie makers, most of the Iranian filmmakers have lost sight of the traditions, patterns, and styles of Iranian narratives being based on the spirit and philosophy of the Iranian narratives. In order to have a cinema with its own identity and narration of the human being and the world, the literary and narratives traditions should be recognized, so that a cinema based on the Iranian ontology that has been originated from the ancient Iranian Islamic philosophy, is resulted.

**Keywords:** *Narratology, Iranian narratives, Western narratives, Iranian cinema.*



\* This article is derived from Ph. D. thesis of Asadollah Zare'i entitled "The Narratological Analysis of Screenplays on the Family of the Iranian Cinema during the Eightieth

Solar Years" guided by Dr. Ismail Bani Ardalan at the Art University of Tehran.

\*\* Corresponding author: zare'i@usc.ac.ir, +989122857159

## Introduction

The narratology, during few decades of its life, has expanded so much that it has been able to be found as a topic in many branches of science and arts. With its diverse and new approaches to literature and arts, it has presented a number of debates and new horizons for researchers and artists. In recent years also, it is seen in the field of ancient and contemporary Iranian literature. There are various articles and writings regarding this issue. The scope of these new thoughts have raised beyond the context of ancient texts and contemporary literature, including theatrical arts and cinematographic genres.

“Nowadays, cinema is a tool for narration. The most important and accessible medium for exploring the world is to struggle and stimulate the human emotions, memory and imagination. We live in a time in which cinema and film are parts of our habitats” (Bransson, 2000, cited in Azadarmaki & Khalegh Panah, 2011).

Due to the rapid expansion of this knowledge and its entrance into the theatrical arts, and in particular the cinema, it is necessary to address this subject and examine this knowledge as well as its intellectual and anthropological foundations, which, like other branches of the human sciences, has its roots in the Western thought and philosophy. Particularly, what is mostly encountered in Iranian and mainly related articles is that in most of these writings some patterns of the narratology are observed. The authors try to explain and analyze the Iranian text and writing with the principles and rules of narratology in the desired approach. Although these efforts are useful in their own right and can reflect the other aspects of the Iranian literature and bring new and up-to-date findings. The question is whether, basically, we had a history, tradition, and background in this field. In other words, whether or not the narratives traditions in Iranian literature and art are able to provide some patterns for the narratives analysis that is associated with the spirit of Iranian philosophy and culture?

As it is known, the knowledge of Western origin comes from the Western philosophy and ontology. In each approach, they reconstruct the same meaning and

position of man, being firstly defined and emphasized in the Western ontology and philosophy. It is not an exaggeration to say that this meaning of human and being, in its essence, is different, if not in conflict, with the Iranian philosophy and ontology. On the other hand, can the literary traditions and the unwritten and unspoken principles involved in our literary and cultural traditions, arise from the Iranian ontology and philosophy? Can't them be regarded as patterns and styles driven from Eastern Iranian ontology, to be the foundation of our narratology? Is this narration capable of designing other narrations through the Iranian literary narratives traditions that could correspond to the Iranian existential situation in the context of the narratives? Can this propose different ways of interpreting and explaining another kind of narratives and, of course, another kind of cinema?

It is assumed that the narratology of the texts and works of theatrical arts, and especially Iranian cinema, can be essentially based on the ontological conceptions found in the context of Iranian literature and art. Therefore, it can be the basis of cosmology and necessarily its narratology along with philosophical and logical approaches. Although there is not a widespread exploration and movement by the Iranian scholars in this field of theoretical study yet, it can be predicted that due to the researches and compilations that have been began in the context of the ancient Iranian literature in recent years, the initial steps are taken whose scope would soon penetrate to the Iranian cinema. Eventually, it would design and introduce Iranian narratives patterns to get to Iranian Islamic thought and ontology in the field of arts and especially cinema. As mentioned above, it is necessary to achieve the recognition of Iranian narratives and narration from the vast range of Iranian literature and art and to look at its consistent and successful examples in the Iranian literary, dramatic and cinematographic works, then, eventually, design and introduce the desired patterns for explaining and interpreting narratives. This requires extensive and comprehensive researches that is not possible for this article. So this article is just a beginning regarding this issue.

## Research Background

So far, no comprehensive research has been carried out regarding Iranian narratives and cinema. But in the articles and books mentioned below, the discussions of ancient Iranian literature and texts have been attempted to convey an Iranian narratives and to obtain an overview of this narration. Some of them are:

Describing and defining the narratives, the research of Arjmand (1989) explained some narratives patterns in the Iranian cinema, which is an imitation of the Western cinema from the beginning till now. Through analyzing some parts of the film *cow* (made by Dariush Mehrjui, 1958), he refers to the theme of representing events in a native and narratives manner influenced by the cinema of neo-realism in 1960s. Relying on the narratives theories, the book of Tavakoli (2010) has discussed the narration in Molavi's *Masnavi* and attempted to obtain a particular model for narration in *Masnavi*. The article of Hori (2011) has been written on reviewing the book of Tavakoli (2010) and while highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of the various chapters of the book in question, he has pointed out that the views expressed in the book "Poetics of the Sea" in the form of a kind of mystical or spiritual narratology were not successful. The article of Mohammadzadeh (2005) has been dedicated to similarities and differences in the moralistic literature of Iran and France. Through an implicit comparison between two Iranian and French poets namely Sa'di and Lafontaine, it has referred to the differences between two narratives cultures. The book of Bani Ardalan (2014) has expressed the spiritual, moral, and ethical foundations of Iranian narratives literature, and has explained its philosophical sources. Also Bani Ardalan (2010) has developed the epistemological roots of the Iranian art. Based on ancient literary and mystical sources, the book of Hashemi Nejad (2015) has tried to analyze the structure of mystical stories and their definition and categorization in terms of narrating purposes. In Hashemi Nezhad (2016) he has specifically dealt with the narration in the Iranian texts and some narratives features in Iranian literature. Chrisman and Williams have focused on the topic of colonialism and post-colonialism and its impact

on narratives theory (Chrisman & Williams, 1993). Dirlik (1994) has explained the way cultures interacted through the issuance of cultural products of the West in the form of written and visual narratives in the Third World through discussing post-colonialism. It led to the cultural transformations and, consequently, its impact on narratology.

Reviewing the history of the articles and books mentioned above, despite the discussion of topics and subjects that are related to the subject of this article, they are not yet successful in the explanation and organization of the principles and the foundations of the Iranian narratives. Moreover, in these researches, they have not essentially and philosophically studied the Iranian narratives in cinema. Therefore, the author's assumption is to find a kind of Iranian narratology and, as a result, a cinema with an Iranian narratives through defining and recognizing the narratives characteristics of Iranian texts and literature.

## Theoretical Foundations of Research

Reviewing the structuralism narratology and having an interpretive analytical approach and referring to the philosophical and ontological findings, this article has dealt with Iranian narrations. Through anthropological doctrines that have been originated in the Islamic and Iranian and Western thought and based on the implicit comparison of two narratives thoughts, it was tried to achieve the purposes and assumptions.

## Research Methodology

This research has been conducted from a qualitative point of view and with the descriptive-analytical approach referring to theoretical documentation.

### 1. An overview of narratology

Narratives and narration are among the oldest tricks of human communication. It has a long history of civilization and human life, from the earliest caveman paintings to the most sophisticated literary texts and cinematographic masterpieces. Surprisingly, the narration with this age and scope, in the most ancient and modern definition, is an event, incident, story or anecdote that is narrated or reconstructed. Either

in literary language or in an image or in other forms of visual and abstract expressions, it is “a sequence of previously thought events that have been non-accidentally connected” (Tolan, 2004).

Aristotle is undoubtedly the first theorist and philosopher in this field, as has been said in the sources of this discipline. While defining the types of drama, where he considers the story as one of the six elements of tragedy, he defined the story, narrator and narration, and sets boundaries for them. This was the beginning of an articulated definition of the narratives that continued until the Middle Ages and was also referred to in the twentieth century.

“In the Platonic (Socratic) distinction between narration and imitation (the presentation of personality speech), the narrating strategy is a characteristic of the level of narratives: the speech of the heroes (obviously) is quoted in full, which opens a discursive level leading to the production of the content narration - a story in the heart of another story. The heroic discourse is actually quoted and formatted: every narratives act is a form of narratives content action” (Fludernik, 2012).

Although it is possible to follow the definitions in this field in the historical researches, and one can take into account in detail the developments of this field, the fact is that the main developments and features of this knowledge begins from the first half of the twentieth century as a new and independent topic. Thinkers such as Seymour Chatman, Tzvetan Todorov, Vladimir Propp, Roland Barthes, Gerard Genette, Jacques Lacan, David McQuillan, Wallace Martin, Paul Ricoeur, and David Herman, and others provided a variety of theories on the narration concept. Each attempted to reveal a new angle and a new function of this knowledge, defining it in different fields, as well as defining their own approach compared to the other opinions.

“Narratology - derived from French structuralism and semiotics and most effective among the traditional humanities - was the first coherent effort in separate studying of the story and consolidating the learning of the narratives through the creation of a heuristic and all-narratives pattern. In addition, Using the structuralism doctrines, the narratology sought to identify the

common elements of the narratives and explained the common characteristics within the framework of formal and specific rules of narration” (Kreiwirth, 2017).

Reviewing the opinions of the theorists of this field, it seems that almost and eventually any kind of phenomenon in the world that is related to the text or followed by a text is a narratives. So if Aristotle defined narration in relation to the story, centuries after him David Herman stated that even a simple declaration, a command written on a glass of medicine, a sign of driving, an advertisement and every brief and concise sentence can also be a narration.

“All human classes and groups have their narrations ...The narration is universal: trans-historical and transcultural: simply, it is like life itself” (Roland Barthes cited in Zokaei & Shojaei Baghini, 2012).

With regard to narratology in the cinema, firstly, Roland Barthes, and then Gerard Genette, and later David Bordwell and Christine Metz, who were the most recent theoreticians of the field of narratives in the cinema, put forward some ideas that emphasized the film as a visual narratives.

“The film professionals often deal with a complex mixture of images and narrations (and sound) that shape their study. The films have not been constituted only of image or text (or just sound and music) as in the silent film. The animation itself is a narratives matter that is not entirely visual. Nevertheless, some movie scene artists want to make the vision monopolized”.

Since the cinema as a cinematographic culture and narratives is regarded as a culture-creating product, it seems that this form of narration can be considered firstly from a cultural and philosophical perspective.

“The narratives and the image are two inherently different cultural expressions. This ‘visual necessity’, along with the literary elitism as its alternative, only leads to suppression. They are the subjective, interdisciplinary, or cultural and political distinctive forms. Narration and image need to interact with cultures” (Ibid).

What is certain is that any cinematographic narratives produced in every genre and style and built in any culture carries its own messages and intends to affect

audiences in all cultures. Therefore, it is better after all to pay attention to the most important aspects of the narratives, namely philosophical and intellectual foundations.

## **2. A glance at the identity and position of the human being in the world according to Western philosophy**

In the human ontology from the point of view of the dominant Western philosophy and thinking, the position of man can be explained from various philosophical aspects and angles as referring to the views of Western philosophers. However, since the intention of this article is not to study pure philosophical theories, but the categories of identity, values and beliefs, lifestyle, individualism, family, love, life and death according to Western thinkers are mainly focused in the current article. Since these issues are raised more than other issues in cinematographic narratives, and it can be said they are the main themes of cinematographic works.

The identity of Western these days has been shaped and defined mainly after the Renaissance, the emergence of modernity, and the proposition of a new ideology derived from postmodernism.

“The analysis of modernity was the main motive for the growth and development of the social sciences in the nineteenth century. The ideas of Enlightenment and progress were introduced firstly in the eighteenth century, and were manifested in the French Revolution of 1789 and the American Revolution of 1776” (Spencer, 2004).

Humanism, which gradually prevailed from the beginning of the Renaissance in all aspects of life, culture, social relations, arts and thought of the West, led to marginalization of churches. After the industrial revolution and the growth of machinery, the philosophy and views of Western philosophers also were evolved by relying on the progress and development of sciences and technology. In the newer centuries, the existence and nature of man was identified and defined under the influence of modern perspectives and modernity. According to these thoughts and this worldview, the man is a being having consciousness and will, he is a decision maker and maker of the world. He is the only omnipotent of the universe. The lifestyle of Western

human and his view of himself, family, friendship, social relationships, etc. are mainly based on the individual or collective economic interests established on the social laws and citizenship; then they receive a human and social concept and meaning:

“... Socialization is also the basis of our individuality and freedom. In the course of socialization, each of us receives a sense of personal identity, the ability to think and act independently” (Giddens, 1995).

Man is not a part of a system based on individual ideology, and the underlying and psychological laws for Western humankind persuade individuals to follow the social system. Human concepts such as love, emotions, conscience and belief in the world after death find their meaning in the same system. The philosophy of being is the one that society and system dictates for the Western individuals, and eventually the Western man is a part of the whole. A whole that has been defined in the social systems and the individual and his freedom, intellectual and philosophical independence have been determined in the philosophy of social laws. In the definition of life for Western human, the emotions are a function of material and social rationality. Even at the highest level and in international relations, this is also the foundation of the human and social communication for the Western society.

The values and beliefs of the Western man come from the material being and the purely earthly and universal life. Therefore, in the cinema and in the narration of human life in the Western cinema, from every angle and every aspect of life, there are often beliefs and values derived from the context of Western culture and thinking. Naturally, in every form of narration, every civilization follows and seeks to emphasize and promote the same values and beliefs that come from the context of its culture.

“The first, second and third societies all differ in a variety of traditional social order dominating the world for thousands of years and up to two centuries. The discoveries that Western travelers around the world initiated, were transformative processes that destroyed pre-modern cultures. However, there is a tremendous cultural diversity that still exists within and among

societies. As humans, we all share some characteristics, but we are still influenced by the cultural values and habits of the societies in which we live in” (Ibid: 63).

At a glance, the concept of life and death, and what is represented in the western cinema from this perspective, indicates a man for whom the beginning and the fulfillment of the existence is the material world, and nothing is beyond this world. Religion is respectful and a ceremonial aspect of life and death. Just as the birth is real, the death is also an undeniable fact, and everything ends with the death of mankind. But what is more important is human beings' material life and happiness. This is the ultimate goal of all personal and social efforts:

“Western philosophy appeals to what is present and neglects what is absent. They have not paid attention to the fact that this being is a manifestation of nothing. From among the boundless ocean of nothing, they satisfied themselves only to what has come into the abyss of the being and forget the essence of the being” (Rikhtegaran, 2014).

Over the life of more than a hundred years of cinema, the themes presented in Western cinematographic art were very diverse. They have been analyzed from various aspects by the critics and cinematic theorists and sociologists. But there is always a subject that is shelved or less mentioned regarding the ultimate destination and ultimate goal of this cinema. What direction and philosophical orientation as well as *Weltanschauung* is the audience faced. In the final analysis, is this guidance a dominant prospect of the Western culture and its impact on audience's culture? Is the same Western culture, born and raised by the Greek culture in the new centuries especially current century, and ended to a way other than this ?

“In the Greek thought, the mankind has reached to a new relation of the world, stemming from the western dimensions. With the Greek thought, the spiritual eye that looked at Asian traditions, was closed and a theoretical eye was opened; Western history began to exist” (Ibid).

It can be said that identity, being and what gives the Western man a meaning is crystalized in the Western

philosophical system and ontology of the world, has been expanded with every narration and in every form of narration and has created its particular impact on the audience's cultures. This can also be considered with the postcolonial thoughts that are induced and supported by Western scholars and politicians.

“Apart from the compromise of particular writers, the problem of the ideological influence of the West is related to the foundations and basis of the post-colonialist narratives. For example, Marxist and feminist works on the political implications of the history of cultural forms, especially in the 1980s, have given prominence to the growth of the novel as a part of the development of the European bourgeois society that has been inevitably influenced by the assumptions and attitudes of that society (see feminist narratology, gender studies). As a result, a number of post-colonial writers and critics have emphasized the importance of native forms of oral and written narratives to minimize any sense of ideological contamination with the exploitative colonial cultures”.

According to what has been said, what is induced by the Western ontology through the written and visual narratives, etc., into the cultures of the Third World and the developing countries, in many cases and principally, is different and contradictory with the meaning of being and the cosmology of these cultures (here the Iranian culture and narratives).

“So, Latin thought translates Greek words without taking into account their genuine experience of being. In this way, Western thinking is founded by these translations. Latin thinking, in the translation of Greek terms, didn't entail necessary foundations, hence distorted the meaning of those terms. Thus, the history of Western thinking is actually an expansion of Latin thought, a history without a basis and root. The existence in history of metaphysics is initially considered to be substance. Thus, the thought of substance and being emerged. Accordingly, the existing would be a combination of substance and accident, which stood under (sub-stance) the same substance and what was presented had happened to it” (Ibid).

### 3. The man and the existence in the Iranian philosophy

In the Iranian Islamic philosophy and culture, the identity, being, lifestyle, individualism and values do not entirely have the complete extension. In other words, the individual is a continuous and affiliated social element that has an emotional, ideological and human relationship; the differences in life, economic and racial levels do not prevent this. This human relationship and interest in the Eastern Iranian society is originated from the ancient religious texts and Islamic Iranian mysticism that have defined it.

“In the Islamic mysticism the man is manifested in the course of history. Therefore, the closed definition of the Aristotle of the man as the rational animal is a subjective and abstract concept of man, but from the perspective of mystics like Ibn ‘Arabi, the intellect is the general property of the objects of the universe; so the man is known as the divine form not as the rational animal. In the mysticism, the divine form is a manifestation of infinite names, and in each period the state of a name is dominant, and the other names are dominated. Therefore, the man has a certain definition in each period, and is known with a particular name or names until it reaches the comprehensive name of Allah in the age of the seal of sainthood” (Salavati, 2010).

What are the values, goals and aspirations for which the Iranian man lives that consumes all his life and death toward? how they are embodied in his mind, language and life? It is clear that in response to this question, many different answers would be found in the minds of each researcher and thinker. But if we consider the basis of life and its purpose to achieve human perfection, then perhaps we can come up with a comprehensive and inclusive response that includes the modern Iranian man. So.

“When a child is born, his soul is in an animal level until it reaches the maturity and formal growth (fifteen years old). At that level, it is an actual animal and a potential man. When it seeks the truth by his intellect, he becomes an actual man. If this force evolves and reaches the limit of spiritual growth, and the faculty of inference and human virtues are fully realized (about forty years old), then he is considered as an actual

animal man and potential spiritual man (Ibid: 39). This is as long as it has not reached the level of perfect abstraction, since the human soul is transformative and is transmitted from the world of Creation to the world of Divine. With its substantial transformation, its existence becomes rational and abstract, which is the highest stage of abstraction” (Behravan & Hosseini, 2012).

As a result, the Iranian man, in the highest form, traverses his development and transcendence stages with the divine and ideal purpose; his substance of existence is always evolving. This evolutionary existential movement does not prevent the social, political, and family communication and relations. In other words, the scheme of the Iranian human being from the beginning to the present and during the history is perfectionism and his ultimate goal is his own happiness as well as his society’s welfare, and this is the basis of his world and his cosmology.

“According to Farabi, the goal of human presence in society and his participation in political affairs is to achieve material and spiritual perfections. He considers the three elements of ‘perfectionism’, ‘material instinct’ and ‘nature’ as the essential causes” (Ibid).

Another aspect that can be considered and proposed in the Iranian philosophy and ontology is the general belief of the Iranian man about the material world and the dignity of worldly life in public opinion. The common belief that the world is a transitory place and what remains of a man is the good name and his good work, and the ultimate goal of worldly life is spiritual happiness. This is one of the most important principles of the person’s life which is expressed philosophically by Hakim Mulla Sadra:

“With a great deal in this matter and determining the status and dignity of worldly life in transcendent philosophy, Sadr al-Muta’alehin stated: The world is a stage for the wayfarers toward the excellence of God, and the human soul is a passenger towards Him. The houses of this soul-passenger are respectively, corporeal, inorganic, vegetative, concupiscent, irascible, feeling, imagination and illusion; then the house of humanity is from the first stage to its final dignity, and then the worldly classes, in terms of their distance from the

supreme goodness. The wayfarer is obliged to pass from all levels to the true desirable” (Ibid).

Let us keep in mind that the Iranian man today, and the design and correspondence of the abovementioned issues and the expression of the mentioned philosophical views, with what we see in the life and work of Iranian man in the 21st century, may not seem to have a direct relationship. Especially that - in most of the works of the narratives works of our cinema today (minus government political films), there is perhaps even no hint. But the purpose of this discussion was to argue that ultimately the most complex existential form and existence of the Iranian man today, are presented with intensity and weakness. They give meaning to his existence, although they cannot apparently see the direct relationship between the Iranian citizen and these concepts. To conclude this issue, we would describe these meanings from another angle, and for the sake of deep understanding the concepts and themes in this section, we would deal with the narrations in the works of Iranian literature. If we want to consider the general and comprehensive intellectual and philosophical headings from which the Iranian ancient art and literature originated and count the main indices of the narratives and the narration, the main themes and the concepts taught in Iranian narratives literature are justice, love, philanthropy, faith, morals, mysticism, patriotism, wisdom, and the struggle against evil and darkness. The ultimate goal of this literature is undoubtedly creating knowledge, the cultivation of the soul and the heart, wisdom, the promotion of goodness, and the negation of evil, filth and darkness. Examples of these themes and concepts are very much in the works of Iranian narratives. Therefore, we disregard these instances and evidences.

#### **4. Difference and opposition in the Iranian and Western narratology**

In western narrations, what was the principle under which the theories of the past till now have been relied? According to the experts and theoreticians, which philosophy is followed by this narration? Which ontology is being followed? In contrast, how can we reach our own definitions in narratology and how can

we define it? What is the difference between these two situations about a subject or an event and a phenomenon, and what can they be? For further attention to the issue, we briefly review the Islamic Iranian philosophy and worldview that we have lived for centuries, and compare this philosophy with the Western philosophy. The vast majority of Western experiences in all fields of the humanities and art rely on the Greek foundations and worldview, a philosophy whose dominant aspect, and in almost all its tendencies, is earthly, materialistic and ontic, from the time of Aristotle to the present. Of course, though, during the Middle Ages and before the Renaissance, this course was almost halted, and Christianity and Christian idealism dominated the arts and literature of the West, the dominant aspect of the Western worldview was still to return and renew the Greek philosophy in different schools of the western philosophy after the Renaissance. It focused on the existence and tangibility and the objectivity of the world and the objective and material relations between phenomena, and perceived the existence and knowledge of the world and the essence of the world through the sensory, scientific and rational experience and rationalism. This dominant aspect was necessarily realized and manifested in all its material, spiritual, objective and subjective dimensions. Therefore, every artistic phenomenon, or any event, and every narratives, was in any form manifested, represented and defined between human beings and human minds in scientific, experimental, and cultural and artistic structures. They were based on the same worldview, consequently the same objective, material and tangible forms with the temporal, spatial and causal relationships:

“The narratives are the narration of the events with a time, space, and causal relationship, which occurs in a definite and definable world” (Bordwell, 1994).

Regarding these representations in novels, plays, scenarios, and others, we encounter a narration of the world that constitutes the narrator’s worldview. For example, when we see a movie from Hollywood, or we read a drama from William Shakespeare, a 16th-century narratives, or a drama from Tennessee Williams in the twentieth century, we soon find out

that what has been dealt with in those works and their impacts, are different from what is common in our culture, customs, and morality. We even feel the behavioral, and emotional differences of ourselves within the characters of the movies. These differences sometimes are such that we feel a kind of alienation with that work, especially regarding family and the relationships among the members of the Western family this issue is more evident. On the other hand, when we read the marvelous stories of for example Marzbak Kameh or Kaleyle's stories, Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, Nezami's Khamseh, Maulana's Masnavi, and the tales of Golestan Sa'di and the writings of the great scholars of mysticism, we perceive the morality, culture, feeling and, ultimately, our very nature in those narratives, with all our being, all the actions and reactions of an Iranian human being of emotions, thoughts, feelings and the beliefs that one has in the supernatural powers within the texts. In fact, apart from the social commonalities with Western man, an Iranian man is different by its existential nature having a culture that has an ancient and deep background. Perhaps the most important characteristic of this difference is the pure rationality of Western humanity and the illuminations of Iranian mankind. That is, a state of existence that believes that, beyond all relations of the material world those forces are dominant that orientate the cycle of existence to goodness and transcendence. The same state, when studying Iranian literature with the characters, thoughts, wisdom and values presented in the texts, brings us together and we believe that this narration has been shaped for us.

“Although the stories have been analyzed and discussed over the past thousands of years, the institutional study of narratives, which has focused on itself, is in contrast to the examination of individual narratives, the features of narratives or their relationships, and is a relatively new phenomenon. Over the past few decades or so, the researchers have been far from the exploration of the narratives features of a play, the story of the Bible, the historiographical report, or the film, and have begun to rigorously examine the narratives itself. They have raised some exact questions not about this

or that narrations, but about the nature of the story, the place, how it works, what does it do and for whom” (Kreiswirth, 2017).

On the other hand, if we look at the foundations and principles as the styles and patterns of Iranian narratives that have been appeared in the written and oral literature of Iran and have become a kind of literary tradition over the centuries and have been shaped the narrations and review these principles and goals, then our comparison about the Iranian narratives and the status of Western narratives would be clarified. The principles that stem from the Iranian narratives and from the context of its literature and culture mainly include prognosis, morality, battle between good and evil, light and darkness, knowledge-augmentation, learning, fate and destiny, struggle, happiness and accompaniment of heavenly and earthly characteristics.

For example, in the old texts of Iranian narratives literature, the man of a good nature and the man of a bad nature and the good and the evil were against each other. Then we follow the narratives with the previous knowledge of the characters of the story, and until the end this prognostication, which is a kind of belief in our goodness and the avoidance of darkness and evil, leads us throughout our story. In these texts, the nature of mankind is mainly considered, and this nature in the eastern area is more metaphysical and natural:

“The tree that is bitter in nature, you may place it in the Garden of Paradise,

And if you irrigate its root, you may harvest pure honey instead of water,

Finally, it may became a valuable treasure, the same bitter fruit being cultivated”

(Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, 1990).

In this sense, one who is bad in nature, would eventually reveal his nature. In contrast, one who is good in nature, would reveal his good nature at last. In the philosophy of the Illumination, human beings are of Divine Illumination.

“This ability from Suhrawardi's point of view is to have Kian Divine Illumination which was the dominant purpose of Suhrawardi's thought. This is the same as Avesta's calling as the Iranian Divine Illumination.

The illumination followers have understood this Divine Illumination so that it was defined by Zoroaster, that is, "a light which is emanated from the divine nature, and every human being is capable of doing activity or technique based on that". This Divine Illumination is actually understood as the light which has been given to the prophets (Bani Ardalan, 2014).

Iraj, Sohrab, Siavash, Esfandiari and Rustam were good characters in nature and Salm, Afrasiab, Shaghad, Garvi had a treacherous character. This attitude is focused on the essence of mankind in the Iranian illumination following thought. But in the Western thought, the man has a different nature. Characters are the result of education, time, place, material and worldly factors, and concrete worldly elements that are personified by the causes and effects. These differences and meanings in Western philosophy make their own narrations in the field of anthropology. The Iranian philosophy, which was briefly mentioned and brings forth another kind of narratives. How is the manifestation of this kind of definitions and this kind of ontology in the discussion of narration and dramatic works in the West and Iran? Does what has happened in our contemporary art and literature and our cinema correspond to the Iranian ontology and the illuminated philosophy? In a family film or in a Western play, we face people who have no metaphysical aspect and terrestrial existence. Characters are human beings in a totally material dimension that expose to difficulties in the course of time and become successful due to their own abilities and efforts. It should be noted that here we do not want to judge about its correctness or falseness of this type of narration. The fact is that most of the writers and artists of the West have been successful in their work ever since. As based on their literary and narratives traditions regarding their particular ontology, they have been successful in the works. Since, according to literature and narratives traditions extracted from the ontological texts, they have created their works. In almost all of the cinematic works and masterpieces of the Western world, this meaning is generalizable. The produced works reflect the same thinking and worldview that is completely matched with the Western society and is rooted in

Western literary traditions. But if we look at the works of Iranian contemporary narratives, including story, script etc. according to the worldview and the Eastern Iranian philosophy, we would find that, apart from a few prominent works, the rest are either completely alien to these concepts or have not much portion of the Iranian philosophy and ontology. They have imitated the worldview and ontology crystallized in the Western literature and cinema. Here it is necessary to note that the purpose of this discussion was not expressing the mode of the narration in the Iranian works, because it is well evident that the narratives of Iranian cinema have always an Iranian characteristic and the story is narrated in the social relations and in the Iranian space. But the hidden agenda of the narratives has another aspect. In order to reveal the essential and normative differences between the Western and the Iranian man, we considered in the following table as a comparison with the assumptions of an ideal Western and Iranian man.

##### **5. Some Instances of Iranian narratives**

The Iranian narratives in a simplest definition is to narrate stories (narration) in literature and cinema in such a way that the signs and meanings generated from the narration explicitly or implicitly are related to the Iranian thought, ethics, culture, art, family, architecture and social and historical values. They should be originated from Iranian philosophy and knowledge. In other words, all the narratives aspects of the produced work should have an institutional relationship with these concepts.

The form and content of the Iranian narratives is not indicative of the fact that all the narratives and all the texts produced follow the same stories and narratives as in the old literature. We do not want to go some way back to the past and imitate the ancient texts of the previous centuries. The point is to bring the spirit of storytelling and narration to the sources of Iranian narration which is constituted of the good, hope, peace, friendship and human and social values and so on. This does not mean that we turn away from events and truths of the time and narrate in a legendary and far-fetched reality. But, proportioned to their content and form,

Table 1. A Comparison Between The Concept of Ideal Man in Western and Persian Societies. Source: authors.

<b>Existential signs and manifestations</b>	<b>Iranian man</b>	<b>Western man</b>
1 The presence and support of heavenly or metaphysical forces in all aspects of the universe	Believed	not believed
2 Good and evil performance in life	It has a mutual relationship in which the good brings good and the evil encompasses evil.	not believed
3 Prognosis	It's as if destiny has come to pass, but the right of choice of man has not been forbidden.	The destiny and end of man is the result of his own manners.
4 Fate	Many of the affairs are considered as the result of fate	It is meaningless.
5 Believing in another world	believed	It does not that much important .
6 Rewards of good and punishment of evil	It is the basic principle of life and death	It is important in the material world.
7 Belief in the independent existence of man	Man is a being created by God and is His trust on earth, yet he has the will and independence	Humanism is the fundamental principle of Western philosophy.
8 Following human pure nature	It is a value	It is observed
9 Individuality and society	They are associated	The society has a priority for the individual
10 Morality	As the basic principle of human relationships	What social system dictates is respectable

today's narrations, events and facts narrating around them should approach to the Iranian concepts and narration themes . We consider what has been provided by the spirit of the Iranian narratives in the rich texts of Iranian literature over centuries. For example, in Shahnameh, Hakim Ferdowsi has mentioned the most beautiful human features such as reason and rationality, intellection, justice, love, altruism, struggle, and so on. The ultimate destination of Shahnameh's stories is toward the same values. Now, in a social drama or an animation, and even a modern police novel, the signs and meanings of Iranian spirit and character should be narrated in different ways, according to the design and story of narration, both in its form and in its content. What has already been done and created in Iranian narratives texts in the broad and extensive range of Iranian history should be reconciled with the necessity and needs of today.

If we want to provide evidence and examples for this

claim, we can mention the most important works remaining in the various forms of this kind of narration from Iranian cinema masters, such as Abbas Kiarostami, Bahram Beyzaie, Ali Hatami, some of Dariush Mehrjui's works, Amir Naderi and some of Massoud Kimiyayee's works, and in recent years, some works of Reza Mirkarimi such as "Very Far Very Close" and "A small piece of Sugar".

In almost all of Abbas Kiarostami's works, we can see the spectacular and unique cinematographic Iranian narratives. In these films, the spectator faces Iranian spaces, Iranian architecture, Iranian themes and the themes and concepts institutionalized in the Iranian culture and history. In works like "where is the friend's house?", "under the olive trees", "homework", etc., the elements of an Iranian narratives coalesce with each other to create an innovative, novel and relevant narratives of Iranian literature and art, and represent a certain existence and entity which has previously

been neglected by the movie makers. What makes the audience to be familiar with this cinema and narratives is space, time, speech and images, and the subject matter presented in the narratives. All of this is originated from Iranian thinking and philosophy. It wouldn't not be an exaggeration to say that the reasons for the recognition and validation of world-renowned cinematic associations of these works have the same identity and authenticity of the work. However, the approval or rejection of a work in the world of cinematic societies can have different reasons. Nevertheless, the main criteria of these assemblies have always been the originality, language, and creative expression in the final presentation of the work. The Iranian narratives and its analogy to the western narratives are not unlike the old examples of Iranian carpet, which so far nobody has been hesitant in its originality and identity. While many Iranian artifacts and industrial productions may not be of much interest to the Western world, because they have made their better and more advanced examples. Particularly, our industrial artifacts in many cases imitate and rebuild the works of the West. This is an example of the narration imitating the Western cinema patterns vis-a-vis the Iranian specific narratives. In the works of Ali Hatami, we also encounter another kind of Iranian narration. In these works, we see the Iranian narratives in the context of Qajar era and contemporary Iranian history, emphasizing Iranian language and culture. All the elements of the literacy and cinematic narration that we observe and receive, all form a structured and integrated context of culture, history, morals, temperament, thinking and identity that has been special for Iranians of the last two centuries. In the works of Bahram Beyzaee, the narratives also involves the elements such as the history and historical presence of personality in the context of Iranian culture and personality and identity. They are inextricably linked to the Iranian narratives themes and concepts mentioned. In the films of Dariush Mehrjui, from his oldest work of "Cow" and in the decades later "Hmoon", the Iranian narratives is followed by the mentioned features. Regarding the examples from the works of Iranian

cinema masters, we can say that in the end what we call the Iranian narratives in these works is a kind of people's ontology that has its own characteristics including: an existence in culture, thinking, ideals, struggles, family, love and all that give to the human being an existence and a meaning of its own. This existence can be called the Iranian human existence. In other words, in these works, we encounter humans who have a deep and ancient knowledge and whose values and aspirations have the ancient roots. At the same time, they are still redefined in the new age, and they take on a new form. Although the provided examples are some unparalleled efforts to present the Iranian narratives, it is worth noting that so far these attempts have not been raised or discussed as the Iranian narrations. So, understanding the needs of today's national film scene and looking into the cinema world, if we try creatively and artistically to look to our own cinematographic literature and narratives, we can hope that in the near future we may achieve a dramatic and cinematographic literature with a narration relying on the Iranian ontology. What is meant is to try and realize the path to a cinema with an Iranian identity. For over than a hundred years of Iranian cinema, some efforts in this area have been carried out, and there are some beautiful and lasting examples in Iranian archives mentioned before. But this is all very small in respect of the talents of Iranian cinema. The culture and rich sources of Iranian literature and the level of knowledge and scientific and technological development that have occurred in the cinema in recent decades makes it necessary to make our cinema in the world known as a particular Iranian cinema. Earlier, the cinema of Japan and India has come to this recognition and quality and identity in a shorter time than the life of Iranian cinema. The most striking example is the Japanese director Akira Kurosawa. He has succeeded in providing a cinema based on the culture and narratives traditions, culture and literature of his land. Moreover, "Satyajit Ray" in India and some other nations have more or less been able to identify their cultural, historical and philosophical originality and their existential nature in cinema in the form of diverse historical social

narratives and make a special movie for the world. The causes of their success are the support and guidance of the cultural and artistic organizations and the cultural and artistic planning of these countries. Moreover, their cinema is tied to their definitions, traditions, lives and thoughts, because it has been derived from the interest, culture, and Japanese, Indian, Oriental worldview. This look and purposefulness in the cinema is so much that in the cinematic works, even in the display of everyday relationships, speeches, clothes, eating and ... all represent the special characteristics of culture and literature and the lives of people who have been narrated on the screen of the cinema. These specifications and properties have not been oriented to the imitation in the course of decades when confronting other cultures and remaining true to their true origins.

### Findings

The existing narratology has been defined and designed on the basis of Western philosophy. Its thought has emerged from the literature and writings of the Western culture. The features and richness of the intellectual and ontological traditions in the Iranian culture and literature and art have the potential and capacity to generalize their special and different patterns that have been hidden throughout the centuries and in the context of literary and artistic works as the styles and methods of explanation and production of the Iranian narrations in a variety of cinematographic narratives. Naturally, it can become a cinema with a more tangible and manifested narratives for the Iranian audience and with a national narratives in the cinema world. Although in the lifetime of Iranian cinema there have been some effective and dispersed efforts in this regard, and some of the great masters of Iranian cinema have been struggling with it, the wave of imitation and sequel to the style of the Western cinema has always been dominant and has prevented it from being taken seriously.

### Conclusion

Narratology and its expansion to the sciences and

arts, especially the cinema that has been increased in recent decades, leads to the studying of the styles and the methods of narratology that are mainly Western, and are referred to the Iranian narratives and legacies. We need to work on finding the working procedures for explaining and defining the narratives and narration based on the artistic and literary arts of our culture and civilization and the up-to-date and efficient findings in this area. However, the patterns and principles presented in existing narratology do not fully correspond to the narration background in Iranian literary sources. They are essentially different from the Iranian intellectual and philosophical principles. Therefore, the Iranian narratives culture and traditions, which are derived from the ancient Iranian literature and culture and defined in our society, are very obscure in our contemporary cinema; since it has not been paid much attention in many cinematographic works. The image and narration of Iran's cinema from culture, society, and world around is largely based on western cinema's patterns. Except for a few Iranian skilled filmmakers and playwrights, the general and dominant role of art in cinema is the imitation of Western narratives. This dilemma has several causes. One of these reasons is the writers and filmmakers' negligence of the literary, philosophical and mystical sources of ancient Iranian culture and civilization. As a matter of fact, we could not deal with the cinema based on the Iranian nature and ontology, originated from the ancient Iranian culture and philosophy, and bring to the world a special cinema with the national, ethnic features. So we can better understand and experience the sense of friendship with a work that comes from the heart of our culture and our land. Therefore, it is better to firstly identify the literary and narratives traditions in the context of Iranian literature and narration. In order to understand the existential nature and assess the potentialities of the Iranian narratives, we shall provide own patterns in this field. We can know our audience better and deeper, and move with these backgrounds in the direction of Iranian cinematographic narratives.

## Reference List

- Arjmand, S. M. (1989). *Narrative Patterns in Iranian Cinema*. Tehran: Farabi Cinema Foundation.
- Azadarmaki, T. & Khalegh Panah, K. (2011). Cinema about Cinema, Meta-cinema in Iranian Cinema after the Islamic Revolution and Controversy Over Cinema Itself. *Quarterly of Cultural and Communication Association*, 7(25): 71-95.
- Bani Ardalan, I. (2010). *Epistemology of Technical Works (An Essay on the Concept of Technique and Art)*. Tehran: Islamic Culture and Arts Institute.
- Bani Ardalan, I. (2014). *The Opportunity of Alas*. Tehran: Islamic Culture and Arts Institute.
- Behravan, H. & Hosseini, M. S. (2012). A Remark on Mulla Sadra's Political Thought. *Doctrines of the Islamic philosophy*, (11): 59-80.
- Bordwell, D. (1994). *Narratives in Fiction 1*. Translated by Tabatabaei, A. Tehran: Farabi Cinema Foundation.
- Chrisman, L. & Williams, P. (1993). *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: A reader*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Dirlik, A. (1994). The post-colonial Aura: Third world criticism in the age of global capitalism. *Critical inquiry*, 20(2): 328-356.
- Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. (1990). Tehran: Amir Kabir.
- Fludernik, M. (2012). Baznamai-e Gofar (Speech Representation). In *Encyclopedia of Theories of Narratives*. Ragheb, M. (Ed.). Tehran: Niloofar.
- Giddens, A. (1995). *Sociology*. Translated by Sabouri, M. Tehran: Ney.
- Hashemi Nejad, Q. (2015). *Mystical Stories*. Tehran: Hermes.
- Hashemi Nejad, Q. (2016). *Love of the Ears, Love of the Earring*. Tehran: Hermes.
- Hori, A. (2011). Toward Spiritual Narratology, A Look at the Hints of the Sea: The Poetics of Narrative in the Spiritual Mathnavi by Hamidreza Tavakoli. *Research on Contemporary World Literature*, 4(13): 181-196.
- Kreiswirth, M. (2017). *The Narratives Turn in the Humanities*. In Encyclopedia of Theories of Narratives. Ragheb, M. (Ed.). Tehran: Niloofar.
- Mohammadzadeh, A. (2005). Iranian-French Moralistic Literature, Inducing or Persuading? The Narratology of Reasoning Discourse in Ethical Texts. *Research on Contemporary World Literature*, 10(28): 69-86.
- Rikhtegaran, M. R. (2014). *Truth and Its Relation to Art (A commentary of Martin Heidegger's dissertation)*. Tehran: Islamic Culture and Arts Institute.
- Salavati, A. (2010). The Historical Transformation of Man by Mulla Sadra. *Shenakht*, 1(63): 121-134.
- Spencer, H. (2004). *Traditional Society, Modern Society*. Translated by Ansari, M. Tehran: Naghsh-e Jahan.
- Tavakoli, H. R. (2010). *From the Hints of the Sea: The Poetics of Narrative in the Spiritual Mathnavi*. Tehran: Cheshmeh.
- Tolan, M. J. (2004). *Critical Linguistic Introduction to the Narratives*. Translated by Hori, A. Tehran: Farabi Cinema Foundation.
- Zokaei, M. S. & Shojaei Baghini, N. (2012). Study of the Method of Structural Analysis of Narratives in the Cinema. *Quarterly of Iranian Association of Cultural and Communications Studies*, 8(29): 117-138.

### COPYRIGHTS

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with publication rights granted to the Bagh-e Nazar Journal. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



### HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Zare'i, A., Bani Ardalan, I. & Namjoo, A. (2019). An Introduction to Iranian Narration and Imitation of Western Narration in Iranian Cinema. *Bagh-e Nazar*, 16 (73):59-72.

DOI: 10.22034/bagh.2019.136596.3645

URL: [http://www.bagh-sj.com/article\\_88992\\_en.html](http://www.bagh-sj.com/article_88992_en.html)

