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| Iranian New Wave |
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| The Iranian New Wave began when a group of young Iranian directors—following developments in the Iranian cultural arena with origins in the political and social changes of the 1950s and 1960s—started, in the mid-1960s, to make films that broke radically from the conventions of Film Farsi, the mainstream Iranian cinema that no longer satisfied the audience. These directors shared some characteristics: many had been educated abroad, and some were initially engaged in film criticism and showed a passion for modern literature. In fact, the interaction between literature and cinema is a main feature of the Iranian New Wave or *Mowj-e No*. The 1960s was a “golden era” of Iranian literature, one which influenced films such as *Khest va Ayeneh* (*The Brick and The Mirror*, 1965) by one of the forerunners of the New Wave, the writer Ebrahim Golestan, who employed modern techniques of storytelling in it. Although Golestan’s masterpiece is set in Teheran, many New Wave films deal with rural areas and their visual significance. Unlike the French New Wave or Italian Neo-realism, the directors started filming without a significant theoretical framework, and engaged in cinema as a work-in-progress. |
| The Iranian New Wave began when a group of young Iranian directors—following developments in the Iranian cultural arena with origins in the political and social changes of the 1950s and 1960s—started, in the mid-1960s, to make films that broke radically from the conventions of Film Farsi, the mainstream Iranian cinema that no longer satisfied the audience. These directors shared some characteristics: many had been educated abroad, and some were initially engaged in film criticism and showed a passion for modern literature. In fact, the interaction between literature and cinema is a main feature of the Iranian New Wave or *Mowj-e No*. The 1960s was a “golden era” of Iranian literature, one which influenced films such as *Khest va Ayeneh* (*The Brick and The Mirror*, 1965) by one of the forerunners of the New Wave, the writer Ebrahim Golestan, who employed modern techniques of storytelling in it. Although Golestan’s masterpiece is set in Teheran, many New Wave films deal with rural areas and their visual significance. Unlike the French New Wave or Italian Neo-realism, the directors started filming without a significant theoretical framework, and engaged in cinema as a work-in-progress. That is one reason why it has more often been called a filmmaking moment than a movement, and also why they were not an integrated group. While they did not follow a common style, they shared elements such as realism, poetic vision and a documentary style. This was a realism never before seen in Iranian cinema, one presaged, for instance, in *Shab-e Ghuzi* (*The Night of the Hunchback,* Farrokh Ghaffari, 1964). These films began to present an alienated and subjective environment, one which would seem to paralyze the characters like in Antonioni’s cinema. One of the most important storywriters who shaped some of these characters was the prolific writer Gholamhossein Sa’edi, who wrote the script for *Gaav* (*The Cow*, Dariush Mehrjui, 1969), a neo-realist experiment quite representative of the Iranian New Wave, which also made reference to Glauber Rocha’s Cinema Novo. There are three major kinds of cinema in the Iranian New Wave (Aghighi, 2012: 106-110). The first, represented by works such as *Qaysar* (by Masoud Kimiai, 1968) is more commercial and distant from the original protest ideals, but shows a love for undramatic speech: monologues as opposed to dialogues. The second is *the middle cinema,* which had to endure low budgets and limited distribution for reasons such as censorship (e.g., *Aramesh dar Hozure Deegaran* [*Tranquility in the Presence of Others*, Nasser Taghvaee, 1970]), focused on images of poverty at south Tehran’s afflicted neighbourhoods (*Kandoo* [*Beehive*, Fereydoun Goleh, 1975]) and on anti-heroes (*On Shab ke Baroon Omad* [*The Night it Rained*, Kamran Shirdel, 1967]). Finally, the third kind, *artistic* *cinema*, was shaped by the return to Iran of filmmakers educated in the West who brought more variety to the movement, for example Mohammad Reza Aslani’s *Shatranj-e Bad* (*The Chess Game of the Wind*, 1976) with its mature and modern camera movements and plan-sequences. Yet within this last cinema there was also place, again, for a realism that looks to the marginalized, as in Sohrab Shahid-Saless’s *Tabi’at-e Bijann* (*Still Life*, 1975). In sum, while the new waves in other national contexts were influential, the Iranian New Wave was significant in its depiction of everyday life, sometimes in a poetic way, with a taste for documentary form, criticizing the prevailing social conditions and the government. It is one of the most important of Iran’s contributions to world cinema, one followed, in the late 1980s, by the so-called “second generation” (the “New Iranian Cinema”) where some new names sparkled: Abbas Kiarostami, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Samira Makhmalbaf and Jafar Panahi, among others. Filmography: Shab-e Ghuzi [The Night of the Hunchback] (1964)  Khest va Ayeneh [The Brick and The Mirror] (1965)  On Shab ke Baroon Omad [The Night it Rained] (1967)  Qaysar [Masoud Kimiai] (1968)  Gaav [The Cow] (1969)  Aramesh dar Hozure Deegaran [Tranquility in the Presence of Others] (1970)  Potschi [The Postman] (1971)  Seh Ghap [The Gamble] (1971)  Cheshmeh [The Spring] (1972)  Ragbar [Downpour] (1972)  Tangsir (Amir Naderi, 1973)  Sahzdeh Ehtejab [Prince Ehtejab] (1974)  Dayereh-ye Mina [The Cycle] (1974)  Gavaznha [The Deer] (1974)  Gharibeh va Meh [The Stranger and the Fog] (1974)  Kandoo [Beehive] (1975)  Tabi’at-e Bijann [Still Life] (1975)  Shatranj-e Bad [The Chess Game of the Wind] (1976)  Bon Bast [Dead End] (1977)  Kalag [The Crow] (1977)  Sayehaye bolande bad [Tall Shadows of the Wind] (1979) Hyperlinks: On Shab ke Baroon Omad: http://ubu.com/film/shirdel\_rain.html  Iranian New Wave 1960s-1970s (Film Series):  <http://asiasociety.org/new-york/iranian-new-wave-1960s-1970s-film-series>  Since 2004 Bidoun spreads the arts and culture of the Middle East: <http://www.bidoun.org>  Annual Iranian Film Festival, San Francisco, since 2008: <http://www.iranianfilmfestival.org/>  Documentary examining the background and significance of the Iranian New Wave: [*The Lost Cinema*](http://asiasociety.org/new-york/events/lost-cinema) (Jamsheed Akrami, USA, 2007)  New edited films from material confiscated during the 1960s: [Kamran Shirdel - Social Documentaries (2013)](http://asiasociety.org/new-york/events/kamran-shirdel-social-documentaries)  London Iranian Film Festival, since 2010: <http://ukiff.org.uk/> |
| Further reading:  (Aghighi)  (Akrami)  (Dabashi)  (Dabashi, Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present, and Future)  (Ginsberg and Lippard)  (Issa)  (Issari)  (Motavalli)  (Naficy)  (Talebinejad)  (Zeydabadi-Nejad)  (Zaydabadi-Nejad) |