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Aesthetic Depictions of Madness and Detachment: A Comparative Study of Shahrnush Parsipur's *Women Without Men* and Shirin Neshat's Cinematic Adaptation

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Dedication

For my parents who have troubled me with the curse of existence yet raised me to see feelingly with my heart and touch tenderly with my eyes: *"I was born in the shadow of a star. My mother, the moon, gave me her coolness. My father, the sun, gave me his warmth, and the universe to live in. Imagine that, I have so much in this life."* Faces Places (2017).

This imperfect work is also for all the people whom I hold dearly into my heart.

Thank you for everything.

Majid.

Dedication

For my unconquerable Soul

To my moon and my stars; my parents, for gifting me with light

To my companions on the journey, for sharing my plights

To my brothers and my sisters, by blood or by story

To those with us present, and those with us we carry

To Palestinian children soaring high in heaven.

"The first flame quickly fades… darkness will shortly settle… but one day, tiny flames will dance across the darkness"

Iliase

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Abstract

The differences between artistic forms of expression create differences in the thematic representation of concepts. Focusing on Shahrnush Parsipur's *Women Without Men* (2011) and its adaptation of the same title by Shirin Neshat and her contributor Shoja Azari (2009), this dissertation compares the disparities in the portrayal of madness and detachment in cinema and literature. It explores how each of the two art forms expresses the same concepts differently. In this research, the psychological understanding of madness and detachment follows Lacan's registers and their Borromean rings correlation. In order to demonstrate how madness and detachment are a continuous thematic heritage of Iran's literary and cinematic tradition, this study employs Gilles Deleuze's concepts of movement-image and time-image for the analysis of the movie, and narratological concepts like narrative voice and focalization for the novella. Additionally, comparative literature, through the reciprocal illumination of the arts, endeavors to compare how cinema and literature achieve distinctive depictions of themes because of the differences of their tools. In the context of this research, the eventual artistic interpretation of madness and detachment is significant since literature and cinema that are born in Iran or produced by Iranians are usually shaded historically, politically, or socially. In broader terms, this dissertation attempts to go beyond issues of faithfulness and the dichotomy of original/copy found in the adaptation theory, trying to show how cinema and literature add to and borrow from each other artistically.

Keywords: Madness, Detachment, Iranian Cinema, Iranian Literature, Focalization, Movement-image, Time-image, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Lacan, Comparative Literature.

Résumé

Les différences entre les formes artistiques d'expression engendrent des variations dans la représentation thématique des concepts. En se concentrant sur "*Femmes sans hommes*" de Shahrnush Parsipur (2011) et son adaptation cinématographique éponyme réalisée par Shirin Neshat et Shoja Azari (2009), cette dissertation compare les disparités dans la représentation de la folie et du détachement entre le cinéma et la littérature. Elle explore comment chacune de ces deux formes artistiques exprime différemment les mêmes concepts. Dans cette recherche, la compréhension psychologique de la folie et du détachement suit les registres de Lacan et leur corrélation avec les anneaux borroméens. Afin de démontrer comment la folie et le détachement constituent un héritage thématique continu de la tradition littéraire et cinématographique iranienne, cette étude utilise les concepts de l'image-mouvement et de l'image-temps de Gilles Deleuze pour l'analyse du film, et des concepts narratologiques tels que la voix narrative et la focalisation pour la nouvelle. De plus, la littérature comparée, à travers l'illumination réciproque des arts, s'efforce de comparer comment le cinéma et la littérature parviennent à des représentations distinctes des thèmes en raison des différences de leurs outils. Dans le contexte de cette recherche, l'interprétation artistique finale de la folie et du détachement est significative, car la littérature et le cinéma nés en Iran ou produits par des Iraniens sont généralement nuancés historiquement, politiquement ou socialement. De manière plus générale, cette dissertation tente de dépasser les questions de fidélité et la dichotomie origine/copie présentes dans la théorie de l'adaptation, en cherchant à montrer comment le cinéma et la littérature s'enrichissent mutuellement sur le plan artistique.

Mots-clés: Folie, Détachement , Cinéma Iranien, Littérature Iranienne, Focalisation, Image-Mouvement, Image-Temps, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Lacan, Littérature Comparée.

الملخص

فنيا، ينشأ الإختلاف في التمثلات الثيمية نتيجة لإختلاف الأشكال الفنية التي تعبر عنها. من خلال التركيز على الرواية القصيرة 'نساء دون رجال' لشهرانوش بارسيبور (2011) و الفيلم الذي يحاكيها بنفس العنوان لشيرين نشأة و شوجا أزاري (2009)، تقارن هذه المذكرة بين الأدب و السينما في سياق الإختلاف الحاصل في تصوير الجنون و الإنفصال عن الواقع، و تتحرى كيف يمكن لكل شكل فني أن يعبر عن نفس المضامين بشكل مختلف. في هذا البحث، يندرج مفهوما الجنون و الإنفصال عن الواقع ضمن التقسيمات المترابطة التي طرحها لاكان. يوظف هذا البحث أفكار دولوز في السينما، تحديدا صورة الحركة و صورة الزمن، لتحليل الفيلم، إلى جانب مفاهيم سردية كالصوت السردي و التبئير لتحليل الرواية القصيرة معا من أجل إظهار كيف يمكن للجنون و الإنفصال عن الواقع أن يكونا إرثا ثيميا مستمرا للأدب و السينما الإيرانية. إضافة إلى كل هذا، و من خلال مفهوم 'التنوير المتبادل للفنون،' الذي ينتمي الى ميدان الأدب المقارن، تحاول المذكرة أن ترى كيف للأدب و السينما أن يصلا إلى وصفٍ خلّاق للثيمات كنتيجة حتمية لإختلاف الأدوات و المصادر التي يُوظفها كلاهما. في سياق هذا البحث، تكمن أهمية تصوير الجنون و الإنفصال عن الواقع خارج إطارٍ إجتماعي، أو تاريخي، أو سياسي، الذي يُترجمان فيه عادة، و إعادة إدراجه ضمن سياق فنيّ. على نطاق أوسع، تصبو هذه المذكرة إلى تخطي حيز الوفاء للسرد و ثنائية الأصل/التقليد، الموجودين في نظرية المحاكاة، في محاولة لإيضاح كيف للسينما و الأدب أن يضيفا إلى و يأخذا من العمق الفني لبعضهما البعض.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجنون، الإنفصال عن الواقع، السينما الإيرانية، الأدب الإيراني، التبئير، صورة الحركة، صورة الزمن، جيل دولوز، جاك لاكان، الأدب المقارن.

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Introduction

Kendrick Lamar, by the end of his unreleased song *Prayer*, emphasizes that Earth is just a rock without the voices of arts. Arts' intrinsic qualities of mimesis and catharsis do not limit its ability to convey different depictions of different concepts, where each art by its extrinsic characteristics creates a unique artistic imagery. However, when different art forms are depicting the same concept(s), the attention should be paid to the observation of how they work together to provide a thorough expression of that concept instead of seeing whose representation is better than the other's. Nonetheless, this dialectical debate, in Iran specifically, has been paid minimal attention to, as well as the artistic interpretation of thematic representations of concepts like madness and detachment, whose interpretations are usually confined to a sociological, political or historical context. *Women without Men* (Zanan Bedoone Mardan, 1989) by Shahrnush Parsipur and its adaptation by Shirin Neshat and her collaborator Shoja Azari (2009) propose themselves to this context through the particular representation of madness and detachment, one that literature does differently from cinema on the levels of content and resources through which it is conveyed. This dissertation researches the possibility to treat concepts of madness and detachment aesthetically and separately from its sociological, historical, and political context. First, the research contains an analysis of the novella and its adaptation to examine madness and detachment on the level of the content, then, in the same context, it tries to compare the merits and fundamentals of literature and cinema beyond issues of hypertextuality, faithfulness, and the duality of original/copy.

It is important to note that this research relies on the English translated versions of *Women without Men* by Faroukh Farridoun (2011), to ensure accessibility and consistency.

Women without Men: A Novel of Modern Iran (Persian: Zanan Bedoone mardan, 1989), one of the most celebrated and most controversial of Parsipur's fictions too, is dedicated to the theme of women's quest for a fulfilling life. Parsipur sketches five women—Mahdokht, Fa‟iza, Munis, Farrokhlaqa and Zarrinkolah—who represent five parallel journeys to achieve a gratifying life. They are united by a sense of inadequacy with their ongoing states of existence and, therefore, driven by an urge to discover a higher meaning and purpose to their lives. However, the connotation of a 'fulfilling life' differs for each woman, exemplified by their varied aspirations. Parsipur assigns a goal to each one of them that they reach by the end. The characters serve as five different cases in point for the author to study the nature of desire in women. On the other hand, taking the work away from its feminist context, themes like madness and detachment emerge more prominently when the work is closely examined.

Around 2009, Shirin Neshat and Shoja Azari, who are Iranian visual artists and filmmakers, saw a promising extension of the novella to be a featured film because of the universal significance they noticed in Shahrnush's writings, even though they faced many difficulties. Starting from the magic realist nature of the source text, which is technically very demanding and hard to be transferred to the screen, to the ban of the work in Iran and the author's exile. The wish to produce the work in their home country was abandoned, since Tehran and Karaj had to be recreated in Casablanca, Morocco. Ultimately, the work became genuinely an international effort- a German, French and Austrian production, directed by Iranians, and shot in Morocco. However, the film is not totally an honest adaptation. Makhdot, the main character of the novel, was omitted for multiple reasons and the narrative underwent many changes, but that does not prevent the film from presenting the story in an exceptional and explicit manner that adds to the narrative as a whole.

Women Without Men's narrative, in general, was followed with remarkable attention, where the novella and the film both were examined attentively and from multiple angles by

researchers. Jayasree Mukherjee's *Women With/Out Men: Deconstructing Shahrnush Parsipur's Women without Men* provides a deconstructive reading of the novella, where she explicates the fact that the text harbors about an equal share of evidence for and against its avowed ideological project (Mukherjee 14). The research paper presents how the binary oppositions established by the author keep making and breaking themselves throughout the course of the narrative. A Derridean reading- as called in the paper- is the tool used to break down dichotomies of woman/man; individual/society; spiritual/material or physical; nature/culture; death/life; and ideal/real. The reading takes each of the mentioned dualities and tries to place it in the context of the work through the elements of the novella: the characters, the narrative, the course of events, the themes, the plot…etc. However, this insightful deconstructive reading does not refer to other essential dichotomies like sanity/madness, and presence/detachment.

Ali Massoud Meghdadi tackled partly the issue of the translation of *Women Without Men* into two different versions, Talattof\Sharlet and Faridoun Farrokh's. Meghdadi suggests that the translation of Talattof\Sharlet held a more faithful approach to translating the book, where Farrokh took more interpretative liberty in conveying the "potentially confusing cultural idiosyncrasies" to a foreign audience (170). The translation of the novella was not just on the level of language, it was also at the level of medium, which Neshat adopted in her project to make an adapted screenplay "The madness suffered by these women and the vacillation between real and surreal struck Neshat as rich with potential for a film rendering" (154). Meghdadi alluded to the richness of the madness suffered by the characters, but only superficially, which creates a gap that simulates interest to study this richness more deeply.

On the other hand, considerable amount of attention has been paid to the movie as numerous research adopted it as a case study. While researchers have tackled the issue of representation, the one they addressed was confined to feminist notions of female oppression

in the patriarchal society of Islamic ruled Iran. Zahedi suggests that it is important that these issues have to be addressed, however, it is more important to put the female subjects of Parsipur and Neshat's work outside the box which the media presented for them as stereotypical images of oppressed and silenced women or as helpless victims of patriarchal values (420). Zahedi's article explores the possible interpretation of the orchard in the film as a Foucauldian heterotopia, since, for Foucault, 'heterotopia' is an 'other space' as 'a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live' (qtd in. Zahedi 429-430). Nonetheless, Foucault did not associate it with a feminist utopia, since one could argue that the magical and supernatural phenomena can be attributed to a state of mental disorientation (madness) employed by the author to lead the characters to discover the truth and emancipate themselves from their internal psychological conflicts. Simona Olaru-Poşiar argues that, akin to Hamlet in Shakespeare's canon, madness in *Women Without Men* may function as an emancipatory tool (4).

Walking, Haunting, and Affirmative Aesthetics: The Case of Women without Men by Maud Ceuterick, in the defense of women, analyzes closely the film's 'affirmative aesthetics' that counteract current power-geometries, and how it opens up alternatives to their status quo. The article explores how haunting the public space empowers Iranian women, as it aesthetically opens up places to which women do not normally have access and makes structural inequalities visible. Maud clearly states that

> I argue that haunting emerges as a form of 'affirmative aesthetics' […] First, I explore how haunting and (in)visible practices of space challenge gender binaries. Second, as the women protagonists of the film haunt 'public' spaces, they open up what Michel Foucault (1986) calls "heterotopias", a hybrid site in-between the real and the imaginary. Finally, walking gives shape to a political and affirmative statement, which is visible both in the film and across feminist digital media (96-99).

Nonetheless, Maud's interpretation of the 'affirmative aesthetics' overlooks the presence of madness and detachment aesthetically in the film, which, parenthetically, does not serve to demean the characters but rather to illuminate their inner lives.

Most of the studies that adopted the case of *Women Without Men*'s narrative, either the novella or the film, placed it in multiple contexts of exile, gender, translation, but did not touch on its artistic nature generally and the aesthetic depiction of madness and detachment specifically. This study postulates that the narrative in general contains images of madness and detachment which are depicted differently between the movie and the novella yet should be read holistically. Since this research aims to examine concepts of madness and detachment through an artistic lens, it must be taken into consideration to see how it is possible to interpret images of madness and detachment of the characters out of their sociological, political, and historical context, as well as how the novella and its adaptation work together to render powerful image of psychological troubles?

Since this research deals with the thematic representation of madness and symbolic detachment on two levels, it employs a close analytical and comparative approach as a methodology. Adopting Lacanian psychoanalytic frameworks, mainly his structuralization of the psyche in different registers (the imaginary, the symbolic, the real), Deleuze's movement-image and time-image, and Genette's understanding of narrative voice and focalization aid to interpret and trace the location of rupture inside the characters' minds. Moreover, the reciprocal illumination of the arts will constitute the comparison of literature and cinema in the depiction of the same concepts.

This research is divided into three chapters. The first supports the conceptual and contextual framework that the work relies on. It will present how the two notions of madness and detachment have been considered thematic traditions in Iranian literature and cinema. This

is relevant to understanding that the thematic representation of madness and detachment there does not come in a vacuum. Lacan's registers and their interdependency form a context to understand these concepts since they are essentially psychological. Additionally, the analysis of the content is going to be undertaken through Deleuze's cinematic concepts of movement-image and time-image for the movie, whereas the novella is examined through narratological concepts of the narrative voice and focalization. Lastly, the comparison of the characteristics of literature and cinema as separate art forms, in the context of the study, follows the concept of the reciprocal illumination of the arts, which belongs to the paradigm of comparative literature.

The second chapter is devoted to the analysis of the novella and its adaptation. The novella's analysis will be relying on narratological and Lacanian psychoanalytic concepts to reveal the mental turmoil of the characters. Also, the analysis of certain characters in the light of 'movement-image' and 'time-image' and then Lacan's registers prove the oscillation of the characters between madness and detachment.

The third chapter focuses on the characteristics of literature and cinema as art forms that depict the same themes differently. This difference points to both strengths and weaknesses of each art form, where the reading of both, nonetheless, should adopt a comparative methodology that emphasizes a complementary artistic expression rather than a dichotomous evaluation.

This study contributes to the comparative literary scholarship on the inter-artistic level by providing new understanding of universal thematic representations in contrast to restrictive studies of Western works as defining humanitarian standards. This research also introduces the case studies to deeper thematic layers that are aesthetic and artistic instead of disparaging to

women. This study also attempts to untangle Iranian literature and cinema from their socio-historical and political readings.

Chapter One: Conceptual and Contextual Framework

This chapter sets the conceptual underpinnings as well as the contextual framework of this study. First, it will provide the presence of madness and detachment as thematic traditions in the literary and the cinematic heritage of Iran. Second, it will trace the phenomenon of madness historically according to Foucault, in addition to conceptualizing it psychoanalytically in Lacanian thought. Additionally, Deleuze's cinematic concepts of movement-image and time-image will be explained to be used later in the analysis of the film. Moreover, it will tackle concepts of narrative voice and focalization, in order to be applied in the analysis of the novella. Lastly, it will show how comparative literature became more inclusive to other artistic forms of expression through the idea of the reciprocal illumination of the arts, and that is what will frame the comparison between literature and cinema in terms of form and characteristics.

1. Madness and Detachment in Iran's Literary and Cinematic Tradition

Apparently, the connection between the notion of madness, regardless of its derivatives when translated from Persian to English or any other language, and the Iranian forms of expression, specifically literature and cinema, is one issue that must be examined critically. The presence of this notion from ages ago until today in both art forms forces itself to be seen as a thematic tradition.

1.1. Literary Lineages of Madness and the Consequential Detachment

Any literature around the world, and as ever, is marked with a special signature that no other one has, whether thematically, stylistically, technically or in terms of genre. Arguably, Japan owns haiku poetry, Magic Realism sprang in Latin America, the Russian Superfluous Man is never overtaken by any other man, and the Persian literary heritage, specifically of Iran, will cling forever to poetry. The geographical, cultural, linguistic contiguity and kinship with Arab(ic) peninsula created a room for exchange between both parts. Away from the

conversation of who influenced the other, and mainly in poetry, mutual types as: *Hija* (satire or lampoon), *Rithā'* (an elegy), *Ghazal* (a love poem) are present in the literature of Persians and Arabs.

Madness as a trend, and legacy, is arguably as old as the literary history of the Persian culture. Regardless of the semantic change of the word across time, and the interchangeable use of the word with its derivatives like: 'madness' *(jonūn)*, *Ishq* (Arabic: عشق, *ʿishq*), *Hawas* (arabic: هوس *hawas*) alongside others, the appealing notion oscillates between a powerful and dwindling presence in the narratives of great Iranian literary figures like: Ferdowsi, Nizami, Rumi, Sa'di, and Hafiz. As a result of their large literary contribution in Iran's literary heritage, these names secured their places in people's minds and hearts: the intellectuals and the commons, the literates and illiterates. In *The Evolution of Madness in the Lasting Texts of Persian Literature*, through a quantitative approach, it is deduced that the thematic use of madness from Ferdowsi to Rumi was increasingly pertinent (abstract). That could be understandable since the social and political landscape did not go through major disturbances that would shift interest to other themes, which helped in cultivating the general atmosphere of literature towards thematic expression of madness and even introducing new perspectives of the term. Rumi's name is held as the epitome or turning point in this context despite the remarkable decline in the pervasiveness of madness as a concept due to the horrors of the Mongol invasion of Persia in his time. The fact that even Hafiz's literary eminence and distinctive embracement of madness in his texts did not help to revitalize the susceptibility of the notion shows precisely a certainty about the fate of Iran's heritage in poetry: a deviation from the lure of madness and its derivatives.

An inviting point for discussion is the dialectical and relative reception of 'madness' in the views of Iran lasting five poets. For Ferdowsi, madness and wisdom are two faces for the

same coin. The epic poet shared the same stance with Attar Nishaburi, another famous Persian poet, that each one of us is secretly insane, and that would only happen when one sits to his ignorance and sinfulness: "from ignorance of my sinfulness/I think I am crazy"[1] (Sadipour and Ghaneirad). Nizami Ganjavi is most famous with his version of The Story of Layla (*Leylī*) and Majnun (*Majnūn*) (1484) that projects his 'mad' as an ablaze passionate lover (Arabic *ʿacheq* عاشق). His mad man is someone who runs after love unashamedly, recklessly; his insanity feeds of love and lust and obstructs his rationality, and this understanding is compatible with the Persian literary tradition that to be mad is to neglect the intellect ('*aql*) and follow the heart (*del*). Rumi's is the happiest although the social unrest of his time would result in a different perspective in the mind of another person; the deceitful appearance of a hermit, who is usually alienated and willingly decrepit, lives freely internally because his madness reduces his suffering[2]. The unfathomable linkage of knowledge and madness is for Sa'di the indispensable premise; one who increases knowledge increases sorrow and insanity as he says in his own words: "those who counted me wise and consciously/Go to write a testimony to my insanity"[3]. As the vigorous spirited Sufi Hafiz is, and similar to Rumi's, his positive and positive yet egoist perspective towards madness is a one-way route. He, who is captivated in love, is not in distress but rather a praised individual who is deliberately throwing himself in the heats of love with no second thoughts:

[1]Translated from Persian to English.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid, translated from Persian to English.

> The mad is tired of captivity of love but still stays in love. In the eyes of Hafez, Madness arises by love … but the current madness is wrapped up by a cause that has been out of human tolerance, and man, although he knows, must remove himself from this position but cannot because of his human weakness[4].

The early highlighted point of the intimate and unparalleled position of poetry in Iran's literary and cultural heritage suggests a legitimate assumption; that if the revival and the continuity of madness – as a literary concept – is meant to be, no other than versification – solely – will be a better ornament. However, this exclusivity of genre does not entail an exclusivity for gender like before, since Forugh-e Zaman Farrokhzad Eraqi (Forūgh-e Zamān Farrokhzād-e 'Erāqī), known as Forugh Farrokhzad (Forūgh Farrokhzād) (1934–1967), is a poetess who inherited the renown of her precedents in fame and interest. It is unfair to reduce her popularity to the mere fact of being a woman writer in 'Iran', because the brilliance and sophistication of her texts, especially when taking the thematic focus of this study, showcases an artist who was able to bring together a piece from each of the country's five lasting poets. Focusing primarily on the different interpretation of madness in the poetess poetry, Leila Rahimi Bahmany, in her *Forugh Farrokhzad and Her Madness*, excellently gives a thorough analysis of Farrokhzad's poetry. Bahmany conceptualizes three different motifs of madness in the poems: love-madness, poetic madness, and what she calls 'mad double'. For the first motif, the sense of love is of Sufi's nature. In the poem *Evasion and Woe* ("Gorīz o dard"), Farrokhzad's employment for the diction of the famous thirteenth-century Sufi poet Farid al-Din Attar (Farīd al-Dīn ʾAṭṭār) exemplifies bluntly her Sufi's perception (Bahmany 3). Also, love is what drove and made her a poetess like when she declares that

[4] Ibid.

When my life was nothing any longer

Nothing but the tick tock of a wall clock

I realized that I must, must, must

Love madly[5]

(Farrokhzad 1: 356).

The second motif, the poetic experience, that is written in other verses from other poems elucidates the poetic madness, as an example: "Have you ever known that for mad people/The space of this cage is taut, taut"[6]. Bahmany explains that in the original text, in Persian, the word *'shūrīde-ḅāl'*, which original means bewilderment, is taken for madness (5). Lastly, Bahmany clarifies that what she calls 'mad double' is more of a style that Farrokhzad applies in some of her poems like *The Stones Patience*; the split of personas gives a speaking I and a spoken-to 'Mad-I', to which Bahmany illustrates: "[t]hat rebellious mad I/ Was raising a commotion inside me/ Banging fists on the walls"[7]. In the same respect she spots where Farrokhzad's 'Mad-I' manifests:

Perambulating my interior

As a soul in a bed chamber

It (mad I) was casting a shadow on my interior

[5]Translated from Persian to English.
[6] Ibid, 61. Translated from Persian to English too.
[7] Qtd in Bahmany 6.

As a cloud on a desert[8].

Farrokhzad did not only take the thematic aspect from Iran's lasting poets. Remarkably, and for hitherto unknown reasons, her infatuation with madness as a focal point in her poems slowly witness an attenuation: "[s]uch obsession with madness seems to fade away and the term "madness" appears less and less in her later volumes" (Bahmany 3).

Being a contemporary of the heiress of the throne of poetry, Sadegh Hedayat (Ṣādiq Hidāyat) (1903-1951) is Iran's most renowned short story writer. To say that his *The Blind Owl* (1936) is *the seminal* work regarding the implication of madness in prose, as a core theme, is a matter of long discussion, but one cannot deny or dismiss the fact that this novella is the most controversial and celebrated work of fiction in Iran. For the narrator, the poignant memory of a failing love, the confusing image of a beautiful dark woman on the wall, the rise to be an impotent husband to a prostitute wife, all of which draws surrealistic imageries of the Hedayat's iconic work and an existential crisis for the narrator. This lengthy passage from *The Blind Owl,* where he is hallucinating over killing the specter of the dark beautiful woman, illustrates:

> This time I did not hesitate. I took a bone-handled knife that I kept in the closet beside my room and began by cutting open with great care the dress of fine black material which swathed her like a spider's web. It was the only covering she wore on her body. She seemed to have grown a little: her body appeared to be longer than it had been in life. Then I severed the head. Drops of cold clotted blood trickled from her neck. Next, I amputated the arms and legs. I neatly fitted the trunk along with the head and limbs into the suitcase and covered the whole with her dress, the same black dress. (Part II).

[8] Ibid.

Criticism over the main theme of the work and what it symbolizes is a persisting issue, but in general, the mental uneasiness and dissociation are progenies of the story, thanks to the formal and innovative style that Hedayat implemented. The nonlinearity of the plot and the abrupt opaque change of narration facilitate the sensation of isolation and eventual madness in the story (quoted in Talattof 59).

The demarcation line between madness and detachment is hard to draw let alone to erase. The latter, on another hand, is not a primal interest neither to poetry nor to prose, but rather a consequential state. The implied propensity to the mystical and spiritual madness, which they praise highly as a form of divine and unworldly frame of mind more than the literal mental derangement, drives one eventually to a separation of mind, soul, and body from the actual world, a present corpse but an overindulgent spiritual state in the realm of asceticism for the soul. This state of in-between is not exclusively theological as there is a secular dimension of that – or even a mixture of both, like in Bahmany's description of Farrokhzad's poetry, "her poetry flows in lyricism and deals with taboo desires and experiences over which the poet feels remorse and shame." (1; Sadipour and Ghaneirad). The same state is discernable in *The Blind Owl* as well through the identity crisis that the unnamed pen case painter narrator lives; his inability neither to believe the illusion nor to realize the disillusionment delineates intricately the rough situation of nonbelonging he suffers from. This dance on the thin line between the two spheres: reality and fantasy, hands the decision to the receiver to judge subjectively.

1.2. Madness in Cinema

"Every film is political. Most political of all are those that pretend not to be" Wim Wenders

- Afracious

Compared to Literature, cinema in Iran is a newborn form of expression. Its existence nowadays as a transcendent nonpareil part of World Cinema is thanks to the Qajar imperial dynasty (1789–1925), nonetheless, this exalted addition to the Persian cultural landscape could not break free from the chronic political interpretation: "cinema in Iran is socially, politically, and culturally conditioned and it is not of an aesthetic nature. It has been living for more than 100 years and was brought by the Qajar ruler of the time"[9] (Atheer, 01:31:59-01:32:14). The engagement and appearance of cinematic figures, like Mohsen Makhmalbaf, as activists in the political and social landscape emphasized the association of the seventh art with politics. However, to reduce the role and the interpretation of cinema to an enclosed political context means the attenuation of its potential.

The cinematic tradition of Iran was not always as rich as it is now, and the selection of the stories was not sophistic. Rather, the plots revolved around commons' lives and rarely included aristocrats, and even thematically, and like in literature, madness, away from political interpretation, appealed for the directors to engage with and focus on. Before mentioning some films where madness is a main theme, one must be informed that the paradigm of madness in Iranian film production is completely different from that of Hollywood. Directed by Dariush Mehrjui and adapted from Gholam-Hossein Sa'edi's *Mourners of Bayal*, *the Cow* (1969) tells

[9]Translated from Arabic to English.

the story of Mashd Hassan who is a is the only villager that owns a cow in his village. His dear love for his cow and wait for a coming calf were the essence of his life until her unexpected death. His unfortunate loss and his neighbors attempt to withhold the information from him affect his mental state, which starts to degrade slowly; that he starts to manifest animalistic acts as eating hey and harming himself. In one scene, he abruptly runs out in the village screaming in a deafening voice. Makhmalbaf's *Marriage of the Blessed* (1989) presents an unprecedented cinematography, and at the same time he masterfully depicts the repercussions of war on Haji's life as the film starts in the psych ward and ends in him returning back there. In this respect, Hamid Dabashi comments, "*Marriage of the Blessed* dealt with the casualties of war, both physical and psychological, and was the most emphatic sign that Makhmalbaf had lost all hope in the promises of the Islamic revolution." (350). In between, the protagonist, Haji, first suffers from recollections and flashbacks of the war, to which the spectator witnesses his mental derangement and at the same time receives a perplexing feeling of disorientation or detachment. Additionally, when Haji leaves the hospital, episodes of madness keep appearing regularly, reaching the climax in his wedding ceremony where his situation worsens badly that he gets hospitalized again.

The above-mentioned films, and others like *Crimson Gold* (2003) by Jafar Panahi, remarkably imply mental and psychological themes as an alluring subject, which goes beyond the mere idea of mental troubles. The application might be allegorical, and its interpretation cannot escape being political in an indirect subversive manner, but also the examination of those themes aesthetic choice must be taken attentively with delicate care.

2. Madness and Detachment, A Psychoanalytic Perspective

Whereas Hegel places madness inside thought, Nietzsche places thought inside madness

-qtd. in solovieva *redefining madness*-

Foucault in his book *Madness and civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* traces the history of madness as its meaning changes along cultures and time periods. In his book he asserts that madness in essence is a social construct and not just a clinical condition, where every person that fails to conform to society's rules was viewed as mad or was deliberately outcasted (9).

2.1. The Elusiveness of Madness: A Social Phenomenon

The classical views on madness as Foucault points out were ones that were unstable, shifting from being a wide array of disorders such as, mania, melancholia, hysteria, and hypochondria to ones that were restrained to being classified under the flattening locus of unreason

> A strange contradiction: the classical age enveloped madness in a total experience of unreason; it reabsorbed its particular forms, which the Middle Ages and the Renaissance had clearly individualized into a general apprehension in which madness consorted indiscriminately with all the forms of unreason. But at the same time it assigned to this same madness a special sign: not that of sickness, but that of glorified scandal (Foucault, Madness and Civilization 70).

This shows the fluidity of the concept and the ease of its appropriation by asserting power and manipulating the rhetoric that defines it, especially when madness was seen in the Middle Ages as the dysregulation between the passions of the soul and the rationality of the mind "passion

is no longer simply one of the causes-however powerful-of madness; rather it forms. the basis for its very possibility" (Madness and Civilization 88).

Foucault asserts that madness, along with sexuality and trauma, has shifted historically from being a source of stigma to the source that shapes our very identities. This shift from a divine to personal mode of identification has its roots according to Foucault in modern confessional Christian models and the growing psychoanalytic practice, which attempts to decipher the identity through the unconscious; by looking inward into our own wounds, madness, and sexuality that we start to perceive the image of ourselves (The History of Sexuality 156).

Tatiana Solovieva states in her paper *Redefining Madness* that Madness is not an objective fact of being it is rather a subjective judgment (128), and she points to the similarity between madness and literature in the aspect of their definitions. She points to the relationship between madness and its representations in literature, in that such readings of literature and madness both require readers to access their "sociolinguistic repertoires of cognitive psychological experiences […]in the evaluation of particular notes of discourse" (127). Solovieva argues that the perception of literature, just as the perception of madness, is parallel to the perception of madness, where literary works are not timeless artifacts but an outcome of social and historical conditions. An idea, of which we find a parallel in Foucault's conception of madness, that it is governed by social and historical circumstances that are always ever changing.

Darian leader, a contemporary British psychoanalyst, in his experience with clinically crazy patients notes that most of them seemed to be calm and collected and showed little to no signs of mental disorder, as he recounts his experience with a patient "He was articulate, lucid and extremely intelligent, and it mystified me to learn that he had spent the last few years in

psychiatric hospitals. Chatting with him, he seemed no more or less disturbed than the student friends I would meet with after work" (1). Madness can be disguised as normalcy on most occasions, that is what makes it hard to define and distinguish. What makes it even harder to distinguish is that the psychotic is judged according to the norms of their time, which are very subjective and vary from one person to another "As the pioneering clinician Marguerite Sechehaye pointed out many years ago, 'When we try to build a bridge between the schizophrenic and ourselves, it is often with the idea of leading him back to reality – our own – and to our own norm. He feels it and naturally turns away from this intrusion'" (qtd. in Leader 4). What is normal to one person is alienating to another, so anyone that "fail[s] to fit the norms of society" (Leader 4), is labeled as psychotic. Darian refuses to treat madness as mental illness, instead he looks at it from an existential perspective, influenced by Lacan, and emphasizes that what may be seen as mental illness in one person is just their way to cope with life's difficulties (7), where he prefers to look at the subjective experiences of madness unlike his peers in mainstream psychiatry, that paid attention only to the symptoms.

2.2. Collapse of Identification: A Structural Madness

Lacanian theories of psychoanalysis are known for their complexity and eccentricity, but one major idea is that language is a tool not only used to describe reality, but also to construct it "it is the whole structure of language that psychoanalytic experience discovers in the unconscious. This is to alert prejudiced minds from the outset that the idea that the unconscious is merely the seat of the instincts may have to be reconsidered" (Lacan, Écrits 413). This idea denotes that the unconscious uses the same functions found in the structure of language, it displaces and signifies, in the same way language uses metaphor and metonymy.

Lacan proposed the idea of orders or registers around which all psychoanalytic thought revolved after him, these orders: the *imaginary*, the *symbolic*, and the *real* are essential to

understanding the development of the identity of an individual, “they are primarily concerned with mental functioning, and together they cover the whole field of psychoanalysis”(Evans 135). These orders are ‘interdependent’ meaning that they work together in unison, to the extent that a disruption in one order can break the other two, leading according to Lacan, to madness:

> The inertia characteristic of the *I* formations can thus be understood as providing the broadest definition of neurosis, just as the subject's capture by his situation gives us the most general formulation of madness—the kind found within the asylum walls as well as the kind that deafens the world with its sound and fury (Écrits 80).

The imaginary as described by Lacan is the essential component of the formation of the *I* function or the ego in the mirror stage as it is explained below, has a rigid property formed by the misrecognition of an ideal image of self in the mirror stage (76). Because the ego is formed through the identification with an illusion, it tends to be resistant to any change that disrupts that ideal image of the self, leading to a structural rigidity. This structural rigidity is the core of neurosis (80), leading people to repeat patterns of behavior that prevent development and behaviors that can be detrimental to their wellbeing, just because of their familiarity. Normally a person develops an order of meaning making, that structures the *imaginary* later in childhood: the symbolic order, which is concerned with language, social formation and law regulation. This order forms by the symbolic father, which is mostly the authoritative figure that signifies law and order, the one that guides and shapes the child’s behavior as Lacan best explains: “It is in the name of the father that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law” (230). When this symbolic order collapses or clashes with the fantasies of unity structured by the imaginary, it gets disrupted by the introduction into the relative and limiting characteristics of language, the person becomes psychotic, without a stable symbolic structure to organize reality, the person

is overwhelmed by the intensity of external experiences, which distorts his/her perception of reality, causing him/her delusions, and even a disconnect from reality.

Christian Metz's idea of the imaginary signifier is a relevant idea both to psychoanalysis and to cinema not only because it is rooted in Lacan's register of imaginary identification, but also because it can be integrated beyond psychoanalysis into cinema and phenomenology. Metz develops the idea that the cinema screen is similar in its function to the mirror in the mirror stage of Lacan's theory; which is the apparatus by which an infant distinguishes himself from the world for the first time as an autonomous body, he accesses his reflection as though he accesses a different realm of perception than what he is used to experience as a united entity with his mother, the entity that takes care of every need for him. That realm, which is governed by different codes, is an ideal representation of reality. That representation is false though (Écrits 76), because it contradicts the child's lack of motor control, which gives him only an illusion of coherence and autonomy, Lacan explains it as such,

> For the total form of his body, by which the subject anticipates the maturation of his power in a mirage, is given to him only as a gestalt […] in which, above all, it appears to him as the contour of his stature that freezes it and in a symmetry that reverses it, in opposition to the turbulent movements with which the subject feels he animates it (76).

This process becomes the beginning of a phenomenon all human beings seek out throughout their lives, the process of seeking ideal images of ourselves instead of real ones. Where Metz and Lacan diverge is the idea of the identification, if the child identifies with his image in the mirror, what then does the spectator of a movie identify with? Metz argues that the spectator identifies with himself as a *pure act of perception*, that the spectator sees the world from the perspective of the camera, and in doing so he no longer is watching the movie, the movie is happening inside him, he explains in length,

> I also know that it is I who am perceiving all this, that this perceived-imaginary material is deposited in me as if on a second screen, that it is in me that it forms up into an organized sequence, that therefore I am myself the place where this really perceived imaginary accedes to the symbolic by its inauguration as the signifier of a certain type of institutionalized social activity called the 'cinema' (Metz 48-49).

By saying that the mind of the spectator is like a second screen, he is saying that movie watching is not simply a passive sensory experience, instead the narrative and events of the movie are being processed and structured into a meaningful sequence by the viewer. This identification with imaginary, the act of perception, and the symbolic, the making of meaning from the perception of the movie, can also be disrupted, and cause a kind of filmic madness. This obsessive cinephelia as he points out in his book, can lead to confusing fictional events of a movie with reality and treating them as a liberating alternative to their oppressive realities.

3. Deleuze's Movement-image and Time-image

Truthful to his methodology in philosophy, Deleuze approached the seventh art from a Bergsonian standpoint. His major interest in movement, time, space, and the possibility of thinking new thoughts extended to create what he preferred to be seen as 'Cinematic Concepts' rather than 'Cinematic Theory'. His stance on filmmakers being on the same level of thinkers, like in his emphasis that "it is not sufficient to compare the great directors of the cinema with painters, architects or even musicians. They must also be compared with thinkers," (Deleuze 1: x) helped to provide a taxonomy of related concepts to cinema. Through two volumes, *Cinema 1* and *2*, he showed that he was less concerned with the What's: what is cinema, what is it about…etc. and more with the How's: how does is provide new forms of thoughts, how does it work to replace reality… etc. (Film and Media Studies). This inclination is

understandable learning that his contribution to Film Theory belongs to the contemporary history of the field. His takes on cinema were more into cinema's relation to "thought" rather than to reality.

From the onset Deleuze presents technical terms that the cinematic image, as well as his concepts, consists of frame, shot, and montage. The frame is that part of the world bounded by the four sides of the rectangle which will then be projected onto a screen during the screening of a film, and the consolidation of 'frames' yields a shot, then comes montage as the last element which is a form of a structure that comes to exist by virtue of the linkage of shots, Rushton explains (14).

Deleuze thinks of cinema as the fabrication of blocks of movement-images[10]. The latter itself becomes a present concept in his first volume and the actual title. Many of the concepts that underpins this research are compound words of "word-image". For him, the understanding of "image" is quite unconventional. He imports it from Bergson's idea as:

> The image itself is the system of the relationships between its elements, that is, a set of relationships of time from which the variable present only flows. […] What is specific to the image, as soon as it is creative, is to make perceptible, to make visible, relationships of time which cannot be seen in the represented object and do not allow themselves to be reduced to the present (Cinema 2: xii).

He renders "image" an abstract nature rather than replica or carbon copies of something, Richard Rushton explains that, and the reference to something as image is nothing but our perception and apprehension to things.

Because of the abstract nature of the philosopher's ideas, movement-image – one of them – does not have a clear understanding or meaning. One possible definition of movement-

[10] For more explanation check : *Gilles Deleuze on Cinema : What is the Creative Act 1987 (English Subs)* here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_hifamdISs&t=425s.

image is it being a *conception* of the way in which things move, and this conception does not involve a single representation but a whole series of signs, a whole sequence of shots[11] (Harris), whereas Attouti clarifies that "it is an expression of the classic cinema […] cinematically, according to Deleuze, it is a reference to the division of the shots to images with narrative sequence"[12] (7). Consequently, an ordinary first-thought of movement-image as image in movement is less likely what Deleuze aims for, and more of a primitive state of cinema.

More in depth, Movement-image constitutes of perception-images. Perception incepts the moment the sense is stimulated by an external object that crosses the 'center of indetermination', and one becomes aware of its existence within the frame of the human eye. Then, "there is in-between" Deleuze writes, "[a]ffection is what occupies the interval, what occupies it without filling it or filling it up… that is to say in the subject … It is a coincidence of subject and object, or the way in which the subject feels itself 'from the inside' (1: 65), and that is affection-images. Lastly, action-images occur as a natural reaction of the previous stages. These three pillars are parallel to the sensori-moter schema, which is usually defined as the habitual coordination between perception and action. Or as it is simply "the sensory-motor schema: this schema, which had linked perceptions, affections and actions" (Deleuze 1: x).

Accordingly, and learning that films of movement-images are generally associated with storytelling and narrative, characters are placed in situations where they are affected by the events around them. Rushton notes: "a character perceives something – something wrong, a problem, something that needs to be fixed – and he or she acts on this perception; he or she performs the actions needed to resolve a perceived problem, an action-image responds to a perception-image." (34). More largely, the usual pattern of storytelling of situation (exposition), action (conflict), reaction (climax), and restored action (resolution), alongside

[11] For more information, check https://www.arasite.org/deltranscript5movt.html.
[12]Translated from Arabic to English

dualities of action/reaction, problem/solution, or obstacle/resolution are focal to the concept on a macro level. Here, time is subordinated to movement and action so the image of time is indirect. Meaning that the center of focus is the movement. To elaborate, Rushton explains in length:

> Why is this an indirect image of time? It is indirect because its form presupposes that the world can, if certain specific actions are performed, be brought to a right, proper and stable order. If that stable order is produced, films of the movement-image imply, then the world might discover its true image and any sense of future change would be annulled. That is why the movement-image presents an indirect Image of time *because it implies that change need not happen* (4 [emphasis in the original]).

In the second volume, which is also the book title and a Deleuzian cinematic concept, Time-image is more philosophical and abstract. Attouti, again, goes after the enquiry to determine what exactly is the meaning of the term and proclaims that the absence of the narrative plot and the rise of illogical linkage of the shots construct the essence of Time-image. She adds, "the characters do not practice a positive behavior, and do not react to the surrounding events, they lack self-consciousness within a surreal or absurd setting" (qtd in. Attouti 7). Rushton compares films of time-image to others of movement image arguing that in simple terms the former cannot figure out a solution to the problem as the latter does (5).

Accordingly, movement and action switch to be subordinate to the flow of time. It strives to establish a liaison between the three tenses or what Rushton calls 'the openness of time', which means that the past, present, and future are all present at once. This is one factor that determines the time-image. For the second factor, Characters struggle to emancipate themselves since their perception is bewildered by unfathomable thought. In this respect Deleuze says, "the characters were found less and less in sensory-motor 'motivating' situations, but rather in a state of strolling, of sauntering or of rambling which defined pure optical and

sound situations," (1: 120) or in other words this cinema, for him, was of the seer and no longer of the agent.

By and large, Rushton draws a careful distinction between the two notions in Rushton words are as follows:

> films which are of the movement-image, return to the past or question the past in the hope of *closing down the past*: they search the past in order to find definitive answers in that past…By contrast, films of the time-image go into the past *in order to open up the past*, to render it malleable and questionable, and also to allow it to become retrievable and open to reinvention. Time-image films go into the past in order to enter that past as a zone of experimentation (74 [emphasis in the original]).

Ultimately, one can infer that movement-image represents cinema of matter, whereas time image is one of mind and thought. Thematically, what is possible to be found are mental imageries and reflections on distress and psychological issues.

4. Narratology and the Study of Narrative

Narratology has its roots in Russian formalism and French structuralism, particularly works of Vladimir Propp and Tzvetan Todorov, which were the first pioneers of narrative theory that later developed into an independent discipline, with different schools of thought offering different views and definitions, essentially, it is the study of narrative structures and how they make meaning by using specific mechanisms and procedures that are derived from all stories, and which are shared among narratives. Gerard Genette in his *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* makes the distinction between story: the events in chronological order, or the *what* of the story. Narrative: the discourse or the narrative text itself, or *how* those events are told and conveyed to the audience through language, images, and sounds. Narrating: the process of storytelling driven by the narrator. What interests us in this study is the different

aspects of narrative, especially: focalization, diegesis, and narrative voice, the narrator, and how all of these come together to reflect the sense of madness and detachment in the novel and the film. A narrative in its broad sense of the word is a structured representation of a sequence of events, it can be fictional or non-fictional, which can be conveyed through different codes whether textual, visual, or spoken. Narratives shape how events are perceived by arranging them in a meaningful structure with a beginning, middle, and an end.

Narrative is transposal, meaning that narrative is not restricted to written text or oral storytelling as the common misconception goes. Seymour Chatman in *story and discourse* argues that narrative can be realized in different substances without losing its essential properties. because the narrative is "endowed with a structure that can be isolated from the whole message: the story recit" (qtd, Chatman 20). Multiple artistic expressions can be considered narrative outlets such as films, comics, manga, music, and paintings. A song like Sing about me I'm Dying of Thirst by Kendrick Lamar is just as narrative as Shakespeare's Macbeth, in the sense that it has a structured flow of events that is told through the code of rhythmic poetry, and in the sense that it makes the reader relate to the story and feel a sense of catharsis. Bremond argues that that which is narrated has proper significant elements, which are not the words, images, and gestures, but the events, situations, and behaviors signified by those words, images, and gestures (Bremond 6).

4.1. Seeing Through Madness: Focalization and Narrative Manipulation of the Readers

Mieke Bal, one of the most notorious post classical theorists of narrative, divided it in its broad sense into three components adopting the framework of the Russian formalists who used two terms fabula, and plot the latter being the way the events are told and presented, and the former: the raw series of logically, and chronologically related events caused or experienced by actors or characters in the story world, with the addition of a third distinction

of the “narrative text” as the medium by which the an agent or subject conveys to an addressee (reader, viewer, or listener) the plot (5). This opens a possibility to analyze the relationship between text, meaning, and reader interpretation. That is through analyzing the techniques that allow the narrative to construct meaning by manipulating the readers and the characters alike.

The type of narratology, or narrative theory in this study is neither purely formalist as to provide a descriptive account of the representation of madness and detachment, nor is it a completely contextual or historical deconstructive analysis of the author’s ideological agendas and how they manifest themselves in the narrative. It is instead a framework by which we attempt to decipher the relation between the inter-artistic thematic depictions in the book and the novella, with references to some of the contextual and historical circumstances that played a role in some of the directorial and authorial choices of the works.

Diegesis and mimesis is an ancient idea dating back to Aristotle in his “poetics” and Plato in his “republic”. It is simply the distinction between ‘showing’ and ‘telling’, in Genette’s terms diegesis is the story level of the narrative, whereas the narrational level of the narrative he distinguishes as extradiegetic, because narration often happens outside of the story (Genette 163). The concept of the narrative voice, who speaks, is a multilayered and complex one, we must first distinguish it from the focalizer, who sees, according to Genette: the narrative voice is the one who tells the story, it can be on two levels, either within the story recounting the events as a character “intradiegetic narrator”, or an all seeing omniscient narrator situated outside the diegesis “extradiegetic narrator” (163).

Gerard Genette provided a methodological approach to analyzing the “mood” of a narrative, and makes the distinction between what is mostly confused as the narrator, and the focal point from which the narrator tells the story, in other words focalization:

> The first term [zero focalization] corresponds to what English-language criticism calls narrative with omniscient narrator and Pouillon 'vision from behind,' and which Todorov symbolizes by the formula *Narrator* > *Character* (where the narrator knows more than the character, or more exactly, *says* more than any of the characters knows). In the second term [internal focalization], *Narrator* = *Character* (the narrator says only what a given character knows); this is narrative with 'point of view' after Lubbock, or with 'restricted field' after Blin; Pouillon calls it 'vision with.' In the third term [external focalization], *Narrator* < *Character* (the narrator says less than the character knows); this is the 'objective' or 'behaviorist' narrative, what Pouillon calls 'vision from without' (188-189 [emphasis in the original]).

Genette's framework is informational, meaning that in order to distinguish between the different types of focalization, it must be deducted through the amount of information that is given to the reader from the point of view of the perceiver, whether it be the character or the narrator.

Mieke Bal expands this idea by explaining that focalization is the relation between the vision, the agent that sees, and that which is seen (135). For example, in our case, the vision is Munis's, the agent, inner thoughts about her brother, that which is seen. The focalization in this instance is internal, since the narrative delves into her subjective thoughts about her brother, which are conveyed to the reader by the narrator narrative voice. This relation allows us to further analyze distortions in focalization and how detaching the focalizer from the rest of the elements can yield a sense of detachment from the story world.

Bal also posits that the point of focalization can create a manipulative distance between the reader and the characters where the narrator can inject the reader with implicit ideology "If the focalizer coincides with the character, that character will have an advantage over the other

characters. This focalization bias is particularly relevant when analyzing distorted perception linked to madness, allowing insight into how narrative voice aligns or alienates reader empathy. Such a character-bound focalizer … brings about bias and limitation" (Bal 135). This idea helps us understand how readers identify with characters and formulate relationships with fictional events and use them as escapism from so called social oppression.

5. Comparative Literature beyond Literature

The linkage between the natural impulse of comparison and literature gave birth to a paradigm that probably without which major studies would have never seen the light of the day. After going through necessary changes in methodology and understanding, Comparative literature did not only provide a space for the comparison of different literatures but also for the comparison of different arts through the notion of the 'reciprocal illumination of the arts.' This conceptualization puts a possible comparison between literature and cinema within a well-established context.

5.1. Comparative Literature and the Change in Perspective

Relatively, the meaning of the word (comparison) is almost clear for everyone as well as the reason behind the act itself; judgment, evaluation, and classification could be the major results, and simultaneously the drives, of comparison, where the latter is an instinctive and necessary mental process whose virtue gives birth to the vitality and the existence of objects as nothing can exist singularly by itself. Historically, the employment of comparison in literature, around the beginning of the Nineteenth century as *Littérature Comparée*, created a new branch in literary studies, where the peculiarity of different literary texts from different nations found a room to meet. For that, altogether, comparison was established as a method of reading, which,

in one opinion among many, does not see it so much as a discipline with its circumscribed subject-matter, but as it is essential and necessary as breathing (Prawer, ix).

The French School in comparative literature gave a primal framework that functioned according to the premises of its time. The definition of the paradigm for the French school was limited for 'verified' mutual relations between different literatures and texts, adopting positivism as a philosophy, principle of inquiry, and the parameter of the approach. In favor of Schopenhauer's texts, Nietzsche's was by no means going to survive the shadow of the former if the method of the French School would have been applied. The same discourse extends with Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1321) and al-Ma'arri's *Risālat al-Ghufrān*, or *The Epistle of Forgiveness* (1033). However, the factuality of relations between texts, authors, and nations, alongside the binary oppositions of creditors/debtors, literary/non-literary and direct/indirect influences presented the drawbacks of the approach and did not last long until it created the 'Crisis of Comparative literature', an actual crisis and the title of René Wellek's paper presented in 1959 that criticized and shook the principles of the French School. The reduction of literature to a mere object of study that is undertaken through an empirical method, to deduce an evident relation between texts, is seen as dead as nineteenth-century factualism, scientism, and historical relativism (Wellek 162). Moreover, one confusion that obscures the clarity of the implantations of the French School's comparative method is the inevitable pertinence of the individualistic and chauvinistic nationalism in literature since "[t]he comparatiste qua comparatiste in this narrow sense could study only sources and influences, causes and effects," which stands against the major goal of the comparison that, in his eyes, should aim to go beyond the investigation of 'the foreign trade'[13].

[13] Ibid, 163.

On another hand, when he criticizes the attempt to narrow down comparative literature to a 'foreign trade', Wellek's stance implies a conviction that literature is a work of art that is characterized with a universal and imaginative nature that creates and preserves the highest values of humankind:

> Comparative literature would be, in subject matter, an incoherent group of unrelated fragments […] and broken off from meaningful wholes. The *comparatiste qua comparatiste* […] would be even prevented from investigating a single work of art in its totality as no work can be reduced entirely to foreign influences or considered as a radiating point of influence only toward foreign countries. Imagine that similar restrictions would be imposed on the study of [literature], music, the fine arts, or philosophy!' […]. *Works of art* […] are not simply sums of sources and influences: they are wholes in which raw materials derived from elsewhere cease to be inert matter and are assimilated into a new structure ... wholes, conceived in the free imagination, *whose integrity and meaning are violated if we break them up into sources and influences* (163-64 [emphasis added]).

Wellek's affirmation, insofar, highlights a reconsideration of the definition of comparative literature: as the old one was defined as the mutual relations between different literature, whereas the new one, according to Henry H.H. Remak, wished to leave 'nationalism' behind and be more interdisciplinary with his definition of comparative literature as the comparison of one literature with another or others and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression (Dominguez el al. 28). Meaning that the field should no longer be merely inter-literary, but it must be inter-artistic and inter-discursive. This new conception, proposed by the American School, widened the horizon of the paradigm to become more inclusive in the evaluation of different art forms. In this respect, the ignorance of the different aesthetic approaches, as one limitation of the French perspective of comparative literature, is overthrown

since interdisciplinarity made possible for every act of reception of significant form, in language, in art, in music… etc. to be comparative; where interpretation and aesthetic judgement arise from an echo-chamber of historical, social, technical presuppositions and recognizance (Steiner 142-44). Altogether, with the American perspective revision, on one dimension, the engagement of comparative literature started to regard literature and art forms collectively, more than literature in isolation.

5.2. About the Genesis of the Reciprocal Illumination of the Arts

Comparison, as an impulse, springs and persists when there is a common feature between multiple objects. The cooperation of the fact that arts, despite the differences of their means and forms, are mimetic and cathartic, and the new propensity of comparative literature towards being more inclusive to different human expressions, in addition to the fact that no art is totalizing welcomes the possibility of reading and examining arts' different 'languages' in the light of each other. In essence, arts are the same as they try to recreate reality creatively, but the particularity of the utilized means determines the specificity of the manner through which each one's product is rendered.

When naming some of the arts that belong to the classic system, there is: poetry, music, dance, sculpture, and painting; all of which, since the dawn of history, formed the aesthetic imitation of life. The diversity of these art forms was consequential in their categorization where spatial arts are painting, sculpture, and architecture, and temporal arts are literature, music, and dance. Nonetheless, this formalistic disparity does not set a definitive separation between them, since their languages, in the semiotic understanding of the word, could be convergent. Abbé Du Bos, in his *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting), praises poetry and painting for their capacity to imitate interesting objects (Dominguez et al. 107). This analogous relation sustains through the notion

of ekphrasis which means the verbal description of a visual work of art – one that is actual or imaginary. This ideation breathed life to many ekphrastic poems: William Carlos Williams' verbalization of Peiter Bruegel the Elder's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* (1555), Homer's description of the shield of Achilles in Book 18 of the *Iliad,* Virgil's description of the shield of Aeneas in Book VIII of the *Aeneid*, and Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. The last three examples are technically notional ekphrasis because the writers are describing imaginary objects for rhetorical purposes[14] (Simon). Moreover, the consanguinity of poetry and music in terms of nature and effects is definitely more fathomable than a fleeting mere idea that poetry can be 'sculpturesque'. In their *Theory of Literature*, Wellek and Warren admit that the coolness and the stillness in poetry are different from the tactual sensation that of marble and the imaginative reconstruction that of a perception from whiteness which distinguish sculpture (125). They further explain,

> [it] is merely a vague metaphor, meaning that poetry coveys somehow similar effects of Greek sculpture. […]. When Collins 'Ode to Evening' is called a 'sculpted poem' nothing is said that implies any real relationship with sculpture. The only analyzable objectivities are the slow, solemn meter and the diction, which is strange enough to compel attention to individual words and hence to enforce a slow pace in reading (125).

As a comparative modality, this unexhausted eagerness that each art shows in attempt to achieve another's effects beyond the obvious questions of sources and influences, inspiration, and co-operation was meant to be coined by Oskar Walzel: "the reciprocal illumination of the arts" (Wechselseitige Erhellung der Künste) in 1919. This formulation was not only for arts which seek a metamorphosis, but for "double talents" as well; creative artists

[14] For more information, check: *Ekphrasis: When Great Art Inspires Great Text (or Comics)* on https://hmu.edu/.

such as Michelangelo, Blake, Hoffmann, Wagner, Rossetti, Almada Negreiros, Dalí, Pier Paolo Pasolini, or Federico García Lorca, who expressed themselves through multiple artistic means (Dominguez et al. 110). Despite his formalist approach, Walzel does not contend with the evident importance of the content of a work of art, where his task to explore the 'form' is imposed on him as it, until his time, has been neglected (Salm 112). However, Salm affirms that reciprocal illumination, or elucidation, of the arts is not a new idea since Wilhelm Scherer, with his Wechselseitige Beleuchtung or Wechselseitige Erhellung that means illuminating analogies, preceded Walzel in the notion's conceptualization; the former's interest was literary as well as sociological, and moved vertically through time, whereas the latter's are taken from the same moment in history, and are on a horizontal line that connects all the arts, and that shows how Walzel's concern was the usefulness and logical coherence of stylistic comparisons between the arts (116-17). This conceptualization revolutionized the paradigm of comparative literature and widened its horizon that was already expanding.

5.3. Between Literature and Cinema

For Herzog, if the attempt to make a great movie is not accompanied with vigorous and constant reading it will fail, and as a matter of fact, the reading, like poetry or even agriculture, must have nothing to do with cinema (outis115, 00:04:41-00:05:03). David Lynch, on the other hand, sees that painting led to cinema or in other words both originate from the image, except that the image in painting is static whereas in cinema it is moving and contains sounds (Artforum, 00:03:49-00:04:01). These two stances imply the evident relation of arts and especially of literature and cinema, taking that Lynch's opinion include painting whose proximity with literature has been proven previously.

Language, as a universal medium, achieves its aesthetic potential most fully through literature. The latter could be defined as the creative use of words in various forms (poetry,

drama, fiction). Lessing argues that "literature is an art in which articulated sounds succeed each other in time and are grouped together to form words, that is, arbitrary and conventional signs. Because of this, literature can represent actions with facility," where he attributes a temporal quality to literature and puts it at the same level of music and dance which are considered, historically, as arts of antiquity because of its capability to render the familiar unfamiliar through literariness and the predication upon imagination designate it as *universal art* for grand figures like Hegel (Dominguez et al. 109).

Cinema, on another hand, is relatively a modern art that speaks the language of camera, although its aptitude to fuse space and time is unprecedented. It puts together the narrative potential of drama and novel, the auditory asset of music, the stillness of sculpture, and the ekpharsis of painting to create an art in which all the others have intended since their origin (Ricciotto Canudo, Manifeste des septs arts (1911). Qtd in Domínguez et al. 110). In favor of cinema, and giving Hemingway's 'documentary material' as an example, Tarkovsky says, "[w]hat for literature would be an occasional possibility, an isolated case … is for cinema the working of its fundamental artistic laws," and he further explains figuratively, "[j]uxtaposing a person with an environment that is boundless, collating him with a countless number of people passing by close to him and far away, relating a person to the whole world: that is the meaning of cinema" (65-66).

In conclusion, this chapter has laid a detailed understanding of the concepts that will be applied later in this study to better frame the discussions and analyses in the subsequent chapters. It has attempted to establish a solid contextual and conceptual map that will hopefully enhance the understanding and incorporations of the thematic analyses of both the film and the novella.

Chapter Two: Madness, Desire, and Symbolic Detachment: A Literary and Cinematic Analysis of *Women Without Men*

This chapter offers a thorough analysis of *Women Without Men* across artistic media, examining the difference in the representation of madness and detachment between both the novella and the film. Through the analytical lenses already established in the previous chapter, this one attempts to dive deeper into the characters' minds while simultaneously taking a step back to look at how the aesthetic exploitation of images, and the nonlinear narrative structure shapes the characters' psychological journey.

1. A Novel of Modern Iran: Framing Rebellion Censorship and Female Expression

Literary censorship in Iran is a controversial issue but not a new one, so much so that banning literary works or any artistic expression in general, has automatically come to be seen as a sign of their success. The Iranian regime has a designated office in the ministry of culture and Islamic guidance that deals with the review and assessment of whether a book is in accordance with the Islamic values of the nation before it is published. Freedom of speech in Iran is overtly guaranteed, as long as it doesn't violate the fundamental Islamic principles of the nation as it is stated in the 24th article of the Iranian constitution.[15]

Of course, the modern Iranian literary landscape at that time was already highly influenced by European and western trends, brought by the return of Iran's first graduates of European universities, along with translations of western literature and philosophy (Mohamadi 2) This influence by European trends will inevitably clash with the Iranian Islamic fundamental principles, especially the ideas of individualization, women's sexual liberation and open discussion of gender problems. Parsipur is one notorious author that does this, and she does it

[15] "Publications and the press have freedom of expression except when it is detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam or the rights of the public. The details of this exception will be specified by law" (the constitution of the Islamic republic of Iran art.24).

so explicitly and defiantly in Women Without Men, where she discusses taboo subjects of virginity, rape, and male violence against women. She creates an alternate utopian reality, where the struggles of the women in the book lead to a perceived emancipation from the oppressive world they live in.

The women in this novella manifest a sense of madness and detachment from the world, however subtle it may be. This madness is a manifestation of a coping mechanism and a necessary rupture in perception that allows them to finally emancipate themselves from the ruthlessness of the patriarchal world. This madness is hard to decipher due to the use of magic realism in the novel where fictitious events happen so naturally in the real world, a genre that was arguably first introduced into the Iranian literary tradition by Parsipur herself (Mozaffari 186). In the foreword of the novella, it is stated that Gabriel Garcia Marquez defines magic realism as the way in which his grandmother told him stories (Neshat vii). The way in which, by extreme emotional investment, the plausibility of those stories becomes a secondary matter. Similarly, Parsipur tells the story and exploits the feature of 'authorial reticence' defined by Chanady as the absence of explicit authorial intervention in the story; withholding information and explanation to encourage the reader in engaging with filling in those gaps themselves (121).

The use of magic realism in the novel creates a sense of fragmentation that elevates the readers into an engaging reorganization of what is thought to be "normal experiences", by blurring the lines between what is real and mystical, what is perceived and what is thought. The novella cultivates a sense of confusion by the immersion into the lives of the different women and the events that lead them to their struggles for psychological freedom.

While Iranian literature is known for being overly constrained to historical and political frameworks of analysis, women without men offers a rich and nuanced understanding of themes such as madness and detachment, especially when considering widening the theoretical

framework of analysis to capture the true essence of the representation of madness and detachment across artistic mediums.

1.1. Narrative Structure and the Aesthetic of Madness: Mahdokht's Narrative Arc

The novella is structured with nonlinear and polyphonic narration, where Parsipur immerses the readers by telling the story from the different perspectives of the five different women. polyphony as introduced by Bakhtin is the idea of the multiplicity of voices present in the story, and the distinctiveness of each voice in driving in its own narrative. Which creates a subjective relationship with each character, "The reader does not see a single reality presented by the author, but rather, how reality appears to each character" (Robinson 7). This idea runs parallel to Genette's idea of narrative voice, which is not simply the point of view, but the complex interplay between the position of the narrator relative to the story world, the diegetic level between him and the story he narrates, and the relationship with his naratees (Genette 215). The novella features a heterodiegetic narrator, one that is absent from the story world (244-245), whose function is limited to the act of recounting the events. However, the absence of the narrator is occasionally disrupted, where the line between narration and narratorial commentary is blurred:

> At mile marker eighteen, a truck came to a halt thirty feet away from them. There were three men in the cab. The driver and his assistant were drunk; the passenger was not. Several times along the trip, the passenger had had to grab the steering wheel to avoid a collision, or to stop the truck from running off the road. Finally, he had given up on interfering and decided to let fate take its course (Parsipur 67).

When the relation of the narrator to the story and the level of narration is combined, we get the relationship of the narrator to its naratees, an extradiegetic - heterodiegetic narrator; one

that is a narrator in the first degree, that tells a story he does not participate in (Genette 248). This generally detached narrator reinforces the internal focalization of the characters and amplifies their voices and subjective status, Genette notes, "since Spitzer, critics have often noted the frequency of those modalizing locutions (perhaps, undoubtedly, as if, seem, appear) that allow the narrator to say hypothetically what he could not assert without stepping outside internal focalization" (203).

Mahdokht, the main character of the book has the most symbolic journey of the five women. Her soft and compassionate nature compels her to reject any kind of conflict: "In the afternoon the light green of the trees noiselessly competed with the dark green of the pool, a struggle that disturbed Mahdokht who had no tolerance for conflict of any kind and simply wished for a universal harmony, even among all shades of green in the world." (Parsipur 1), her goal in the world is to achieve all-encompassing peace and remove suffering from it entirely like the bodhisattva Guan Yin, a Buddhist deity or a saint that is most known for their ultimate purpose to relieve the suffering from the world. Parsipur alludes to this in a passage where Mahdokht contemplates having a thousand hands, a physical attribute of Guan Yin in Chinese Buddhism[16], to knit five hundred sweaters a day for the children of the orphanage where she had a habit of volunteering. Mahdokht's thoughts are initially grounded in reality, and she appears to follow a rational thought process. However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that the narrator frequently intervenes in conveying her internal reflections, as seen in the following passage:

> "Two hands per sweater," she figured, "so one thousand hands would equal five hundred sweaters."

[16] More on Guan Yin's depictions in Chinese mythology: https://asia.si.edu/explore-art-culture/collections/search/edanmdm:fsg_F1917.110/

> But a person cannot have a thousand hands, especially Mahdokht, who loved the winter and took daily afternoon walks during the season. It would take five hours or so to put one thousand gloves on one thousand hands.
>
> "No," she reasoned with herself, "with the first five hundred hands I would put gloves on the other five hundred hands and then repeat the process. Three minutes or less. That's all."
>
> This is not the real problem. It is up to the government to set up a factory and produce sweaters as needed.
>
> Mahdokht dipped her toes in the pool water (Parsipur 5).

The narrator relays the thoughts of Mahdokht as a stream of consciousness, the focus starting on her internal world and how she rationalizes her thoughts, this internal focalization emphasizes Mahdokht's naïve inward reclusion, the narrator then breaks this immersion by stepping out of her fantasy and emphasizing her humanity, establishing an order of objective reality: "But a person cannot have a thousand hands, especially Mahdokht" (5) this sudden ironic emphasis of Mahdokht's humanity *'especially Mahdokht'* highlights her detachment from it. She then goes back to building her absurd reality, but this time she is solving an imaginary problem in this 'fantastic' reality with a real-world determination and "reasoning."

The narrator remains heterodiegetic, outside the story world, but when it (the narrator) steps out again it ironizes her internal monologue, as though controlling the flow of her thoughts: "This is not the real problem. It is up to the government to set up a factory and produce sweaters as needed" (Parsipur 5). This time it is more ambiguous than the first one, while this line could be regarded as Mahdokht's own logical conclusion to her fantasy, it can also be interpreted as a narratorial commentary on broader political issues. This oscillation between internal and external focalization demonstrates the instability of the character's

psychological framework, and this is further strengthened by the subtle temporal manipulation in the movement between her absurd problem solving and dipping her toes in the water, further disconnecting her and her narrative from linearity.

1.1.1. Abjections of the Soul: Mahdokht's Extreme Deterritorialization

Mahdokht undergoes a transformative experience when she witnesses the fifteen-year-old servant girl Fati engaging in obscene behavior with the gardener. The narrative mood of this scene is characterized by intense feelings of disgust, and repulsion towards the girl, that is an extension of her alienation from both the physical world and human beings, which foreshadows her ultimate desire for extreme deterritorialization. Although the narrator is heterodiegetic and avoids markers of full stylistic immersion into Mahdokht's voice like this descriptive passage for example: "she felt repulsed by the touch of the girl's hands on her ankles." (Parsipur 8). Her emotional perspective and internal reflections dominate even some descriptive parts of the narrative. Moreover, Mahdokht's acute disgust toward Fati can be seen as a manifestation of the abject described by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror (1982)* as the repulsion of that which obscures the boundaries between the self and the other (3), abjection happens according to Kristeva before the introduction into the symbolic order, it is by casting away the 'abject' that the individual achieves its subjectivity, not by rejecting an external 'other' in order to identify as 'I', but only by rejecting that abject, one can enter the symbolic order (12). Although the abject is violently expelled, it does not completely disappear, the abject always stays underneath the surface as a reminder of the pure lack that constitutes desire for Lacan (15). It aligns with the real in terms of the impossibility of symbolization, Kristeva connects it to 'primal repression', by which we separate ourselves from the animalistic such as sex and murder (Felluga 1). Mahdokht's rejection of Fati's animalistic posture triggered by her yelping like a dog marks a threat of her own image of purity and bodily autonomy, but Mahdokht's rejection is extreme and instead of managing this threat she retreats into an absurd

fantasy of absolute organic unity manifested in her declaration: “Well, I am not an acorn, but a tree. I should plant myself.” This marks an imaginary identification with unity and wholeness, a refusal of both the symbolic and the abject.

Mahdokht’s internal fantasy is again at play in the passage above, where her fantasy materializes into palpable desire to not only sever her connection from the human realm, but also to expand through time and space, by imagining her offshoots spreading through the orchard at the expense of cutting down all surrounding trees in the area to make room for her offspring that will eventually overtake the whole world, what seems to be a colonial desire is shortly trumped by the capitalist appropriation of her identity shown by her anticipation of the Americanization of her name.

1.1.2. Rooted in Lack: Mahdokht’s Transformation and the Phantasy of Unity

Mahdokht’s fantasy of transformation is a practical example of Christian Metz’s *Imaginary Signifier,* which in its surface is cinematic, but in essence can be extended to any representative image or fantasy where he explains thoroughly that the signifiers of film along with literature are perceptual in principle

> The written chain has to be *read*, but it involves a more restricted perceptual register: only graphemes, writing. So too are those of painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, but still within limits, and different ones: absence of auditory perception, absence in the visual itself of certain import ant dimensions such as time and movement (obviously there is the time of the look, but the object looked at is not inscribed in a precise and ordered time sequence forced on the spectator from outside) (Metz 42-43).

For Metz, this representation functions as a substitution for what is materially absent, or in Lacan’s words *a lack.* Lacan’s definition of the imaginary aligns perfectly with this notion,

being the register of identification by misrecognition, it is through the imaginary that the subject forms the conceptualization of itself as a unified autonomous image:

> On the other hand, the experience of the mirror as it is described by Lacan is essentially situated on the side of the imaginary (= formation of the ego by identification with a phantom, an image), even if the mirror also makes possible a first access to the symbolic by the mediation of the mother holding the child to the glass whose reflection, functioning here as the capitalised Other, necessarily appears in the field of the mirror alongside that of the child" (Metz 6).

Mahdokht's declaration "I am a tree" (Parsipur 8) stages her 'imaginary' identification with an image of stability, plenitude, and organic unity. An idealized fantasy of coherence produced precisely in response to her alienation from the symbolic order, the realm of social norms, law, and language. Her repulsion of Fati, her aggressive rejection of Mr. Ehtechami's advances and her inability to articulate her fantasy to become a tree to her brother exemplify this alienation perfectly, yet her fantasy is structured within the same social and linguistic systems she seeks to escape, a fantasy designed by the imaginary order to cover the fundamental lack constituted by the symbolic. The imaginary signifier of 'the tree' operates as a placeholder for her desire for coherence, yet never fully fulfilling or satisfying it. We see Lacan's real[17] in the closing lines of the chapter erupt precisely at the site of tension between the imaginary desire for wholeness that structures subjectivity, and the symbolic law of lack

[17] In his earlier work Lacan questions Freud's pairing of the pleasure principle with the reality principle, which leads him in his later works to developing his famous 'registers' arguing that "the primary process encounters nothing real except the impossible, which in the Freudian perspective remains the best definition that can be given of reality [reel]" (Écrits 53-54). It is essentially "The state of nature from which we have been forever severed by our entrance into language…Lacan sometimes represents this state of nature as a time of fullness or completeness that is subsequently lost through the entrance into language" (Felluga).

which propagates its instability, where Mahdokht hysterically breaks down and admits “This was what she wanted with all her heart. It is always the heart’s desire that drives one insane” (Parsipur 9).

1.2. Bound by Narrative: Munis and her Symbolic Entrapment

Munis is introduced as a seemingly passive character, isolated from the outside world and surveilled by her brother’s authoritative role, whose oppressive vigilance functions as a symbolic barrier between her and the external world. Her aspirations and desires are barred by what seem to be ideological prohibitions at first, but they are in actuality manifestations of the symbolic order imposed by her brother who embodies the “nom/non de père”. A pun coined by Lacan that designates parental function and symbolizes “no” prohibition and “name” designation which, in turn, signals the introduction of the parental figure of the subject into both language and law structures by barring their access to the imaginary fantasies of unity[18].

Munis’s passiveness and detachment from her subjectivity and agency is also apparent in the way the narrative functions. Her narrative, in the beginning of the novel, is mostly focalized externally, either from the perspective of her friend Faizah or a broader social lens imposed by her brother “On principle... women belong in the house. The outside is the world of men” (Parsipur 28), this narrative distance mirrors Munis’s constrained position in her so-called patriarchal society. Munis’s story in her opening chapters is highly diegetic[19], she is narratively marginalized and treated as an object of narration rather than a narrating subject

[18] “Freud reveals to us that it is thanks to the Name-of-the-Father that man does not remain bound [attaché] to the sexual service of his mother, that aggression toward the Father is at the very heart of the Law, and that the Law is at the service of the desire that Law institutes through the prohibition of incest” (Écrits 723).

[19] *Diegesis* is distinguished by Genette from *mimesis* as the difference between “telling” and “showing” respectively. A diegetic form of narrative is one that is described as “pure narrative” which “will be taken to be more distant than "imitation": it says less, and in a more mediated way” (Genette 163).

“Munis sat directly across from Fa’iza, not saying a word… For the past ten years she had thought of Munis as an imbecile. Fa’iza had cultivated a friendship with her despite the fact that Munis was ten years her senior because she found in her a winsome sincerity and personal magnetism” (Parsipur 14-15). Parsipur employs these strategies to deliberately demonstrate the suppression of Munis’s voice under the pressure of societal norms and patriarchal expectations, to build up to her suicide as a reclamation of subjectivity and autonomy, Ameneh Shervin Emami critically argues that Parsipur “creates characters that are mobile and cannot be silenced, who refuse to be erased or marginalized” (Emami 20).

1.2.1. Faizah’s Narcissistic Reflections in Parveen

Munis’s narrative is overshadowed by Faizah’s ramblings about her sister-in-law Parveen, these ramblings reveal much about Faizah’s narcissistic fragility more than they do Munis, these ramblings are not just ethical frustrations “she’s all pretense and not an ounce of sincerity in her” (Parsipur 20), but they are projections of her own self-hatred manifested as a scapegoat for her repressed envy. Parveen to Faizah acts like a mirror in which she sees her own lacks: beauty, marital success, and domestic desirability. Trapped in imaginary misrecognition, Faizah mistakes projection for truth, much like the spectator Metz describes as becoming overtaken by the image dismissing its constructed nature. Faizah’s ramblings about Parveen are not about Parveen, but about the image of womanhood Parveen embodies that contradicts her own.

1.2.2. Narrative Suicide: A Detachment from Passivity

The transformation of Munis into a narrating subject after she was a narrated object can be clearly distinguished after her suicide, where the focalization shifts from an external into an internal one “Munis was thinking obsessively that for as long as she could remember she had looked at the garden through the window convinced that virginity was a delicate, vulnerable

membrane" (Parsipur 24-25). The window represents a literal and metaphorical screen, from which she has long viewed her body and the world, mimicking a cinematic screen, where she finally decides to break the fourth wall of her life, transitioning from a mere spectator into an active character in her own narrative. Her position on the roof facing the street also emphasizes the dialectical relation between interiority and exteriority (Zahedi 424), which establishes the narrative shift from external to internal focalization.

In this pivotal moment, Munis contemplates her position in the world: "for as long as she could remember she had looked at the garden through the window convinced that virginity was a delicate, vulnerable membrane" (Parsipur 29). The window functions as a visual frame that positions Munis as a spectator of her own life. From a cinematic perspective, this passage resembles a point-of-view shot, the reader is spectatorially "sutured"[20] into her internal vision of the world she cannot seem to reach. The narration is internally focalized, further deepening the sense of immersion into Munis's obsessive thought pattern, just to abruptly collapse this psychological continuity with a condensation of narrative time: "Within five seconds she was plastered on the pavement below" (30), Mimicking a jump cut in film, which ruptures the spectatorial suture. The window being a symbolization of a cinematic screen, through which Munis has always seen herself as other, her suicidal leap, then is a gesture of desuturing, a rebellion against social order that has always restricted her body and gaze (Zahedi 425). This parallels a Lacanian encounter with 'the real' similar to Mahdokht's breakdown: where the illusion of a coherent subjective position is violently dismantled.

[20] "Miller seeks to extend Lacan's thought, in which suture "stitches over," so to speak, the subject's experience of absence (of many kinds, but particularly the subject's experience of exclusion from the very discourse that forms its illusions of selfhood)" (Butte 282). For more on suture film theory check: https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=68c3d64f510d1a46fb6dec074c753482b6c6a183

1.2.3. Death and Resurrection: Detachment from Detachment

After the suicide, Munis roams the country as a liminal ghost, in a space outside social identity, language, and meaning, she haunts the streets of Tehran, and she seeks knowledge mainly, political and sexual knowledge, as is shown in this passage:

> She was intrigued by one book… Its title was *Sexual Fulfillment or How to Know Our Bodies*…Without interruption she read the book cover to cover three times. Three days passed. At the end of the third day, she looked up from the book. She saw the external world in a different light. She felt she had undergone a process of growth and maturation (Parsipur 32).

Her psyche changes even more and starts reassembling itself, when she is killed again by her brother for not returning home and ruining the family's reputation, she rises from her grave, but this time a transcendental being, she exceeds the limits of the normal living subject by gaining access to experiences and knowledge that seems spectral and extraterrestrial. Parsipur refused to let the death of Munis be the ending of her story, instead she framed her death as a rebirth that elevates her from the world of social and ideological confinement into a world of unrestricted possibilities: possibilities of subjectivity never before could she have imagined, a subjectivity achieved only by detachment "After her symbolic death/ rebirth, Munis crosses the boundaries of gender/space, fulfils her desire, and becomes a new, emancipated, and yet a ghostly wandering woman." (Zahedi 424). Therefore, Munis's detachment can be seen as a structural split; divided between imaginary identification and symbolic law.

1.3. The Melancholic Madness of Farrokhlaqa

Farraokhlaqa's introduction is instantly colored by a nostalgic, and melancholic overwhelming reflection of her father's haunting memory, triggered by the scent of citrus blossoms (Parsipur 53), reactivating her mourning, dragged deeper into it at the sense of her husband's presence, a stark reminder of her dead marriage which she dismisses with a physical gesture signifying a psychological defense against an overwhelming past "she lifted her right hand to her face, as if to keep the memory from entering her mind. It was so melancholy to think of the dead"[21]. Her marriage is dominated by psychological estrangement, and emotional distance, a marriage that feels more like a business contract than an affectionate relationship. Farrokhlaqa constantly daydreams of her youthful romance Fakhroddin, a fantasy of harmless desire, propagated by the very impossibility of its fulfillment, "For some reason, Farrokhlaqa knew deep down in her heart that Fakhroddin would never come back to her. Five months later came the news that he had died in a car crash". She felt she was now alone in the world with only Golchehreh for company," (67) this fantasy functions as an image of the anti-Golchehreh, an image that represents all the absent qualities of her husband, and her lost emotions: tenderness, safety, and elegance.

Narratively, these analeptic[22] fragments function not as exposition, but as emotional ruptures that emerge in moments of solitude and nostalgic introspection, these fragmented memories show her fragmented psyche that is torn temporally between her hopeful past and her claustrophobic present. She is destabilized further when Golchehreh experiences a psychic epiphany "He realized that the grin was his defensive barrier against her overwhelming

[21] Ibid.

[22] Genette explains analepsis as "any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment" (Genette 40). In other words, analeptic fragments are temporal shifts or flashbacks that often happen without any chronological indication from the narrator.

desirability" (Parsipur 58-59) His sudden genuine affection triggers a fight or flight response in Farrokhlaqa, where, overwhelmed by paranoia she interprets it as an immediate threat "What if he wants to kill me?" (59) madness at its rawest form, a madness bred by confusion, one that has been building up in her mind by the accumulation of years of and years of emotional detachment.

1.4. Zarin: Hallucinatory Gateway of Madness into Mysticism

Zarrinkolah's journey is a mystic journey into spiritual transcendence, driven by a hallucinatory rupture that propels her away from her repetitive draining routine as a sex worker toward a metaphysical search for purification. She leaves the brothel heeding the spiritual advice of a new coming worker, who urges her to pray and perform ablutions after confiding in her the grotesque visions of her headless male clients (Parsipur 65) a metaphor for the erasure of identity and dehumanization of the patriarchal order, and a Freudian example of displacement where the head, which symbolizes logic and rationality, is severed in a manner that signals her own detachment from logical rationality. She goes to a shrine where she obsessively scrubs herself bloody in order to cleanse herself from her sins and reclaim a purified version of herself that eludes the physical constraints of desire. This attempt fails, but Zarin persists and pushes this desire for purification further, aided by the "kind gardener" who helps her restore her vision and guides her to a final transcendence, an idea known in Persian Sufi mysticism as (FANĀ) defined by Böwering as the "passing away of human consciousness in the divine" (1). Zarin achieves wholeness and integrates into the divine, along with the kind gardener, when she gives birth to a morning glory, a symbol of spiritual awakening, undying love, and transformation.

2. Cinematic Mental-Images: Deleuzian Aesthetics in Neshat's *Women Without Men*

The trajectory of any artwork, from the outset till it is set between the reader's hands, must contain an aesthetic choice, whether from the artist or the beholder. If the former, willingly or not, and admittedly or not, signs his work with an aesthetic creativity, the latter is also in duty to engage with the work aesthetically even in case of difficulty in the identification of the esthetics. In fact, the components and the parts, taking cinema specifically, exist in a complementary relation where the characters and the events act upon, in, and within each other or as Henry James says, "[w]hat is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?" (qtd in. Harize 35). Then comes the role of the spectator to examine the art from perspective and perception, undoubtedly subjectively, from what is framed in a sequence of shots.

Usually, the saneness and reliability of a character are called into question when they are struggling psychologically and mentally. As a result, the existential elements, like the differentiation between reality and fantasy and the sensation of time, which comprise the character's reality, are meant to be shaken. This point is essential in the movie since the characters differently face challenges on the psychological level, on which Ceuterick comments,

> Through magical realism, the affirmative aesthetics of *Women Without Men* brings light and gives a voice to both the past and possible futures, actualising the desires of women to be mobile and involved in the public sphere […] As these sound variations manifest as subtle changes between real and unreal, realistic and magical spaces, they reinforce the continuum between life and death, virtual and actual (in Deleuzian terms) [and sanity and insanity] (103).

Zarin, who spoke with her eyes and never spelled a word throughout the film, is a prostitute whose descent into madness throbs from her first scene. The montage of the shots where she is on the verge of her bed and after cowering in the middle of the room resembles the great American film director D.W Griffith's psychological close-up shots[23], and that presents from the beginning an image of disenchantment. Simultaneously, the shouts of the brothel's patronne, a role played by Parsipur, builds an aggravating sense of dissociation, similar to that of *Sound of Metal* (2009)[24]. Conversely, her cleansing comes early in the movie starting from the moment a customer sitting by the window approaches her with gentleness that she is not familiar with, that is what provokes a movement-image pattern as she turns her head to perceive a terrifying image of a faceless man to which she flinches and consequently runs away from the place. Her downward journey into the psychological trouble persists with a regeneration of the same pattern with her entrance to a shrine where the camera puts her in the middle of the frame first seen by the men raising from a prostrate; a reminding shot of Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954), which implied the male gaze through the camera lens.

Previously, in the first chapter, it has been noted that movement-image films are ones of matter, for its construction around movement more than time, but the case for Zarin's is quite different. Jordan Schonig's idea of the amalgamation of storytelling structure that Deleuze was interested in, since it follows the same normal structure of a story[25], could be implemented with Zarin on two levels with the psychological close-up shots' peculiar thematic portrayal of mental derangement. On a micro level, what she witnesses in referential sets like in the brothel as well as in the shrine is a minor plot; its exposition is the perception-image, the

[23] the American director who famously used the same technique in his *A Corner in Wheat* (1909) to probe the devastating psychic results of the American economic relations of his time.
[24] In the film the use of audio effects and sound by the end transfers a sensation of the protagonist's mental uneasiness.
[25]For more information on this point check https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbYYrRDKm5I&t=382s.

affection-image is the climax, and the resolution is the action-image. Alongside isolated shots, like when she is strenuously scrubbing her body in the bathhouse, the montage of Zarin's part in the movie works on the macro level of her journey in the film to be a movement-image character per se, one who descends into madness and solves her problem with embracing the orchard as her only and unreached sanctuary. An exemplar of the subordination of time to movement but still within a cinematography of mind, similar to Hitchcock's style that Rushton comments on, "Hitchcock then pushes the movement-image beyond action so that interpretation or thought – 'mental relations' – becomes central to the image. In Hitchcock, the action-image is eclipsed in favor of mental relations" (61).

Nietzsche assumes that a character is determined more by the lack of certain experiences than by those one has had (104), and that applies to faezah who is another woman from the movie but with a conservative background, appearing as a middle-class citizen, a character that unintentionally might fit for the time-image concept appropriately. Her natural and instinctive desire, as a woman, to marry Amir Khan, with her guard for her virginity as a sacred possession, suddenly and completely vanishes with the marriage of the man of her dreams and the sexual assault she experiences. The latter specifically makes the turning point of her story and establishes one of the two factors that governs the time-image movie: an unsolvable problematic.

Her loss of her virginity is irrevocable and there will never be a solution to that, unlike Zarin who sees her escape to the orchard as a solution to her problem. For the silent character, even the place which is meant to be a sanctuary does not provide a final solace for Faezah, as long as her memory does not stop haunting her. In a scene when Faezah steps reluctantly inside the house, the sight of unconscious Zarin, through the long shot, evokes a feeling of disorientation; an attentive memory that brings back an atrocious flashback that presents her in a state of alienation. There, "the actor's playing his part *in the present* while also listening to

or observing himself *as though looking at himself 'in the past'* delivers 'a little time in the pure state' (Rushton 81 [emphasis in the original]). Similarly, in *Umberto D*[26] the maid makes the same pure optical situation when her eyes meet her pregnant belly, and "[t]his is how, in an ordinary or everyday situation, in the course of a series of gestures, which are insignificant but all the more obedient to simple sensory-motor schemata, what has suddenly been brought about is a *pure optical situation* to which the little maid has no response or reaction" (Deleuze 2: 2 [emphasis in the original]).

The other factor, the openness of time, marks its beginning with her entrance to the orchard; a strong and heavy sensation of the flow of time or what Deleuze names 'a little time in a pure state' or 'a direct-image of time' where the movement is secondary and the heavy duration of time is pervasive. Almost every shot that followed the pivotal incident of her abuse, starting from her "Dear God have mercy on me… forgive my sins" (00:49:11-00:49:22)[27] stipulates the presence of the past with the present.

If the movement-image follows a clear well-established pattern of narration, time-image's is a persistent perplexity that prolongs with the development of the story. When the sight of the gardener petrifies Faezah, she rapidly closes the window for a shot that its nature is confusing. She recollects, at a phantasmal sight, the agonizing memory of her assault to which the viewer finds it hard to tell if what he is perceiving is an actual or a virtual; she as well cannot tell if she is awake or dreaming. For that Deleuze says, "there is no present which is not haunted by a past" (2: 38). The moment she closes the window throws her somewhere between the actual and the virtual where she re-lives her atrocious rape. In other words, the actual can be her present, while the virtual is her past, and Deleuze does not advocate for one

[26] A 1952 Neorealist Italian film directed by Vittorio De Sica that follows the simple story of an aged government pensioner in his journey selling his watch and books to pay his rent.
[27] From here onward, the citations of videos are all from Neshat's *Women Without Men* (2009).

or the other, but rather he sees their relation as key (Rushton 87). The daunting shots for Faezah, which are dazzling for the viewer, evokes and plays a moment of pure detachment, a dream-like situation where surrealism is more likely to be the setting. Deleuze explains in length,

> [T]he confusion of the real and the imaginary is a simple error of fact, and does not affect their discernibility: the confusion is produced solely 'in someone's head'. But indiscernibility constitutes an objective illusion; it does not suppress the distinction between the two sides, but makes it unattributable, each side taking the other's role in a relation which we must describe as a reciprocal presupposition [...]. In fact, there is no virtual which does not become actual in relation to the actual, the latter becoming virtual through the same relation […]. The indiscernibility of the real and the imaginary, or of the present and the past, of the actual and the virtual, is definitely not produced in the head or the mind, it is the objective characteristic of certain existing images which are by nature double (2: 69).

The subordination of movement to time makes an eventual feeling of alienation possible to exist; based on a presumption of the mental themes that time-image movies generally contain and its attempted definition as one with characters who lack self-consciousness. Together, a supported judgment can be made upon Faezah that she is in a fluctuating state of mind, between detachment and madness.

Munis, on her part, is a woman whose aspirations do not meet with the social truth around her; the revolutionary picture that she insists to draw against her society's moors drives all her journey. As cryptic as her personality is, her part in the film is hard to categorize and so is her psychological condition. Informing that Munis comes back from death excludes any waiting for a usual story. She opens the movie with a shot that frames her in an inexplicable angst, the reason behind that becomes clear as the events develop, and then a long close-up

shot follows with an internal monologue “now I’ll have silence. Silence… and nothing” (00:02:10-00:02:22). There one could notice the condensed time in the shot. From her resurrection onward, the events escalate with her clear political and social interests. The same course of events put her, again, in another close-up shot, amidst the demonstrations, in a moment of consciousness and social realization in what appears as an action-image. Conversely, this time the close-up shot is that of Eisenstein and not of Griffith, and what distinguishes the first from the second is that the Soviet’s is social. Meaning that the excessive use of close-up [shots] results in a transformational leap [to] a social-revolutionary realm (Rushton 19-20). Looking at the sky, in the same manner in the opening of the movie, Munis finishes what she started in a shot that resumes her jump from the rooftop continuing the internal monologue “Death isn’t hard. You only think it is. All that we wanted… was to find a new form, a new way. Release” (01:33:54-01:34:26).

2.1. Between Deleuze and Lacan: A Psychoanalytical Reading of the Film

The nature of art, as an imitation of reality, with its aims – plural because it is never reduced to one ineffable platonic sublime effect on the receiver, plainly or not, is determined and interpreted within a cultural opinion. The Deleuzian examination of some parts of the movie presented a possibility for a thematic interpretation of madness and detachment, and in Iran, this interpretation is forever shaded socially, historically, or mainly politically. Not undoubtedly but rather surprisingly, films like Abbas Kiarostami’s, which have unanimous agreement of a primary aesthetic value, are in some parts of a socio-political nature, and are interpreted in that respect, despite his disapproval of that. Mohsen Makhmalbaf’s style and influence find a way to exist in Neshat’s movie; an element of psychoanalytical interpretation within a socio-historical context invites for discussion.

The psychosis and neurosis that are interpreted in the previous element could not be better expressed more than in Jung's words:

> The words "many are called, but few are chosen" are singularly appropriate here, for the development of personality from the germ-state to full consciousness is at once a charisma and a curse, because its first fruit is the conscious and unavoidable segregation of the single individual from the undifferentiated and unconscious herd. This means isolation, and there is no more comforting word for it. Neither family nor society nor position can save him from this fate, nor yet the most successful adaptation to his environment, however smoothly he fits in. The development of personality is a [favor] that must be paid for dearly. But the people who talk most loudly about developing their personalities are the very ones who are least mindful of the results, which are such as to frighten away all weaker spirits (183).

If the convictions that put together and principles that rule one's life get violated poignantly in a fleeting moment, their mental state and psyche are most likely to be torn asunder. Clearly, Faezah is a young conservative religious woman who was raised in a household where she was taught that her identity, actual, and factual existence is inseparable from her virginity. "Munis that girl will ruin your brother's life. You should hear the rumors about her. They say she is not virgin … [Astaghfirullah] bite your tongue." (00:20:21-00:20:35), this brief discussion that she has with her friend evidently delineates a symbolic stage that she passed through where she was taught, in the religious and societal norms of Iran in that time, that her virginity is worthy of her life, and equal to that is the idea of marriage. All of that shaped her reality, one that has suddenly vanished with her sexual assault, making her staring at the abyss of a terrifying existence, a 'real' that she had to experience twice (that and Amir Khan's marriage of another) breaking an 'I' that she preserved cautiously for years, and putting her in a dilemma where nothing was enough to reconcile the void that she felt.

Manifestly, the result was a psychological conundrum that tormented her psyche with the recollected images of the animalistic incident that she went through; next to Zarin's unconscious image as a 'small other'[28], upon which she projects herself. The scattered pieces should be gathered even if that meant to her a total new reformation of identity. When she sits in front of the mirror, she stares at her reflection with the world's misery in her eyes just like the infant in the mirror stage who recognizes his image for the first time. The moment she unbuttoned her dress marks a fresh 'Specular Image', a separation from an old 'self' that parts away, leaving a place for a new one to rise from the rubbles.

Contrary to that, and despite being Faezah's close friend, Munis's mind and character are unshakable; returning from death draws a picture of a challenging unvanquished persona. More or less, one could possibly assume that she sculpted her identity; the unapologetic stance against her brother's conventional orders and aspirations: "Amir Khan: You're almost 30 and still not married. If you impress him, you might have a husband and a life… Munis: to hell with the suitor. I don't want to get married… Amir Khan: you are never going to be decent." (00:05:44-00:06:18), the opposition of her friend's contentious words on the demonstrators: "Faezah: but why? It's just a lot of idiots making trouble outside. Munis: idiots? Faezah: yes, a bunch of troublemakers who tell the people nonsense. Munis: those trouble makers are fighting to stop the British… and you're calling this nonsense?" (00:08:50-00:09:13), and the unthinkable bold storming to the café shows her rebellious nature. Munis does not suffer from detachment, and she is the farthest from madness. Rather, she climaxes in a moment of epiphany attaining a sense of completeness, a wholeness of her 'I' when she stands surely amongst the demonstrators; where she repossessed her will to move all things, where she was to see not watch, to act and not just to be (00:55:55-00:56:55). A conjunction of oneness and

[28] 'Small other' or 'petit a' for Lacan means an internalized imaginary representaion of the other, where it is often a reflection of oneself or ego.

identification thrusted her to an ephemeral moment of realization and divorce from reality. Her 'lack' was fulfilled in a reversed manner when her 'Ideal I' was born in that moment.

The utter silence that Zarin adopts throughout the movie, except for one suspended moment in time when she is framed and a narrator speaks as in an internal monologue, deceives the observer for an impossibility to interpret her madness within a Lacanian psychoanalytic context. But Deleuze's movement-images, and the shots she was in, provide a room for that interpretation to exist. First, Zarin's madness is similar to that of Faezah in essence, if one decides not to see the latter's situation as detachment. Since forever, there have been stories in the folklore of many civilizations, whose doctrines were either conservative or religious, linking prostitution, virginity, or any similar issues with mental disturbance and bad karma. In other words, the righteousness of destiny will eventually manifest and drag the deserved punishment on the sinner. This, according to Foucault, is a social diagnosis rather than a clinical one; meaning that if the conformity to society's rules is jeopardized, the individual will be stripped of his 'sanity' (Madness and civilization 9).

This contextualization points out the predication upon which Zarin's madness is examined. In a brief review on the novella and the movie, Hoyer shows a simile between her and Iran that "[a]bove all, Zarin reminds us that unless women are prioritized and nurtured, unless they are given the space to be women without men, Iran's progress is unsustainable."[29] This reminder might be insightful within a specific context, and if one tends to do the same with a Psychoanalytic Lacanian interpretation, her experience is entailed in the French philosopher's words "there are in the unconscious signifying chains which subsist as such, and which from there structure, act on the organism, influence what appears from the outside as a symptom, this is the whole basis of analytic experience." (Book V The Formations of the

[29] For more information, check *Magic in the Orchard* here: https://blogs.wellesley.edu/fren35901sp17/category/film-review-women-without-men-2009/.

Unconscious 374). Zarin, as noted previously, does not utter a single word the whole movie, but, again, that does not restrain the possibility to analyze her character from a Lacanian angle. If the unconscious for Freud is a repository for repressed desire, ironically, Zarin exhausted all her sexuality with a scrawny body that tells her story. But if we adopt one possible understanding of Lacan to the unconscious desire, the perplexing shot of the faceless man could be interpreted as the last straw for her to purification and repentance that comes from an unknown area of her psyche, because there exists nothing that informs about her background. This desire goes hand in hand with the tremulous societal and political change of 1979; an Islamic revolution comes and brings a picture of a "Big Other[30]" that the woman unconsciously desires; one that is ascetic, to purify herself from an unpromising shallow quotidian. The chador and the shrine are symbols of a new Symbolic Order that guide her new identity, a desire that is a desire of the other (Lacan Seminar IX, 235). Her decision to reside in the close orchard, and her firm negation, which is evident in her eyes, to any outsiders perform a protection from any 'Real' that might threaten her sanctified new 'Self'; the same threat that triggered poignant memories when she was in the shrine.

The aforementioned point on the lack of information in Zarin's background is mutual between her, Faezah, and Munis. But that does not prevent the attempt to see the film from a thematic frame. The film forms a collection of sequences, which is the first and primary aspect of one to exist, that acts on the spectator to form a mental meaning. The act of perception starting from the opening shot of Munis's dread, the hallucinations of both Zarin and Faezah, their re-identification, Munis's integrality, and many other points that are highlighted previously collide with a Symbolic structure that the viewer goes by since madness is usually synonymous to figments of imagination, whereas detachment is associated with an image of

[30] The "big Other" (or Symbolic Other) represents a fundamental concept that shapes individual identity and desire. It's a hypothetical, external force that encompasses language, societal norms, and the "law" that structures our unconscious (May-Hobbs).

disengagement from where he/she is standing. Between Deleuze and Lacan, and from the first to the second, the movie, from an upper dimension, presents an aesthetic and thorough expression of madness and detachment. There is no respective order that one is bound to in the analysis of the movie, but if there is one thing to clarify is that there is no rigid objective interpretation; meaning that the examined characters are not completely mad or detached from their reality, instead, somewhere there will be a thin line from which they oscillate. As a matter of fact, each character's story is a film within the film itself that intersects to deepen the mental and psychological experience of each other.

To sum up this chapter, the madness and the symbolic detachment of the characters were conveyed through an interactive network of techniques. Where the nonlinear structure of the novella offered an internal gateway into characters' psychological troubles through introspective language, the movie introduced the characters' mental delirium through an omniscient psychological perspective. The images were not restricted to their thoughts since it transmitted the manifestations of madness and detachment too. The interpretation of these concepts, however, does not fall for its socio-historical or political concepts because it is placed across both artistic mediums: novella and movie.

Chapter Three: Madness and Symbolic Detachment on Pages, Screen, and in between

This chapter explores how the concepts of madness and detachment are portrayed differently in literature and cinema through a comparative analysis of Shahrnush Parsipur's novella *Women Without Men* and Shirin Neshat and Shoja Azari's 2009 film adaptation. It considers how these two media, each with its own affordances and constraints, approach the same thematic material using different formal and aesthetic strategies. The chapter investigates how inner psychological rupture is conveyed through language, sound, image, and time. Finally, it tackles how the dialogue of the convergence of literary and cinematic expression should be approached.

1. The Divergence of Cinema and Literature in the Depiction of Madness and Detachment

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

-Robert Frost, *The Road Not Taken*

Cinema and literature are completely different apparatus due to the difference of the tools by which they are conceived. Their resources and purposes differ from one another, while cinema offers visual images and sounds to its spectators, literature offers mental and emotional dimensions to those images.

1.1. Literature the Initiator of Arts

Literary texts have been a significant source of inspiration to film makers whether classical works like *Pride and Prejudice (1813)*, and *Jane Eyre (1847)* or more contemporary works like *Harry Potter (1997-2016)* and *No Country for Old Men (2005)*. These movie adaptations have sometimes cultivated more fame and recognition than the adapted texts they were adapted from, but this does not mean that the books offer any less value, nor is it fair to judge the success of a work based on a comparison to its "original" form. The field of interart studies has been struggling since its emergence in the twentieth century. The field of study conflicted between a study of interdependence, and the study of independent formal qualities of the arts. The focus, however, should be a humanistic and cultural approach to study the narrative function which all the arts share. Every art in essence tries to tell a story or convey a message, with the exception of abstract paintings and the more ambiguous forms of modern "art" the different means and resources by which that message is conveyed, although important in their own right, should not be the main focus of scrutiny when comparing two works of art. A thematic study of what humans share by unraveling the schemes of storytelling and deciphering how certain themes are shown and shared across media is a far more relevant practice in the humanities than a simple reductive formal study of techniques and literary devices.

1.1.1. Translation as Adaptation

In his conversations with Eckermann in 1827, Goethe pushes the view of literature as a common possession of all humankind (212), and advocates for a universal readership of literature away from the inadequacy of the restrictive notions of national literatures in a world where the boundaries of cultural and intellectual exchange are constantly expanding. He argues that "[n]ational literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of World literature is at hand, and every one must strive to hasten its approach" (213). He anticipates the effects of globalization on the intellectual landscape; a landscape of free cultural circulation across linguistic and physical frontiers mainly thanks to translation and digital development.

Goethe's vision has gained astounding prominence in the modern era where the audiences of literature can be as diverse as the individual languages they speak, to the extent that not only can you access any work of literature from any tradition, in any language online, but there also exist some renditions of major classical works into fictional languages (created in literary productions themselves) such as the translation of hamlet into star trek's Klingon, and some partial translations of Shakespeare into George R.R Martin's Dothraki created for "A Song of Ice and Fire" series. Although these translations seem unserious and experimental, they showcase the validity of Goethe's claim to his fundamental idea that literature can address the human condition no matter the cultural origin of the reader.

Usually, a work of literature does not require many translations unless the translators feel that there is a gap to fill, either linguistically, ideologically, or stylistically. Women Without Men's translations reveal a significant divergence of the different audiences targeted by the translators, while talattof/sharlet's translation retains the style of Parsipur's curt, detached narrative style and offer an almost verbatim translation of the Persian text, the translation of Farrokh Fakhroddin offers a more interpretational translation, where he interferes

in elaborating metaphors, and familiarizing cultural and historical ambiguity to an anglophone readership. While Ali Maghdadi argues that the translators share the general aim of approximating to English readers as close a translation of Parsipur's Persian form (84), the translations reveal the divergence in the audiences targeted by the translators. Such a stylistically faithful and literal translation of the text delivered by talattof/sharlet serves a more academic audience that might be interested in a close stylistic and formal reading of the text. Whereas a more accessible and familiarized translation such as the one delivered by Farrokh serves a broader readership that might not be as familiar with culturally specific references, one that is less concerned with the prose style and more interested in the interpretive thematic richness of the narrative. This divergence in audience does in no way reduce the value of the translations, nor does it introduce a hierarchical structure of a better and worse translation, as modern literature owes its widening scope to this very idea of the "cosmopolitanism of literature" (Dominguez, 79) aided mainly by eliminating the need for mastering a specific language to read its literature.

1.1.2. Interiority through Language

If cinema's grandeur is driven from its visual and external jouissance, literature's universality stems from the emotive, imaginative, and cognitive ability to captivate the reader fully into its experiences. Wordsworth in his *preface to lyrical ballads* advocated for the superiority of the literature that prioritizes emotion and sensibility over the formal rigidity of classical literature, and its intimate ability to immerse the reader in the mental and emotional states of its characters with unparalleled depth.

As Lacan contends in his *ÉCRITS (1966)*, the unconscious is structured like a language (213). Literature's innate reliance on language in its structural integrity offers a raw and ontological gateway to human experiences. According to Lacan, it is only through the

introduction into the symbolic order that psychological life is rendered intelligible, and since literature is produced in this very order, it offers an internal access to the psychic structures of the characters, and it does not merely reflect them, but materializes them. Literary devices such as stream of consciousness, free indirect speech, and internal focalization allow the reader to have direct contact with the interiority of the characters. Offering not just descriptions of madness and detachment, but manifestations of these psychic ruptures in the text itself. Parsipur's use of shifting focalization between internal and external allows the reader to access the fragmented perceptual framework of the characters and experience it with them immediately. While these complex psychological states can be represented in cinema via voiceover techniques, performance and shot manipulation in the editing stage, they remain external techniques that try to approximate the madness and detachment as close as possible to the viewer. Farrokhlaqa's representation in both mediums is a perfect example of the difference in the level of immersion, in the novella her descent into madness is shown completely inwardly:

> There was a tremor of surprise in the woman. He had never addressed her in those terms. He always called her by a nickname. And that loathsome grin was not there. Instead there was in the tone of his voice a trace of what sounded like genuine affection. She shuddered with fear. She was certain there was an evil intention behind all this. "What if he wants to kill me?" she thought to herself (Parsipur, 59).

This passage is an example of the series of compulsive internal monologues that are impossible to transform into aesthetic cues without losing the depth of the linguistic complexity the novella delivers, not because the film lacks complexity, but because its medium specific techniques are limited to visual external representation rather than an internal materialization of thoughts.

1.1.3. Temporal Manipulation

One of the most noticeable divergences between the film and the novella's reflection of detachment is the temporal manipulation of the events of the story. The book uses narrative techniques such as borderline ellipsis and summary to condense the narrative time, most notably in the chapter of Munis' suicide. Parsipur evokes the feeling of detachment from the world by detaching Munis from diegetic continuity, where she uses the narrative voice to summarize the event of her suicide, an event that spans one single page. Her resurrection follows almost immediately, with no narrative justification or logical transition, reflecting the magical realist style. This feature borderline touches Genette's idea of 'ellipsis' "the omission of narrative time", and aligns with the conventions of the genre of magic realism, where the magical seamlessly blends with the real without an apparent causal relationship. The film, however, shows this dissonance by using sound and the strategic editorial use of a slow motion shot when Munis is falling, suspending her in the shot and producing a sensory dilation of time. The film thus offers an affective experience of detachment through time dilation and sensory intensification, while the novella delivers a cognitive experience through temporal abstraction and narrative manipulation.

1.2. Madness and Detachment through The Cinematic Lens

Tarkovsky's grandeur and eminence in World Cinema did not come in a vacuum. His poetic spirit, that he inherited from his father the poet Arseny Tarkovsky, was not only reproduced ornamentally in his works, but also in the infatuation he held in his view on cinema, which he praised as reigning supreme over all other art forms. Nonetheless, he helplessly admits that the selection, collation, adjustment, and editing of the components of a film form it as a whole since no single component has a meaning when it is in isolation from the other and "*we can only talk about its components rather arbitrarily, dividing it up artificially for the sake*

of theoretical discussion." (114 [emphasis added]). In this respect, *Women Without Men* makes use of the same cinematic tools to display and formulate images and understandings of madness and detachment that only cinema can present in its specific manner.

1.2.1. Sound, Music, and Noises: Auditory Psychological Delirium

Surprisingly for many, the vitality of the auditory aspect in any movie is a topic for large discussion between the grand figures of World Cinema. First, the distinction between sound and music is of great importance for Directors like the French Robert Bresson, but the conviction behind the minimalistic use of both is one. His approach in his films was non-musical, where the music should not take any form of reinforcement or support except for the music played by visible instruments (Bresson 10), because for him music is never able to increase the value of the image to which it is integrated, and he contends that "[p]eople flood a film with music. They are preventing us from seeing that there is nothing in those images." (71). Yet, Bresson was not completely against the use of sound or music, but against the overuse of them since the exchange between image and sound, through any composed duality between them, gives a cinematographic life to films (24). On the other side, the poet of the cinema Andrei Tarkovsky adopted an opinion contrary to Bresson's, in which he sees music as an essential element in the realization of a certain concept as whole (Tarkovsky 158). Meaning that the role of music is vitally complementary to the understanding of any concept that is projected on a screen. To elaborate in length:

> *[M]usic does more than intensify the impression of the visual image by providing a parallel illustration of the same idea*; it opens up the possibility of a new, transfigured impression of the same material: something different in kind. Plunging into the musical element which the refrain brings into being, we return again and again to the emotions the film has given us, with our experience deepened each time by new impressions.

> With the introduction of the musical progression, the life recorded in the frame can change its colour and sometimes even its essence. […]. Music can be used to produce a necessary distortion of the visual material in the audience's perception, to make it heavier or lighter […]. By using music, it is possible for the director to prompt the emotions of the audience in a particular direction, by widening the range of their perception of the visual image. The meaning of the object is not changed, but the object itself takes on a new colouring. […] *Perception is deepened*. (158 [emphasis added]).

In multiple excerpts in *Women Without Men*, music, sounds, or noises add profoundly to the thematic representation of mental distortion in the characters. As for Munis, the echoed sound of Adhan in the beginning of the movie, minding the rebellious persona she plays against her religious patriarchal society, and the layered scene when she is standing amidst the protests with musical notes that is accompanied by the alleviation of the protestors voice, altogether display ephemeral moments when she feels absent from her reality. Ceuterick's description of Munis' 'ghost' supports the notion of her situational detachment as she says, "[o]n the one hand, Munis has formally become a ghost: she looks at people who do not look back at her, and *her voice-over talks to people (the spectators) who do not talk back*" (103 [emphasis added]). The women's wailing in the entrance of the shrine, and the aggravating white noise of the thin echo of shallow chime sounds intensify the visual image of mental derangement that Zarin is framed within on her part. When she is standing in front of the mirror threading her eyebrow with an impression of indifference, the synchronous high-pitched sound of the musical piece, namely Delkash's Yadat Miayad, playing in the background with the brothel's patronne shouts, as if coming from the back of her head, delineate the unstable mental state of Zarin. The sedative naturalistic sounds of birds' tweets and water's gurgle in the orchard where she resides after her departure from the city of Tehran exemplify a sensation of a societal detachment from urban life to the natural one. Moreover, Faezah, in the sequence where she is

haunted by her poignant memory of the rape incident that she experienced, the same shallow chime sounds escalate in the background alongside daunting whispers and calls for her name with a high musical note by the end of the sequence render another dimension, as auditory hallucinations, to the completeness of her madness and detachment, both at the same time, as concepts.

1.2.2. Performance as Psychic Expression

Performance art is presented through artwork(s) that demand physical presence and/or movement, through actions and behaviors, made by the artist or other participants, and it includes multiple forms like dance, music, theater… etc. where the body is the primary medium that is used to convey a massage or tell a story in front of an audience. An obvious distinction that sets a demarcation line between acting on the stage and in the screen is the matter of being recorded; in the theater actors are faced directly by the audience, whereas in the movie they are faced by the crew. Performance in cinema, compared to the other performing arts, is as important as the recording camera, because it completes the large continuum of the film. To elaborate, acting –if it is possible to be used interchangeably with 'performance', is the human element of mise-en-scene, an actual element nonetheless, which is placed in front of a camera within a setting and a lighting, wearing costumes and makeup and effecting actions within a scene with their facial expressions and bodily gestures (Sikov 129-30). This elaboration implies the power of performance through its immersion in a complete system of elements that operate together to create a meaning.

The performance of women in movie generally, and their representation of complete madness specifically evokes an association in the spectators' minds with *Possession* (1981) by Andrzej Żuławski which follows the story of disturbing acting of a terrible mental breakdown performed by Mark's wife Anna, who discovers his infidelity after her request for divorce. In

Shirin Neshat's and Shoja Azari's *Women Without Men* (2009), though the performance of the women is not as intense as in *Possession* psychologically, there are many spots where the characters execute acts of madness and/or detachment. Zarin, first, with her tired physique and blank stare to the void, sends an impression that her body is present in the moment unlike her mind that is absent from reality, as in the nonchalant reaction that she embodies when she is having sexual intercourses with her clients. What seems to be a bed sheet that she puts on her head as a chador when she leaves the brothel, and the defensive posture that her body takes and the cautious gaze that she sends in a women's bath house symbolize an inexplicable behavioral and emotionless shifts that draws attention to an unstable mental state. The state of unsound mind has three conditions, one of them is 'delusional' which refers to the voices that instructs the mentally unstable person for self-harm (Shepherd 151), and it applies to Zarin when she performs an exhausting and harsh bloodily skin scrub through which she personifies a mentally distorted woman. Munis, on her part, from the moment when she resurrects, performs lightly an image of both societal and psychological detachment in a couple of sequences. Despite being a space for men, the bold entrance to the café where she sits close to the radio absolutely careless about her surroundings draws the image of a detachment from the societal setting that classifies such behavior as utter disgrace. On the other hand, in the middle of the riots, her light steps and blank stares in the air fill the sequence with a sense of spiritual ascendance that she embodies. The actors of both characters' act in a way which Bresson, in general terms, describes that "[t]he actor projects himself before him in the form of the character he wants to seem; lends him his own body, face, voice; makes him sit down, stand up, walk; penetrates him with sentiments and passions he himself does not have" (34).

1.2.3. Time in Cinematography

Camera, as an element of a total-dependent cinematic apparatus, like pen in writing, is the means that enables the realization of visual arts like photography and cinema. Cinematography is both: an art and a technical term in cinema despite being considered an aspect of mise-en-scene. Etymologically, 'cinematography', whose first part means movement, could be possibly defined as writing with movement and light, since it shares the mutual Greek root *grapho*, which means to write or record, with the word 'photography', whose first part *phos* means light (sikov 38). Insofar, Bresson approximately gives the same definition for cinematography which he sees as writing with images in movements and with sounds, minding that, for him, the special meaning of creative film making, which thoroughly exploits the nature of film as such, should not be confused with the work of a cameraman (2).

It would not have been possible for films of the time-image to have the ability to present 'a little time in the pure state' if it was not by virtue of a 'spiritual automaton' at first place. For Deleuze, thinking is not 'owned' by humans, since it exists independently from human beings, for that even machines can think and could be endowed with a spirit (an automated spirit), and that is the closest understanding of what 'spiritual automaton' means (Rushton 9). In this context, Camera itself, as a machine, and as one indispensable means for the realization of a movie, is imparted a characterization of pondering. This quality, by extension, would give the camera the capability to expand and use its distinctive features to present new forms of concepts: like pressing time and rendering it malleable. The question that forces itself here is how is it possible for time to be made through a shot that is taken by a camera? In the following passage Tarkovsky answers,

> It becomes tangible when you sense something significant, truthful, going on beyond the events on the screen; when you realise, quite consciously, that what you see in the

> frame is not limited to its visual depiction, but is a pointer to something stretching out beyond the frame and to infinity; a pointer to life. […] And it always turns out to have more thought, more ideas, than were consciously put there by its author (117-18).

In many sequences in the film, camera did double-work at the same time, it generated a shot through creative exploitation of movement, lights, and sounds, and made it possible to condense time within the same shot. When Munis jumps from the rooftop, the close-up shot to her face in the opening scene and in the sequel by the end create an intensified heavy sense of time, where it loses its duration making the rhythm slower and the estimated time to reach the ground longer. Something that allows her to think about essential questions in life and changes her, and the spectator's, sensation of the present. Similarly, the long shot when she is in the middle of the demonstrations contains the same time-pressure as the previous one. Her realization of the essence of her role in that moment requires an extensible duration to assimilate the situation thoroughly, which the movement and the placement of the camera facilitates. The shot that pictures Zarin in the middle of her room with a body gesture that resembles the Polish jester Stańczyk holds a meaning more profound than a melancholic prostitute. The dim light, the position of the camera behind the shot, and the sound of the vivid atmosphere in the brothel endow her image with a significant sensation of the heaviness of time that she passes in her room. The same truthful sensation of stretched time reoccurs when she lays on the orchard's ground with a close-up shot that is edited to display her floating joyfully and lightly. Both sequences present a technical expression of detachment, except that the first is poignant and the second is appeasing.

2. The Convergence of Cinema and Literature in the Depiction of Madness and Detachment

The shared criteria between different art forms are the ability to mimic reality and to generate an emotional response when meeting the audience's perception. However, for many people, this mutual ground does not bring arts closer since, in the contrary, the discourse deflects to revolve around an artistic a debate over artistic supremacy and hierarchical value. Taking cinema and literature specifically, Cuarón sees that "cinema does not owe anything to literature, or to drama, or to painting", furthermore he argues, "[it] is way similar to music, [being] an art that flows in time that is also an abstract language that flows with themes" (BAFTA Guru). His opinion places cinema almost individually apart from any other art form, and the reference to language is a reminder of the literary language that literature uses, which highlights a legitimate concern that the former and the latter cannot be mutually intelligible. Accordingly, literature and cinema employ different resources and mediums that establish a difference in 'language', yet the very first premises, that of mimicry and catharsis, direct the discussion to question how can both arts surpass the disparities of means which would help to create an artistic exchange between them in an attempt to reach a thorough thematic representation?

Georges Duhamel's exclamation around the experience of cinema that changes and replaces his thinking with moving images was a criticism for cinema that Deleuze, nonetheless, takes it as a claim for highest praise (Rushton 11). Arguably, this merit is based upon the predicament that cinema is an art that shows more than it tells, and the role it plays as mediator between thoughts and their realization through the celluloid to project a virtual reality. The capability of moving images to provide new thoughts, present themes in a quite thorough manner, and to make time malleable is by virtue of a whole compound and interdependent system. The mise-en-scene, the performance, the sound, the montage, the editing… etc. work

together to create an enriched art which integrates all the traditional arts. Cinema has the ability, also, to be both temporal and special. The impossibility to have a movie without a sensation of time and the essentiality of the feeling of an existent movement in the film, either by the actors or the camera itself, are what create a language of camera. Thematically, and as presented in the previous element, the combination of the fundamentals of the cinema facilitates the realization of concepts as madness and detachment like in Neshat's *Women Without Men* (2009). However, Tarkovsky claims that the factuality of time in cinema is given in simple direct form of observation, which is not exclusive to cinema since it is already present in the Japanese haiku poetry (66). Regardless if this mutual possession is established deliberately or not, Tarkovsky's remark presents a featured element between two different art forms which brings them closer to create not a replica but a new dimensional artistic expression.

On the other hand, for many intellects like Hegel, the supremacy of literature on top of the artistic hierarchy is thanks to imagination, which, for him, is constitutive and forms the fundamental foundation of all arts (Dominguez et al. 108). The imagination could be handed to both: the writer and the reader, since, for the former, what is invoked in his mind is transmitted through the descriptive nature of literature and its literariness that employs the special use of literary language, the piece of writing that is going to be read by the latter is destined to be visualized imaginatively. The power of literature lies in the smoothness of transition between narration and action. Between the mental visualization of the story, and the control of the abrupt shift between narration and action literature defies cinema in the ability to draw pictures that are hard to realize in films. *Women Without Men* is a magic realism novella that has characters like Mahdokht who transforms to be a tree makes the work of the director nightmarish, as what Neshat herself claims (Parsipur Preface). Moreover, like Holden in *The Cather in the Rye*, narration in literature can inhabit the mind of a character where little action occurs, something that cinema cannot maintain as it is based more on action that thought. This

unfilmable side of the story is found in *Women Without Men* (the novella), where many sequences happen totally in the mind of the characters like: Makhdot, Munis, and Faezah. However, the intensity of the depiction cannot overthrow the syncretism of cinema as the incorporation of multiple aspects at the cost of the arts of antiquity makes it richer and more fertile and complete (Dominguez et al. 111).

Between Parsipur's words in the novella and Neshat's direction of the film, the fact that both of them build upon one narrative does not have to make the comparison neither reduced to a duality of original/copy nor should it be minimized to a matter of which one depicted madness and detachment better. The peculiarity of each art's means to achieve thematic representation of madness and detachment differently helps to make the narrative be of two-dimensional nature, and that aids to make each art form compensate for the shortcomings of the other. The area where Neshat had to omit Mahdokht for technical over-bearings shall not undermine the capability of the movie to present thorough images of women's madness and detachment in a manner that only cinema is capable of. The cinematography, the time-pressing, the performance, and the sound and the music helped to intensify the aesthetic imagery of the themes. The sincerity of the images does not replace the imagination of the spectator to make him passive; it helps to provide a new 'thought' of madness and detachment as concepts, a new form of 'thought' that is 'out there' and not originally his. On the other hand, the mere descriptive and literary features of the novella do not strip it from the fact that the magical realist parts of the story find a room to exist because of the constitution of imagination in literature, otherwise the whole story would miss an element that adds depth and aestheticism to the narrative. The internal monologue, which literature excels in its depiction, is also present to give the narrative the balance between narration in literature and action in films. The comparison in this way shifts the attention to how a battery of codes is added through examining what a book takes and adds to the cinema and vice versa, for that a thorough

thematic representation of any concept, and taking madness and detachment specifically here, is most likely to be attainable.

To conclude, the comparative gaze across diverse artistic mediums should adopt a holistic comparative approach with an amalgamative reading that fosters mutual intelligibility between different artistic languages. The fact that all arts go through stages of imaginative ideation, exploration, and then realization, alongside the mutual mimetic and cathartic essence, shall guide the comparison to be congregational. Essentially, arts share more than what separate them, and that is the premise that should guide the inter-artistic comparison.

In this chapter, the temporal nature of literature and its literary capacity to narrate interior conflict exhibit the strengths of literature in the depiction of madness and detachment. On the other hand, manifested in the utilization of sound, performance, and cinematography, cinema's temporal and spatial feature can render intensified images of mental distortion. As much as the novella and the film diverge in their aesthetic depictions, they converge together in their thematic ones to simulate a holistic interplay of themes, where the imaginative aspect of the novella is rendered concrete and tangible in its translation into filmic language.

Conclusion

The study examined the representation of madness and detachment in an Iranian work, taking the focus of the study outside the predetermined socio-political frameworks and placing the analysis in a wider artistic and interpretative scope. The artistic and aesthetic study of the film and novella focused on observing the differences of the depictions of the themes across artistic mediums. As for the case studies, the research sought to demonstrate how the depiction of madness and detachment could yield a thorough representation of these concepts.

The analysis of madness and detachment out of any socio-historical or political context was made possible through Genette's conception of the narrative voice and focalization, Deleuze's movement-image and time- image, and the intermediary role of Lacan's psychoanalytical registers: the symbolic, real, and imaginary. These concepts allowed for an artistic interpretation of the aforementioned themes. Additionally, the divergences in the depictions of madness and detachment between literature and cinema were evident, where each medium used its resources to portray distinctively either or both themes. However, both art forms, when converged together under the umbrella of mutual thematic representation, showed a holistic collaboration to provide a thorough image of mental disarray. The abstract nature of the images of the novella were materialized into cinematic imagery.

The novella's depiction of madness was one that emphasized the interiority of the characters, due to the introspective nature of literary language. Genette's concepts of focalization and narrative voice aided in penetrating the text and how it guides the readers into the access of the characters' mental states, shifting between internal and external focalization to deliberately disorient the reader. The ellipsis of Mahdokht's character from the movie and inserting a more explicit political aspect into the narrative in the light of Mosadegh's coup,

emphasized the idea that Neshat's film was not merely an adaptation but a creative re-imagination of Parsipur's narrative.

This study revealed that the particularity of each art form shall not impose a division between the 'form' and the 'content', because the concepts live through the content which is contained within a specific form. This whole circuit should have the required assets that enable arts to be interpreted aesthetically, free from any sociological, historical, or political constraints

Comparative studies generally, and the inter-artistic studies specifically, do not usually try to look beyond the canon, whereas this study contributed to the field by providing a new example out of the literary and cinematic canon by focusing on universal themes. Also, the study, through the implementation of the reciprocal illumination of the arts, presented a method of comparison that brings arts closer to each other rather than one that privileges one art form over the other. Partially, the research provided a psychoanalytical perception of madness and detachment as subsequent states of the rupture between Lacan's registers. Moreover, it proposed a new film, out of Europe, to Deleuze's time-image and movement-image which are majorly exclusive to Western cinema.

Nonetheless, this study, like any other study, is not without limitations. Were it not the unavailability of translation of some secondary sources from Persian to English and time constraints, the research could have been more thorough and richer.

However, the limitations and uncharted territories in this study might help to foreground future studies. The universal themes of the film and the novella might be examined intertextually with other works from Iran or other parts of the world. Also, *Women Without Men's* narrative might be examined through the theory of adaptation as the issue of faithfulness might yield insightful results.

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