Contemporary history of Iranian Political Theatre: A Study of Two Plays by Bahram Beyzai

By:

Niousha Mesdaghi

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Philosophy

The University of Sheffield

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

 Department of English

07/02/2018

Supervisors: Prof. Stephen Nicholson

Dr. Carmen Levick

Prof. Frances Babbage

*Abstract*

*Bahram Beyzai is among a number of Iranian playwrights who, together, created a New Wave in 1960’s Iran which had close ties to the historical and cultural background of Iran. Coming from the age of the New Wave filmmakers and playwrights, Bahram Beyzai can today be considered one of the most prominent and decisive figures at the forefront of Iranian modern drama; from his roots in Iranian drama, to the point where his works have been performed in Europe and North America. Beyzai, now 75, is a leading scholar of both religious and secular studies of the history of Persia and its literature and theatre.*

*The first chapter introduces both ancient literature and the art of performance in Iranian history as well as outlining the contemporary political and social history of Iran. The chapter also considers the role of religion and the formation of a unique faith in the political history of Iran and its connection to Iranian theatre and drama of mourning. The following two chapters focus on two of Beyzai’s most prominent plays: The Murder of Cenmar and The Wailing. Both plays were written around the time of a huge political transition which only happened to one Middle Eastern nation: the Revolution of 1979. Both plays represent themes which are related to the events in the late 1970s and early 1980s focusing on issues which led to the revolution and also the factors influencing the pursuit of democracy and freedom in Iran. The research also examines the current state of theatre and drama in Iran and the advancements in productions of Beyzai’s plays and their connection to the Iranian audience.*

**Acknowledgement**

Firstly, I must thank my supervisors, Professor Stephen Nicholson, Dr. Carmen Levick and Professor Frances Babbage for years of support and guidance and who furthered my knowledge of English comprehension and critical analysis which not only created this thesis but changed my point of view towards a better and more comprehensive understanding of art and realities in the theatrical and political world.

Secondly, and most importantly, I like to thank my amazing family especially my devoted mother for the unconditional support and love she has given me every step of the way from the day I learned my first word in English to this day that I have completed my thesis.

Finally, I must thank my husband who has been with me through the last two years of this amazing research work. Without his love and support I would have not been able to complete this significant phase of my life.

Table of Contents:

* Chapter I: Introduction
* Chapter II: The Murder of Cenmar
* Chapter III: The Wailing
* Chapter IV: Conclusion
* Bibliography
* Appendix

Chapter I: Introduction

The country of Iran has been through massive political and social upheaval during the past century. The effects of such transitions and turmoil have affected foreign relations and politics, especially those with the United States and the conflict of war and peace in the Middle East. Iranian society itself has transformed in numerous ways, affecting different sectors of society including the middle classes, intellectuals, clergy and women. Despite numerous attempts aat forming a democracy, the democratic freedom movements have failed to diminish tyranny and dictatorship from the ruling system of Iran. Freedom of expression, media, and political parties have been under constant suppression, detainment, crackdown and censorship.

From all the opposing sectors that were involved in criticism and backlash against the ruling system in Iran, few have survived the tensions and suppressions of the past century. Theatre and Cinema are specific survivors; industries that were formed less than a century ago and continued to exist, withstand, and flourish despite the face off with violent dominating ruling systems. The failure in pursuit of Iranian democracy and intellectualism did not just occur in fighting against the regime, but it also occurred at many historical points when the movements failed the people and their ideals, goals and motives. The outcome of many such movements, whether successful or not, has not met the motives of modern democratic reforms which were primarily intended by its pioneers and followers. It appears that the activists have revolted against one oppressor only to end up following and electing another oppressor. This suggests that there were numerous flaws in the political analysis of the people leading to a misjudged political stance. This research examines the ties between such political misinterpretations and how these flaws could be addressed through theatre and the effects of that as one the few surviving ways of expression. Political theatre encourages critical analysis among its viewers thus, generally, increases political awareness. It also encourages the audience to interpret the reality of events and seek logical responses towards incidents and events. This research highlights the fact that when a person becomes capable of recognizing truth through analysis in a play, or a political incidence then that would enhance the analytical point of view of that person. Such transition could happen to a single individual or a society therefore resulting in drastic changes in their point of view in regards to politics. With better understanding and more democratic track, there is more chance for formation of a democracy in the critical region of Middle East.

The reality behind a tormented nation who had experienced centuries of tyranny, illiteracy, colonialism, suppression and theological oppression is that, despite all the obstacles, intellectualism found its place among the artistic society of Iran. This influential sector fought against idiocy and illiteracy by defying its proponents and presenting criticism within their writings and, later, within their plays and film scripts. The formation of the New Wave, for instance, is an example of how intellectual movements were formed among playwrights and filmmakers who were newly introduced to the modern means of expression as well as to visual arts. Cinema was first introduced to a certain class of Iranians, particularly in the capital of Tehran in early 1900. This was due to young filmmakers who were educated in foreign countries and who then founded the first school of cinema in Tehran[[1]](#footnote-1). Instead of the mimicking Hollywood films and popular culture which were the dominant genre in the early century, icons such as Dariush Mehrjoui, Bahram Beyzai, Abbas Kiarostami, Masoud Kimiai and Ebrahim Golestan created a huge shift in the industry[[2]](#footnote-2). This shift flourished in 60s and 70s Iran with films such as *The Cow* by Mehrjoui and *The Downpour* by Beyzai. It is believed that the flourish in critical culture in Iranian cinema and theatre drastically influenced Iranian culture in general. Many critics have asserted the same idea by declaring the importance of visual arts and performance on cultural modernity: "the visual possibility of seeing the historical person (as opposed to the eternal Qur'anic man) on screen is arguably the single most important event allowing Iranians access to modernity."[[3]](#footnote-3)

The film of *Downpour* was made in 1971 but was not presented to international audiences for four decades. However, when the remaining copy of the film was aired in the United States, it drew massive attention and positive feedback:

I'm very proud that the World Cinema Foundation has restored this wise and beautiful film, the first feature from its director Bahram Bayzaie. The tone puts me in mind of what I love best in the Italian neorealist pictures, and the story has the beauty of an ancient fable – you can feel Bayzaie's background in Persian literature, theater and poetry. Bayzaie never received the support he deserved from the government of his home country – he now lives in California – and it's painful to think that this extraordinary film, once so popular in Iran, was on the verge of disappearing forever. The original negative has been either impounded or destroyed by the Iranian government, and all that remained was one 35mm print with English subtitles burned in. Now, audiences all over the world will be able to see this remarkable picture.[[4]](#footnote-4)

From such quotes, it is clear to see that cinema and the dramatic arts are an integral feature of Iranian society; a part that has affected some of the dramatic incidents and circumstances of the last century enormously. It also emphasizes the notion that the figures within visual arts have vast capability to enhance and influence the state of mind of a nation leading them to towards understanding, enlightenment, and criticism. There have been numerous obstacles for the incline of the Iranian cinema and dramatic performances. During the very early rise of the industry, the Pahlavi regime made every effort to control aspects of culture which led to massive censorship and the promotion of low quality films chosen to reflect Pahlavi's own ideals[[5]](#footnote-5). There was less room for different approaches, alternative themes and innovative productions. Despite that, in a matter of decades, many of the New Wave activists, including Bahram Beyzai, found a way to break the cliché of Iranian movies and created works of art that changed the face of Iranian cinema and theatre forever. It is worth mentioning that the theatre and film industry suffered a second time, and to a greater extent, upon the downfall of the previous regime and formation of the Islamic republic. As noted by Scorsese, many of the pioneers and their works had not only faced censorship and ban but the oppression was so great that it diminished them from the face of the industry whether it would be a forgotten play or film or an exiled playwright or actor/actress[[6]](#footnote-6).

Bahram Beyzai was born on 26th of December 1938 in Tehran, into a family with a long history of participation in Literature and dramatic performances of Ta’ziyeh in Iran. Ta’ziyeh refers to a series of dramatic performances concerning mourning for prominent Islamic Shia leaders. This religious ceremony has ties to Ancient Persian historical condolence theatre which has been practiced in Iran since the ancient pre-Islamic era right through to the Islamic era (700AD.) Soug e Siavash or Mourning for Siavash[[7]](#footnote-7) is the old version of Ta’ziyeh where the story of the life of a Persian Prince is recounted, telling how the tragedies of his life led to his death in a foreign land. This mourning ceremony was practiced throughout Persia for centuries but, as a result of the domination of Shia Islamic faith, it was replaced with Ta’ziyeh and the story of the death of the Shia Emams.

Beyzai grew up to become a Persian literature scholar who pursued play writing passionately. During his career in research and theatre, Ta’ziyeh (which is examined further in Chapter III) became of notable interest to him and he sought to use this to expand his playwriting techniques and develop his political theatre within the context of the historical and cultural influences of Iran. Examples of his approach can be seen in many of his plays such as *The Wailing* and *The Murder of Cenmar*. This development began in his youth and at the commencement of his studies when he left school in order to fully devote himself to the realms of Persian literature, culture and history. From that point, researching Ta’ziyeh played an important role in his scholarly life just like that of his family.

Bahram Beyzai’s uncle Adib Ali Beyzai, Grandfather Mirza Muhamad Reza Arani, and great grandfather Mulla Muhammad faqih Arani were all notable poets and literary icons[[8]](#footnote-8). As the child of a literary family, Bahram Beyzai began his primary studies in the School of Dar’-ol-fonoun where he wrote his first two plays and became interested in the genre that, later, formed the basis of his literary career. He also attended Tehran University to study literature but, even then, his personal studies and exploration into the realm of plays and movies affected his attendance and graduation from school. At the time, during the 1940s and 1950s, the Cinema of Tehran was becoming rapidly popular among Iranians, thus persuading the young playwright, Bahram Beyzaie, to explore the world of visual arts. At that time, the cinema and theatre of Iran was, arguably, being highly influenced by western countries and, to an extent, it was an imitation of western cinema and theatre. Beyzai, however, in his works in the field of theatre and film had bigger plans. In this vein, he began to explore the pre-Islamic Persian literature and the traces of traditional Iranian drama practices to form a unique identity within his future works.

This was the point where Beyzai was able to make a connection between the roots of his country’s culture and history while presenting his work in a modern way. Despite the so-called modernization of Iran by the Pahlavi regime, Beyzai’s focus on national and cultural themes, which can be found in his plays and films, began with a mission to explore and establish ties between modern cinema and traditional eastern characteristics of Iranian theatre. He influenced the creation of a unique national identity for Iranian theatre and, by adopting modern techniques in the narration of his works, his plays could communicate with a western audience. His works included many influences of political theatre practiced decades ago in England and other European countries. In an interview, Beyzai himself emphasized the profound influence of Persian literature and culture on his works as well as the underlying social and philosophical themes in his plays:

 This dimension (reference to the history and national identity) in my works is transparent and speaking about it magnifies it beyond proportion and burdens the understanding of the film. Others (filmmakers and playwrights) strive to surmount the film with meanings and messages that grant the film a social respectability. This mentality existed in our traditional theatre as well, where the actors preached morals and ethics to prove that theatre was a respectable profession. I do not suffer such guilt or inadequacy (about the insufficiency of the cinema) and I think that the on-screen subject precedes the importance of any other underlying concept, which might be credited. I have always said that the viewers do understand, if I make my work understandable. On the other hand, if the spectator’s comprehension is not elevated enough, it is because she has not been exposed to more elaborated films. This is neither his fault nor his destiny. This is neither my fault nor a determining factor of my form and style. We should all try to improve this level. And I don’t know why instead of helping me, the intellectuals, the critics, the producers and the government have stood in my way.[[9]](#footnote-9)

His ways certainly made him a pioneer in research into ancient Persian mythology, reviving many Iranian Tales, including from the book of *Shahnameh*[[10]](#footnote-10)and *A Thousand and One Nights.* He also led the way in interpreting ancient historical events such as the destiny of the last Sassanid king in *Death of Yazdgerd* by creating a notable play which was critical of the current regime of Iran and political social events of the day[[11]](#footnote-11). These books, which narrate very old tales and depict historical characters of Persian rulers and other important historical figures, provided Beyzai with many historical events, stories, and characters which ideally served to convey the points he aimed to emphasise in his plays and films.

When I first encountered Beyzai’s works, I assumed they were the glorification of Persian identity since he was known as a proponent of ancient Persian history and culture. Further, Stanford University, where he had been completing his lifetime research on Iranian literary and cultural heritage, awarded him the cultural heritage prize.[[12]](#footnote-12) However, through interpreting his works, particularly *The Murder of Cenmar*, I reached a very different understanding of the themes of his plays. It was not just the glory of the past he was interested in but the situation within present day Iran and the state of people and their efforts in promoting intellectualism. Beyzai depicts the plans, ideals, and aims of a nation alongside their religion, beliefs, and culture and shows how these affect the political choices made in the foundation of a new government which was the outcome of the revolution of 1979.

Bearing this in mind, most of Bahram Beyzai’s plays, including *Death of Yazdgerd* and *The Murder of Cenmar,* focus in some way on Persian ancient history. By this means, Beyzai could present aspects, tales and events of Persian history while focusing on current issues directly related to the recent situation and events happening centuries later such as those between 1960-80. Through such a method, Beyzai was able to express his point of view about political and social matters of the day but set them in an ancient historical context with the setting and the characters of his plays derived from the ancient past. This technique, ultimately, meant that his underlying criticism survived the ban and censorship heavily imposed on contemporary Iranian theatre. Under censorship and ban[[13]](#footnote-13) playwrights such as Beyzai had to covertly express their point of view on personal and political issues of the time to avoid direct criticism of the rulers. Details regarding how the ban was applied on texts as well as prosecution of activists and critics are further mentioned throughout this chapter. The threat of ban, censorship and prosecution had always been an issue for Iranian authors, playwrights and filmmakers beginning with the establishment of the New Wave and, later, during and after the revolution of 1979 when the ideological regime under the leadership of the clergy replaced the ruling monarchy system. Details regarding the censorship operated by the ministry of intelligence of Iran, either before or after the revolution of 1979, are introduced and discussed in terms of their connection to the works of Beyzai in the next two chapters. I have also briefly mentioned in this chapter, the rule of government and the intelligence system in controlling media, arts, and theatre while introducing the Pahlavi regime who ruled Iran before the revolution. Since most of Bahram Beyzai’s plays are very political, they have been subjected to censorship and ban, both in publishing and also staging. A notable example would be Beyzai’s play *Four Boxes* which ends by stating that this play shall be taken off the stage each and every time. Beyzai’s prediction came true and this play was staged a few times abroad but never in Iran[[14]](#footnote-14).

**Beyzai and Ancient Persian History, Culture and Mythology**

This introductory chapter introduces the history of Shia Islam, Ta’ziyeh performances in Iran, and the contemporary history of Iran involving two revolutions in the past century.Early in his career, in order to produce more profound works of theatre, Beyzai left school to devote his time to the self-study of Persian history, culture and literature. So, as early as in his early twenties, he began studying the “Book of Kings” Aka *Shahnameh,* which is a Persian book of about 5000 verses of epic poems by Iranian Poet and nationalist, Ferdowsi, presenting the mythologies of the Persian Empire and Persian tales. Many of his plays and films are based on the characters and tales of *Shahnameh*. *Shahnameh* or the “Book of Kings” recounts the mythologies and ancient tales of Persia from as early as 300 BC covering the formation of dynasties and, later, the ruling the Persian Empire right up to its fall as the result of the Arab invasion which took place in 642-651 BC[[15]](#footnote-15).

According to *Shahnameh*, narrated by Ferdowsi (940-1020 CE) through around 60,000 verses, the Persian Empire formed a huge section of the world, which probably referred to the civilized world back in 300 BC along with Turan[[16]](#footnote-16) (China) and covering regions of Turkey and Armenia, which were part of the Persian Empire. During the lifetime of the poet, Arabic was the main language of Iran under the rule of the Ghaznavid Dynasty and the Persian poet, Ferdowsi made it his goal to revive the Persian language and the history of Persia by narrating the mythologies and Persian tales in verse form[[17]](#footnote-17). In the narration of the verses, Ferdowsi adopts a Persian dialect, which was spoken in Iran back in that era, to revive the language, literature, and culture of Persia among Iranians. He was also an advocate of national identity in his efforts to form and develop a unique national identity for the Theatre and Film industry of Iran[[18]](#footnote-18). However, a modern critic like Beyzai had more political and social issues to deal with than Ferdowsi, as Bahram Beyzai lived in a century of turmoil in Iran’s history, witnessing a revolution and transition of power alongside the frequent oppression of Iranian artists. With this in mind, Beyzai chose to include criticism within his plays and characters, ultimately becoming a prominent political playwright. The aforementioned play, *Four Boxes,* consisted of a scarecrow and four boxes where characters each symbolized a sector of society: commoners, intellectuals, conservatives and an additional silent box which opens at the end of the play. They are symbolically imprisoned in boxes at the time and they choose the scarecrow as their spiritual leader. Such a tactic in the setting of the play left little room for hesitation in banning the play, which means that *Four Boxes* was never staged in Iran and still hasn’t been to date. However, it was only published once, right after the revolution when media and literature experienced a short period of freedom for about a year. Ultimately, the play was banned in the second year of the revolution. During the course of the play, the sectors of the society are imprisoned by the scarecrow whom they had previously chosen as their leader, but they continue to plot to revolt against it. By the end of the play, three of the boxes give in to fear and refuse to revolt and the fourth box that breaks free is murdered due to the betrayal of the other boxes or sectors of the society. As mentioned earlier, this play was banned by the time the Islamic republic gained control over the country and began to enforce its authority and power within the society. This play did not narrate an old tale from Persian literature or mythology, instead the playwright addressed the politics quite openly. This is when Persian mythology becomes extremely important in the creation of Beyzai’s plays as the old historical names, settings, and timelines cover up the straightforward criticism thus leaving room for the publication and staging of a play under a dictatorship regime.

The book of *Shahnameh* or the Book of Kings is a collection of Persian epics starting from the very first rulers of Iran right through to the last ancient dynasty before the invasion of Islam. This book is a source of mythology which presents the history of Iran in a very distinct and selective way. The timeline of the mentioned rulers in this book goes back to the earliest dynasties ruling Iran and the mythologies suggest the early inhabitants of the region and how they tended to live and survive with their religions and beliefs. The book names a number of Iranian dynasties and recounts their stories by means of focusing on the mythology of Persia, then, in the second half of the verses, goes on to narrate the heroic influences and characters of ancient Iran and also to an extent the actual history of pre-Islamic Iran, especially the Sassanid rulers (224-651 CE) as the last dynasty of Iran before the Islamic quest for Persia[[19]](#footnote-19). It must be mentioned that, after the Islamic quest for Persia and the fall of the last dynasty, the Sassanids, few ancient Persian texts survived the invasion. One of the surviving ones was a book which influenced Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*. This book was probably written during the reign of another dynasty preceding the Sassanids and the heroic tales and it could be suggested that the praise of heroism has ties to the influences of Hellenism. In this way, the verses of Shahnameh approach heroism, history and mythology[[20]](#footnote-20). This book refers to the reign and life of many important kings and emperors, therefore, there are numerous options for Beyzai to choose a character whose destiny and reign would be similar to the political life of a dictator in power in contemporary Iran. On the other hand, Beyzai’s heroes and heroines are mostly from the diverse classes of society, predominantly artists and intellectuals. Therefore, Beyzai had also turned to other sources of mythology and old Persian texts from different eras where certain individuals rather than rulers are the main characters of the tale. *The prize of Cenmar* narrated in the verses of Nizami Ganjavi, is a tale where the main character is not a king but one of the artists thriving in a barbaric society.

In the case of the book of *Shahnameh*, the mythology section goes back to the early foundations of civilization in Iran and the settlement of the Aryan race in Iran, whilst the Heroic section mostly focuses on the life of certain characters of kings and warriors and their tales. Afterwards, however, the verses switch to a more accurate account of historical events in Iran during the Sassanid era in early Middle Ages. The life and events of the Sassanid kings until their fall and defeat by the Arab invasion is narrated in this section. Since these events are related to only around 1400 years ago, there is more evidence, including transcripts, historical narrations which could support the mythology delivered by Ferdowsi compared to the early rulers of Iran which date back thousands of years. As well as the mythological or historical approach towards the verses of Ferdowsi, the book itself presents many tales of warriors and princes and princesses of Persia and their lives, reign, religions and battles with neighboring civilizations. The book introduces many characters and numerous love stories between these characters. Ferdowsi revived these tales and probably old texts from ancient Persia in his book of *Shahnameh* centuries after the fall of the Persian Empire and under the reign of Islamic rulers. However, his talent in the creation of these verses not only revived a culture, language, and history of centuries past but also influenced world literature and European poets such as Goethe.[[21]](#footnote-21) Many other books of Iranian poetry told historical tales of Persia in a similar manner. It must be mentioned that influences of such tales and stories found in Beyzai’s plays can be tracked from many other historical texts and poetry books. For instance, in the case of Beyzai’s play *The Murder of Cenmar*, the story of the architect and the building of the Khawarnaq and the fate of Cenmar has been part of history dating back to the Sassanid era before the rise of Islam. Iranian Poet Nezami Ganjavi narrated this story in his poetry book named “Haft Peykar” aka “The Seven Beauties” (1197). Beyzai has taken these historic tales and re-told them in performance literature by means of new modern expressive techniques. Each of his plays and the historical setting and characters, such the Last Persian king of the Sassanids, Yazdgerd, can be traced within his research to the history and literature of ancient Persia. Beyzai clearly found them a suitable subject to be revived in his modern plays; due to their apparent ties to the past and their historical setting and characters, it allowed him to challenge many current issues while somehow cleverly concealing them from restriction and censorship. Since these characterizations of Kings, heroes and heroines, as well as names of locations and regions of ancient Iran and Middle East, are familiar to a Persian speaking audience but very strange for an international audience, it is necessary to bring them together in the introductory chapter and then briefly in the following chapters so that readers understand the background story of the plays.

The stories delivered in old Persian texts allowed Beyzai to represent characters and elements of Persian heritage and to use this knowledge of Persian culture to create plays set in the near future. In 1960’s Iran, the history of theatre and performance and its place among Iranians for centuries was quite significant. Dramatic Literature can arguably be most found in religious history of Persia. The religious ceremonies which took place in ancient Iran before the quest of Islam were affiliated with influences of performance such as the dance of the clergy in reading religious texts. Other dramatic performances were related to the mourning of “Souge Siavash” which is an old Persian myth conveying the tragic death of a Persian prince in, what was then, Turan[[22]](#footnote-22) (Modern China). Apparently, for centuries, tradition and ceremony for this kind of mourning was adopted by numerous regions within Iran whereby they would deliver the story of his death and perform the tragic play of his life and the events leading to his death. These stories were told among the majority of people and they survived from generation to generation so their performance did not necessarily need an actual text but just a knowledge of the simple stories and tales from the past.[[23]](#footnote-23) However, the only form of historical performance with actual texts was created after the quest of Islam and it was Ta’ziyeh, the ritual of mourning for religious leaders of Shia Islam which became popular by the beginning of the rule of Shia leaders in Iran (945-967 CE) and continued on to exist and flourish through the later Shia Islamic rulers and dynasties in Iran[[24]](#footnote-24) (1501-1736)[[25]](#footnote-25). Ta’ziyeh was a significant and traditional Iranian dramatic artform and Beyzai portrayed elements of Ta’ziyeh in many of his plays.

The most significant presence of Ta’ziyeh in works of Beyzai is discussed in chapter III which looks at the play *The Wailing* where Beyzai chooses a setting of the Ta’ziyeh for a prominent figure who is the heroine of play: an oppressed woman who joins the fights and revolts against the antagonist and suffers a tragic death. However, the topic of Ta’ziyeh, the historical tragedy of Ashura[[26]](#footnote-26), the fighting of Zeynab[[27]](#footnote-27) and how those would be presented in Beyzai’s play is very unfamiliar for western audiences, making it necessary to fully develop these ideas before moving on to the critical analysis of the plays.

**Ta’ziyeh**

Ta’ziyeh also referred to as Ta’zieh, Tazia or Taziya is a word that originates from Arabic and means condolence and mourning. Arguably the condolence theatre of Ta’ziyeh is a depiction of ancient ceremonies of mourning and condolence dating back to ancient Persia. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the book of *Shahnameh* contains many characters and their stories including that of “Siyavash”, introduced in this book as a Persian prince who after suffering many tragedies and misfortunes, leaves the country to take refuge in the neighboring region of “Touran” where he meets a tragic death. The ceremony of mourning for Siyavash titled as “Soog-e-Siyavash” existed in Iran for centuries[[28]](#footnote-28).

The ritual of Ta’ziyeh is believed to have originated from Soog-e-Siyavash yet it became the dominant genre of historical drama in Iran speculated by the Shia historians to been established by the 1500s CE when Shia Muslim rulers took over Iran and the Shia became the dominant religion of Iran. The ancient sites in Iran are evidence to the site and place where performances were held in Souge Siavash. On the other hand, there is no notion of condolence theatre in any of the Sunni dominant countries or any cities except for Iran. Thus, Ta’ziyeh would be a unique Iranian practice of drama and mourning. History recounts the rise of Safavids and the establishment of Shia Islam as the dominant religion, as the starting point for the development of the theatre of condolence in Iran. Around the same time, the dynasty which ruled Persia and its kings were very interested in advocating this sort of theatre to propagate the Shia faith which was against the rest of Sunni Muslim world.[[29]](#footnote-29) Theatre indeed became a political force for the Safavid rulers in propagating Shia values and Shia faith against most of their competitor Sunni rulers, particularly the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the court of Iran had initiated and advanced the Ta’ziyeh ritual and performances as a national ceremony to be held each year. Throughout history, this dramatic practice continued its popularity among Iranians and was performed each year during the month of Muharram when the historical tragedy took place. What was noticeable about these two forms of performance was that both “Sooge Siyavash” and Ta’ziyeh were performed outdoors, and, in the case of “Sooge Siyavash”, there are actual sites in north western Iran where it is believed that the performance took place in a kind of outdoor amphitheater[[30]](#footnote-30). Ta’ziyeh performances were commonly held in a “Takia”[[31]](#footnote-31) aka Tekyeh which was a temporary stage built up by using wooden piles and poles. They took place every year and in various locations to have the actors rehearse and perform the play. At some points the Takia could become a permanent construction and a house of theatre such as the great Takia of Dowlat during Qajar era (1870) where the royal court were entertained in this theatre house making it the Royal theatre of Tehran.

During the Qajar era (1785-1925 CE) the practice of Ta’ziyeh and its theatrical features, unlike its outdoor setting in the past and the temporary wooden stages, began to take place indoors. The primary locations of the theatre would be an inn yard or courtyard of a house. Over the years these indoor practices finally found permanent bases such as the playhouses which kept the old title of Tekia. The newly found playhouses were very like modern European theatres where people would decorate and prepare the stage before the performance. What is significant in this case is the active role of the spectators, who during the performance participate with the actors and actresses on the stage who, for instance, may remove or place things on the stage or may play marginal roles. Tekia became very popular during the Qajar era (1785-1925 CE) which might be due to the tendency for artists to settle in the capital rather than traveling from city to city to perform which they would have done in the past. It was mentioned earlier how the Safavid rulers (1501-1736) tried to use theatre as a way of making Shiism dominant among people, yet the Qajar kings, who were conservative religious rulers, had different policies concerning arts and artists. Their strict religious policies shifted during the reign of Naser al-ddin Shah (1848-1896 CE) who was the first Qajar King to have travelled to Europe and was the first Qajar ruler most affected by European modernism and the advancement of the west. Thus, he intended to follow European styles of government and civilization such as the European courts’ habit of attending opera and theatre. Therefore, being so impressed by European theatre, he founded the first official house of theatre in Tehran. Tekia-e-Dowlat became the first official theatre and the most prominent one built bythe Qajar King, Naser al-ddin Shah. Tekyeh Dowlat, as it was called, was the Royal House of theatre in Tehran during the reign of Naser al-ddin Shah inspired by the European opera and playhouses he had seen during his frequent visits to Europe. [[32]](#footnote-32) This Tekieh, and its features, along with dramatic performances, amazed the foreign visitors of Iran who could see a similar type of playhouse and a unique theatre genre and performance in a very distant conservative country.[[33]](#footnote-33) Unfortunately, this development and consistency in the identity of Iranian theatre was not to be long lived. Not only did the dramatic performances suffer interruption after the downfall of the Qajar era but also the Royal Playhouse or Tekia-e-Dowlat itself was to be abolished later due to its traditional and religious significance by the successors of Qajars (Pahlavi dynasty) and their efforts in promoting western modernization. The building was situated in the center of the capital of Tehran called “Arg”, which refers to where the palace and other governmental buildings were centered in the traditional urban design of cities in Iran. On its best days, Tekia-e-Dowlat could seat up to 4000 people and was impressive for foreign visitors who compared it to European playhouses, especially to Verona Arena in Italy[[34]](#footnote-34). There will be more discussion later in this and following chapters regarding the fate of Ta’ziyeh and how it became marginalized in contemporary Iran. By the end of the Qajar era, Iran went through a series of reforms towards modernism and, due to the religious nature of Ta’ziyeh and the theatre of condolence, the remaining Iranian dramatic performances dating back to middle ages and ancient times unfortunately suffered a huge crackdown and ban by the modernists due to its ties to previous religious rulers. Ultimately, the Theatre of Condolence was marginalized and never again found its place within Iranian society as a form of dramatic art.

Discussions linking the history and final fate of Iranian theatre to the fate of the Iranian nation which underwent huge transitions of power in contemporary Iran can be found throughout further chapters. Chapter II focuses on the class of artists and how they suffered most at the hand of government and society, especially during political social movements. The crackdown of the so-called modern post-Qajar government on the only existing Iranian theatre could be seen as a notable example of the negligence which arts suffered under different rulers. Critics, such as Beyzai, have focused on such key historical tragic themes in their plays and films regarding the state of drama and arts in contemporary Iran. However, despite the crackdown or revisions practiced by different rulers of Iran, Ta’ziyeh still remains the very first point of the theatre of Iran and it influenced the works of most of the pioneering playwrights of Iran in the New Wave.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Though Ta’ziyeh in general is quite religious and thus Islamic, it is still also Persian due to the way it has been inspired by culture, politics and social events in Iran throughout the history of its existence.[[36]](#footnote-36) As mentioned earlier, the ritual of mourning for tragic figures in Persian history has always been there along with a proclaimed happy and celebratory culture within Iran back in the ancient era. According to many texts and also the existence of numerous celebration events in the Persian calendar, such as the celebration of new year at the beginning of Norouz, the celebration of different time intervals and seasons of the year which all had their own significant and unique features and rituals in a way, suggests the existence of a happy life for ancient Persians. This claim stretches to such an extent that some scholars have declared the extreme happiness of Persians during the Achaemenid era (550-330 BC) by referring to the way the empire was ruled where each region had their own religion, language, culture, and local rulers in power. So, the question remains why there was this much interest in mourning to promote the culture of Soog-e-Siavash and later in Islamic era Ta’ziyeh?

 The very critical history of Iran during the time of different rulers and dynasties should be mentioned here. The rise and fall of powerful empires dedicated much to the formation of a wealthy celebratory nation and years of fall and dissolution, along with battles and destructive invasions which could be the reason behind the tendency towards mourning amongst Persians. Their idols were apparently adopted from prominent figures who endured a tragic fate and who were Princes and members of the monarchy before the Islamic era. In the aftermath, Persians who were Shia Muslims, idolized the prominent Shia leaders who were the children, grandchildren and descendants of Prophet Mohammad in a way that their family roots resembled those of the royals of Persia where a son would be crowned following the death of his father. Therefore, Shia Muslims supported a tendency towards the descendants of Prophet Mohammad and their rule following the death of the Prophet which contradicted the Sunni beliefs that backed the rule of Khalifa[[37]](#footnote-37) after the Prophet. Therefore, Persians praised the children and grandchildren of Prophet Mohammad and glorified their legitimacy to Islamic rule, as a Prince would succeed the king in ancient Persia. However, back at the time of the death of Mohammad (632 CE), Persia was not Islamic and had not had that much to do with Islamic history other than the fact that Islamic territories began a series of quests to invade Persia and finally conquered the whole empire in 654 CE. It was centuries after the Muslim quest for Persia, when Iranians and Persian dynasties found interest in propagating Shia faith. Therefore, they began to praise the children of Mohammad including his grandson, Hussein, who had fought against Sunni leaders during his lifetime. Hussein and his family ultimately had all suffered a tragic death. One of the very crucial issues of this historical and religious event was the will of Hussein and his family and peers to fight an unfair battle. From the final quest for Persia in 654 CE, many uprisings and revolts took place in diverse regions of Iran against the rule of Khalifa. Persians probably further identified with bravery and the clash of Mohammad’s descendants with the Khalifa as they would have suffered such revolts and defeats from them as well. Similarly to the continuous uprising in Arab governed regions of Iran, grandchildren of Mohammad chose to fight, though their defeat and murder was almost evident from the beginning, so the culture of resistance against oppression has been highly idealized by Persians, who themselves suffered many similar fights and defeats throughout the history.

In fact, there were glorious times when Persia would rule over many regions of the Middle East, including Asia and Anatolia, forming a great Empire. But the empire also suffered downfall, severe battles and invasions and the rule of foreign invaders and their oppression over Persians. It is possible that this may be one of the reasons why the culture of resistance against tyranny and oppressive rulers has been an ideal for Iranians, so much so that the defeated Shia leaders became idols for Iranians and remain so to this day. On the other hand, apparently, these sad eras, whether due to battle or the rule of tyrannical and oppressive rulers, have brought much pain and mourning to Persian culture; the culture that promoted its own unique drama and theatre regarding the revival of notable historical tragedies and tales through the performance of Ta’ziyeh.[[38]](#footnote-38)

Historically, the events related to Ta’ziyeh go back the death of the Islamic prophet Mohammad and the question of leadership and whether a member of his family would be the next in line to power. Arabs followed the regionally elected tribal leaders, whilst the Shia Muslims supported those blood-related family members of the Prophet himself. Apparently, the Shia Muslims were mainly based in Persia and modern Iran and Iraq. The Persian culture of leadership had much to do with the reign of a king and the accession of his son or a close relative in the aftermath. For instance, it may be noted that history asserts that, after the death of one of the most important Persian Emperors, Cyrus the Great and his sons, “Darius”, who was a relative of the deceased king, took the reigning power, becoming the next prominent Persian emperor during the Achaemenid era (550-330 BC). Although he was just a relative of the king and not his offspring, his marriage to the daughter of the deceased king, “Atousa”, still could have also played a significant role in legitimizing his power and reign. Apparently, after his death, only his son from Atousa, Xerxes, who is known in history due to his battles with the Greeks, became the next emperor although he was not the eldest of his sons but the grandson of Cyrus the great[[39]](#footnote-39). This historical account could suggest how much family ties meant to Iranian culture rather than the tribal influences practiced by many other regions in Middle East. This issue is quite significant as it can be traced all the way back to the contemporary history of Iran where, after thousands of years and numerous dynasties, Iranians put an end to the monarchy and promoted the formation of a republic instead of the rule of a king. The revolution which made this a reality was against the most prominent person in power, the king himself, and this is even though constitutional revolution had granted Iranians a parliamentary monarchy about a century prior to that. Yet, the Shah of Iran, who was the son of the former Pahlavi king, remained as the number one enemy of the people. This accounts for a huge change and transition in Iranian beliefs from Shia conversion when they tended to idolize the son of each Shia Emam after the other. To evaluate the importance of this issue, I should note that Iranians continued to follow each son of Shia Emams until the 12th Emam who was merely a child and there is little or no evidence to support his actual existence based on this fact that no one knows whether the 11th Emam had any children at all. So many theoreticians expand on the idea that the 12th Emam and the last one had not existed at all but instead was made up by Shia propagates. According to Shia faith, the 12th and last Emam titled as the Emam of time never had children or reached puberty yet he has been gone through occultation and one day he shall rise again[[40]](#footnote-40).

I have discussed the details of the formation of Shia faith among Iranians in order to show how significant and distinct it was for a Middle Eastern region to have an identical faith which is different from the rest of the Muslim countries. This debate is crucial since it signifies the importance of performance in Iranian history and how it has contributed to the formation of a distinct faith. As important and celebrated the drama practice was among Persians, it would glorify a faith among them so that Shia Islam would be created, practiced and survive among only one region of the Middle East. In fact, it could be claimed that the art of performance and theatre was expanded and survived throughout the Persian history since it served the purpose of Persian identity and the faith of Shia in contrast to Arab Sunni regions.

I’ve noted some brief historical facts in order to show how accession to the throne and power and its legitimization was significant amongst Persians throughout history. Therefore, when Iranians converted to Islam it was likely that they would choose the relatives of the Prophet as the right leaders of the faith. At the time the Persian Empire had long fallen, and the region of Persia was under the rule of Islamic dynasties that were cruel to the people for several different reasons including their faith and leanings towards shiism. So, this clarifies the ties of Persian culture and history to the issue of Ta’ziyeh and how these drama practices became an identical Iranian heritage[[41]](#footnote-41).

To introduce the theatre of condolence, Ta’ziyeh, and its effects in the modern plays of Beyzai to a western audience, it is necessary to clarify the background and history of Shia Islam and of how and why it formed and became the dominant religion of Iran. Beyzai’s plays deal with current themes at the time they were written and they interpret and criticize the past actions of society. In order to understand the points he makes about the nation, the ruling system and the different sectors of society - including intellectuals and the clergy - it is of great importance to introduce the dominant religion of Iran and the role it plays in the politics of the time. One of the key features in Beyzai’s plays is a religious figure, whether it be heroine such as Zeynab or an oppressive cleric such as the scarecrow in the *Four Boxes*. Without focusing on the history of Shia religion, it would be impossible to draw a parallel between elements and characters of the play and the religious political themes of the Iranian society.

I have introduced the theory and history of Muharram and Ta’ziyeh in order to form a picture of what Bahram Beyzai, as a young scholar, would have researched in the earliest stages of his career and to gain better understanding of how he had been influenced by these in creating his own plays. The backbone of most of his works had Persian features related to the history of Ta’ziyeh, tales of Shahnameh, and historical issues. What is impressive is that most of the themes of the plays and the point he was probably trying to make had to do with the current issues of the time including much criticism of the social political atmosphere and events within Iran prior to the revolution of 1979 and the aftermath. Beyzai explores these issues hidden within historical tales and, through mythological and historical characters, does it so adeptly that they avoided censorship and ban. The play, *The Wailing,* is one of Beyzai’s works that directly addresses social themes relevant to the society of Iran at the time the script was written in 1978. The story narrated in the text is almost a narration of Ta’ziyeh ceremony held in Iran. In fact, it could be claimed that Beyzai has written *The Wailing* in the format and structure of Ta’ziyeh itself, as in the play there is a round stage similar to the ones in Tekia and then the audience, actors, and actresses all sit around this stage and in different scenes take part in the play. Later, the story of Ashura and the Murders is further explained and noted that, similar to *The Wailing*, there are numerous characters in that old story concerning the family of Emam Hussein, his peers, many women and children and the invading soldiers and their commanders. It is not surprising that the actors had to play several parts in plays with numerous characters. Beyzai also included a large number of characters in *The Wailing*, consisting of female residents of a brothel, men who each represent a class of revolutionaries and invading soldiers and their commander. Based on such facts, I will later focus on the reasons why Beyzai might have used Ta’ziyeh and its rituals as a way of narrating *The Wailing*. *The Wailing* was written in 1978 but then published more than two decades later in the early 90s in Iran and the United States. Just like many of Beyzai’s plays, *The Wailing* is set at the peak of an important historical point: the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905-1907)[[42]](#footnote-42).

**Timelines in Bahram Beyzai’s Plays**

Bahram Beyzai, as a prominent figure and pioneer of modern theatre, mainly choosing the setting and time of his plays according to significant points in Persia’s history when notable transitions were taking place. Yet, almost all the themes of his plays are contemporary ones usually in accordance to very recent social political events within Iran at the time Beyzai wrote those plays. I believe Beyzai used a very distinctive technique, he illustrates his criticism and analysis of the current political issues within the context of history. Importantly, this technique allows him to express and discuss his vision of controversial issues that were otherwise not tolerated by the government[[43]](#footnote-43). There is also a tendency towards the revival of many Persian ancient elements in his works from the glorious ages of Persia which points to Beyzai’s personal interest in the history and identity of Iran. Although a pioneer in modern theatre, Beyzai is also an advocate for the significance of national identity while practicing modern theatre. This issue was first suggested in this chapter regarding the abolition of the first official playhouse of Tehran when the new modern government modernized Iranian arts by demolishing all traces of the national Iranian dramatic performances in 1947. On the other hand, the New Wave filmmakers and playwrights had every intention to use and revive the elements and figures of the historical past just as Beyzai has used Persian mythology in setting his plays, and another prominent filmmaker, Abbas Kiarostami, had focused on the role of the audience and their interaction with the stage and actors in old Tekia performances.[[44]](#footnote-44)

This dissertation mainly explores the critical analysis of Bahram Beyzai’s plays in the context of history, politics and social issues of contemporary Iran. The two following chapters also focus on specific sectors of society such as women, and artists, and how different governments, which rose to power during the past century, treated them and the Iranian society in general.

The initial understanding of a play by Beyzai in the case of *The Wailing* would be that it is the format of a Ta’ziyeh. So many elements within the play evidence this claim, including the stage, actors, and how they mourn and narrate the story of a murdered heroine. But then a closer look into the play and further study of the work would clarify many issues regarding the plot which leads to a much deeper understanding of the concepts rather than just the theatre of condolence of Iran.

People’s main aim in attending these gatherings was simply to mourn. The show or the dramatic performance would depict the sufferings of the characters to the audience[[45]](#footnote-45). In *The Wailing*, Beyzai transforms the format and structure of old mourning and performing rituals, making them speak out not about the historical tragedies but the suffering and casualties of contemporary people in the present[[46]](#footnote-46). At this point, it is suggested that Beyzai used Ta’ziyeh to present three different timelines in Iranian history: The Middle ages, beginning of the 20th century and finally 1970s. During these timelines, significant political events took place which ultimately changed the history and fate of the Iranian nation. As I will later discuss *The Wailing* in Chapter III, these diverse times in history have connections to one and the other. However, it is necessary to introduce these timelines to the readers before further elaboration can be made on the play or the playwright thus a brief historical context of the timelines in provided in the first chapter. At the same time the play has to be introduced through main characters, setting, and plot so that connection of the three timelines to the text, would remain as one the main aims of the research.

Another influence of Ta’ziyeh would be the presence of one stage and one setting where everything is performed. Of course, the audience of the performance of Ta’ziyeh can assume the change of setting but, in the actual staging, little is done to visually change the locations. *The Wailing,* likewise, delivers the story within one location (the brothel) and time is not expressed throughout the play in physical terms.

The second chapter focuses on the *The Murder of Cenmar* which, in a similar manner, is delivered through a type of Ta’ziyeh called Shabih-Khani. By contrast with the three timelines of the previous play, *The Murder of Cenmar* deals with the issue of time in a different way. The story of Cenmar and his Khawarnaq is from the historical events in Sassanid Empire back in 602 AD. The ancient tale was later turned into verses by Persian poet, Nizami Ganjavi (1141-1209).

 Bahram Beyzai’s notable themes would be the clash between tradition and modernity, ccondemning any sort of blind nationalism, which may be observed in almost all his works. The stories of his plays mostly come from real historical events, which took place in the region of Persia. Beyzai, however, never intended to praise or condemn anything but rather leave it to the audience to decide. His technique in presenting the characters and their dialogues leaves room for the audience to observe and comprehend a new version of the story. In the play of Cenmar, just like many of his plays, Beyzai focuses on history and then narrates it differently. So, the audience can re-interpret what has already been interpreted in history ultimately reaching a more comprehensive one. The time of this particular play goes back to the time of the Sassanid dynasty (421-438). According to mythology, when a Persian prince is sent to Al-Hira as a child, the Persian king orders the construction of a castle for his son. This castle is called “Khawarnaq”, which is a Persian word for a place with a beautiful ceiling also interpreted as the hall of sunlight. Khawarnaq’s ruins still stand about a mile from the east of the city of Najaf in modern Iraq[[47]](#footnote-47).

Chapter II explores the realm of *The Murder of Cenmar* to evaluate the reasons behind why this play can be argued to be set in modern day Iran, specifically addressing and analyzing the issues regarding the rise of the revolution of 1979 and the cries within the country asking for European democracy and, most importantly, the eventuality of these events which led to the formation of an ideological republic in Iran.

Bahram Beyzai’s life and biography serves as a structural background in considering the rise and development of modernity in Iran. The life and career of Beyzai is somehow parallel to the establishment of modern Iran. He spoke for the generation who were suddenly exposed to the new world of modernism and development and who had come from very traditional religious backgrounds. Beyzai’s characters in his plays could picture the nation’s effort in connecting their traditional illiterate conservative pasts to the new grounds of social and political freedom[[48]](#footnote-48).

There had been much political conflict in Iran at the time of the career of the playwright from 1960s to 1980s when many of his prominent plays were written. There was also much oppression, censorship, and restriction affecting the freedom of speech, media, film, and theatre industry. No wonder there were limited ways for a playwright to share his view and criticism towards the events. Bahram Beyzai has written more than 50 published plays during his career from the 60s to his latest works in recent years following his migration to North America. Each of his plays deals with significant political events which took place around the same time they were written. The events were also quite outstanding in the face of this country’s history as Iran experienced a revolution in 1979 that overthrew the monarchy, replacing it with a republic. The formation of such revolution, which was the only one to happen in the Middle East at that time, was dependent on many intellectual issues and movements in Iran alongside the policies of the rulers, which resulted in such a huge transition taking place. I believe that for analyzing a political play, the political events and political history of that play must be introduced to the audience for better comprehension of the play, and I wish to pursue the same aim in the introductory chapter of my research.

**Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911)**

Iran, or the old Persia, has been ruled by different dynasties as early as 2600 years ago. Before the beginning of the rule of Pahlavi dynasty which was the last monarchy regime to rule Iran, the Qajar dynasty were the ones in power. Regional wars with Russia, trade deals with western countries, and the constitutional revolution of 1896 were some of the notable events during the Qajar Era. The revolution led to the establishment of the Iranian Parliament which changed the traditional monarchy and opened doors towards a constitutional government and a new modern era[[49]](#footnote-49). Despite the opposition of some Qajar kings towards the constitutional movement of Iran, the parliament was established and the rulers themselves were affected by a number of events, including the occupation of Iran following World War I by the British, Russian and Ottoman troops which reduced the power of the ruling dynasty to a great extent.

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution as a unique movement in Middle East was the opposition and uprising of different sectors of society, including the intellectuals, reformist, aristocrats and the clergy back in 1905-07. This opposition aimed at replacing the old order of the Monarchy by constitutional institutions. The movement was shaped not only in the capital of what was then Persia, Tehran, but also throughout Iran’s other regions including the provinces of Gilan[[50]](#footnote-50) and Azarbaijan[[51]](#footnote-51). The Revolution finally resulted in the establishment of the new political structure and Iran’s first parliament[[52]](#footnote-52). This movement and revolution changed the history and fate of Iran or Persia as it then was, forever. It totally transformed many social political aspects including the freedom of expression and media. The Revolution and the constitutional movement continued on its rocky path with a series of setbacks and new revolts from the regions of Iran (Kasravi 2003, 951). The presence of women throughout the fights and revolts is also a distinctive feature of this movement.

During the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, when the transition of power from monarchy to constitutionalized institutions took place, a movement was shaped in Tehran and other provinces of Iran and involved different sectors of the society, including women.[[53]](#footnote-53) The parliament was primarily established in 1896 but, since Qajar king was against the idea of constitutionalism, the foreign forces attacked the parliament. The crowds fought back, refusing to give up on the idea of constitutionalism and, thus, a major battle occurred in the streets of Tehran and other provinces. Iranian women at that time were confined indoors, mostly illiterate, and without any social rights, yet they joined the fighting, carrying arms. Their participation and involvement in the revolution was significant: one of the leaders and occupiers of the attack on Tehran was a woman. Bi Bi Maryam Bakhtiari was the head of the Bakhtiari tribe[[54]](#footnote-54) in southwestern provinces of Iran who had key roles in formation and victory of the constitutional revolution. This is where the characters of *The Wailing* are drawn from: those involved in the resistance against the Qajar king and the foreign forces appointed by the court against the parliament and the revolutionaries. However, despite the fact that the Qajar rulers finally approved of the constitution, it was a setback for the court and monarchy as it limited their dictatorship as well as their wealth and authority over the country. The victory of the constitutional revolution in 1911 further weakened the position of the Qajar rulers who were already under too much pressure, especially due to the occupation of British and Russian troops. Finally, the coup of an army commander against the last Qajar King, Ahmad Shah, brought an end to their dynasty. The commander in chief in charge of the coup became the next Shah of Iran and the founder of Pahlavi dynasty.[[55]](#footnote-55)

**Monarchy Rulers of Iran: Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979)**

The Pahlavi monarchy was a modern secular government, which advocated western lifestyle and principals[[56]](#footnote-56). Their standards, however, somehow contradicted the traditional society of Iran. Reza Khan who became Reza Shah Pahlavi had great ambitions for the modernization of Iran and he successfully founded many projects to urbanize the country and established middle class and an industrial working class while promoting public education and military foundations. Despite his success, his reign had many opponents among different sectors including the clergy who opposed his secular policies, especially those promoting the rights of women. Reza Shah’s urban plans also disturbed many old feudal governors within the country and their ownership of the lands. However, since the oil industry of Iran was mainly under the control of Britain and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, his reign was not showing any threat or enmity towards the Britain or the Allies. However, following World War II and Reza Shah’s inclintion towards the Germans, this compensation was jeopardized and later terminated when the Allies invaded Iran and had Reza Shah overthrown from power and appointed his son Mohammad Reza Shah as his successor.

At this point, the situation of Iranians and the formation of Iranian society is mentioned to show how diverse regions of Persia, under the rule of the Qajar Dynasty, came to form a federal government and a modern urbanized society. There are also the foreign rulers and their influence on the newly formed government of Iran and how their policies towards the region affected the ruling power of Iran.

Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1919-1980), the second and last monarch of the Pahlavi dynasty, ruled Iran from 1941 till his overthrow by the revolution in 1979. His reign suffered many ups and downs. Many major decisive historical political events took place during his time such as Iran’s campaign for oil nationalization and the American supported coup of 1953. The very same ups and downs of his reign either promoted or lessened the liberty of the intellectuals of Iranian society during this time. After the coup of 1953, Shah Intelligence service began harassing people for the slightest political actions, creating obstacles for almost each and every individual thought.

Mohammad Reza Shah had taken a more democratic stand towards the state of power than that of his father, Reza Shah. However, during his first years in power, he faced a number of political propagandas including the 1933 agreement with OPEC which declined the amount of Iran’s benefit received of the oil extract. The parliament and the democratically elected Prime Minister Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq won the vote of the parliament in the mission of nationalizing the petroleum industry of Iran. The coup of 1953 was pretty much the end of the story. The elected Prime Minister of the time was overthrown, and the monarchy was restored. The new regime began a massive crackdown on the political activists especially the Communist Party of Iran who were the supporters of the Soviet Union. The coup was the beginning of the growth of a great gap between the nation and the ruling class keeping them from any sort of communication and integration. The Monarchy was, of course, in favor of stabilizing their power and dominance but at the same time was ignoring the casualties that their policies were causing among different layers of the society. What the government failed to comprehend was the growing sense of discontent among different factions of society and the whole nation in general. Being part of an imperial government, the nation was dealing with an identity crisis as they were forced into blind modernization which had little or no ties to their historic, ethnic, and religious background. Other than that, many Iranians including the intellectuals and activists were highly affected by communism, which at the time contradicted imperialism. Thus, they were ignored and marginalized by the government due to the ties of the Pahlavi regime to western countries and imperialism. The government of Mohammad Reza Shah did not help to seek any negotiation with the activists or their parties, instead they went even as far as to use excessive force to keep activists from identifying with certain groups such as communism.

Following the American and British supported coup of 1953, which overthrew the prime minister, Mohammad Mosaddeq and returned power to Mohammad Reza Shah, the government lost much of its legitimacy among the Iranian nation. Mohammad Reza Shah tried to regain the sustainability of his rule through military force and the intelligence ministry. Following the coup, many political nationalists of Iran including the proponents of the former prime minister, were prosecuted and imprisoned. However, the most severe attack was on the communist party following numerous executions and imprisonments of its members, which may have been due to the role of western imperial countries and their ties to Pahlavi regime.

The second reign of Pahlavi treated Iranian women differently way from how they were treated for centuries during the Qajar era. Although slavery was not officially practiced during their reign, women were still considered merely objects of interest and a girl similar to Zeynab in *The Wailing* could be given away in marriage or prostitution or slavery in exchange for money or other financial gain. One of the ideals of constitutionalism was to recognize the individual rights of every citizen of the country so that they would not be victims of slavery and abuse by local rulers or alternatively the head of their families. The right to education for women was primarily debated in the parliament and it was officially recognized during Pahlavi’s reign. Reza Shah’s interest in women’s participation in industry and education gave them the opportunity to be educated, gain employment, become financially independent and further participate in the society. Yet the seemingly modern dictatorship of Reza Shah did not guarantee the freedom of expression to individuals in the country and, therefore, his crackdown on media resulted in the closure of many women’s journals during his reign.

It appeared that the opposing groups focused on the miserable sectors of the society including women who were subjected to discrimination and suffrage. Yet Shah’s attempts to heal these wounds in a series of reforms backfired on him, making the conservatives furious, or instance women’s right to vote outraged the clergies and religious groups. So many fractions of society with different stands towards national, social and political matters joined the fight against the Pahlavi regime.

During the years prior to the revolution, there were enormous limitations and censorship placed on the publication of contemporary literature and the production of movies and theatre performances. The intelligence system of the government was formed following the coup and their enormous control until 1979 had put huge restrictions on visual and literary arts and the participating filmmakers, writers, and etc[[57]](#footnote-57). After the 1953 coup, the Shah's government formed the intelligence organization under the title of SAVAK under the supervision of the CIA and MOSSAD, operated from 1957 to 1979. The SAVAK monitored dissidents and carried out censorship, thus limiting any text, pamphlet, performance or film with influences of Marxism or leftist ideology[[58]](#footnote-58). SAVAK had the power to censor the media, screen applicants for government jobs and, based on western sources, used all essential means, including torture, to hunt down dissidents of the Shah’s regime. Considering the coup of 1953 and the assassination attempts of Mohammad Reza Shah[[59]](#footnote-59) which were attributed to the Tudeh or Leftist party, SAVAK targeted the leftist party as Shah’s major dissidents and began a huge crackdown on the activities and members of the political party, leading to numerous executions and extensive repression of leftist ideologies in Iranian media before the revolution. Nationalist and Islamist groups attacked the government of Mohammad Reza Shah on the basis of violating the Iranian constitution, corruption within the governmental sectors, and the political oppression by the SAVAK secret police. For instance, about a decade before the revolution the word “Golsorkh”[[60]](#footnote-60) aka ‘red rose’ was banned by SAVAK[[61]](#footnote-61) in literature as it was the surname of one the leftist intellectuals who was tried and sentenced to death based on accusation of alleged terror of the royal family which was never proved. The trial of the same leftist intellectual was fully aired on national television in Iran after the revolution of 1979 in the short interval of freedom before the government brought back censorship and hypocritical control of media in early 1980s. Likewise, a famous poem by Ahmad Shamloo is dedicated to the death of Armenian-Iranian Marxist activist, Vartan[[62]](#footnote-62) by SAVAK but for the sake of censorship; Shamloo had used the death of “Nazli”, a female Persian name instead[[63]](#footnote-63). Ahmad Shamloo had been a cellmate of Vartan and, after his murder in prison, dedicated this song to him stating, “Nazli never spoke” which referred to Vartans’ resistance despite torture until death. Following the establishment of the Islamic republic, different involved parties, including the leftists, were left out of judiciary power, therefore, the proponents of Khomeini began to restrict activities of those groups such as the publishing and distribution of their newspapers etc.

The government of Mohammad Reza Shah did not seek any negotiation with the activists or their parties. Faced with an imperialistic regime, the opposing groups focused on the casualties that the society suffered from, including women’s rights, poverty, and social injustice specifically in the case of lower classes of Iran. Yet the Shah’s attempts to heal these wounds in a series of reforms backfired making the conservatives furious, for instance, in the case of women’s right to vote that outraged the clergy and religious sectors. The monarchic regime had ties to the clergy in an attempt to fight against communism but, ultimately, they turned out to be the enemy of the secular Pahlavi regime. Soon one of the clergies, Ayatollah Khomeini became the leader of the opposition in late 70s persuading revolutionaries towards massive demonstrations and general strikes in the country.

**Revolution of 1979 and its effects on the society**

As mentioned earlier, following the coup of 1953 the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah lost much of its legitimacy among Iranian crowds while the intelligence forces of Shah began a huge crackdown on political activists and suppressed visual and literary arts, writers and critics, etc.

Owing to a number of other reasons, many of Mohammad Reza Shah’s foreign and domestic allies became critical of his policies on the basis of human rights and economic grounds. Though many anti-Shah fighters, including members of the communist party, had already been prosecuted or had gone into exile, a huge number of different political groups still came together to raise opposition against the government under the leadership of the clergy: Ayatollah Khomeini. The pro-regime forces resisted but the revolution of 1979 finally took place when the military forces backed the opposition groups against the regime thus handing the power from Prime Minister, Mohammad Reza Shah, to the leader of the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini. In April of the same year, Iranians took part in a referendum where most voted in favor of the Islamic republic instead of the monarchy. This referendum brought more legitimacy and acceptance for the establishment of the republic after the revolution. The constitutional law was changed to appoint a supreme leader, suggesting the idea of leadership of a highly ranked clergyman over a constitutional republic state where Islamic Jurists would guard what was established as an Islamic state. A prominent Iranian clergyman, Ayatollah Hussein Montazeri, founded the ideology of such guardianship in the face of a country’s leadership[[64]](#footnote-64). The aftermath of the revolution brought about a series of events including the huge attack and oppression of almost all other political parties involved in the revolution except for the one in power. The dominating party, which was the Islamic Jurists and also the military forces of the guardians of the revolution, attacked all other parties that had no judiciary power such as the communists. The oppression and attack did not only target the contradictory doctrines but also the closest people to the leader Ayatollah Khomeini, including his own prime ministers, presidents and the founder of the Islamic Jurists’ ideology Ayatollah Hussein Montazeri. Many of the prominent figures of the Islamic republic began to criticize the oppressive actions of the government against political activists including their imprisonment, unfair trials, cruel treatment of the detained, torture and executions. In this way the founder of the revolution and the Islamic republic became their own victims especially by the mass executions of 1989 where thousands of detained activists were put to death by the order of Ayatollah Khomeini. Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri himself, who was the founder of the guardianship of the Islamist Jurist as the basis of the Islamic republic, was revoked from his state of leadership of the Islamic republic. His right to lead was later bestowed to the current leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei who denounced Ayatollah Montazeri, which resulted in his house arrest until his death in 2009[[65]](#footnote-65).

It was not only the political activists and revolutionaries who suffered and were victimized in the course of the revolution but many other sectors of the society were targeted by the horrors of the newly found regime including women, artists, intellectuals, critics, and religious minorities. Nevertheless, the revolution and foundation of the Islamic republic changed the destiny of a nation and over a course of three decades dramatically changed the foreign relations of Iran with western powers. The conflict in between prompted many political tensions in the whole of the Middle East as the rule of the highly religious Shia clergy in Iran and their support for Shia Islam brought much conflict with neighboring Sunni Arab countries. It is worth mentioning that the military invasion of the regime in neighboring Iraq had taken place due to the crisis of power in Iran and the impaired relations with foreign governors for eight years; making it the lengthiest war of the century.

In the early years of the establishment of a religious dictatorship, a huge number of artists, filmmakers, actors and entertainers, intellectuals and politicians left Iran in fear of the new regime. The Islamic republic is based on the Guardianship of Islamic Jurists and promoted sharia laws; therefore, it was a threat to the social freedom of the nation. When such laws were imposed in the country, many participants in the entertainment industry, theatre and film industry faced prosecution and imprisonment as their activities were considered to be against the basics of Sharia. In the early 1980s, a huge migration took place in Iran where most immigrants headed to the United States and European countries to later create an Iranian diaspora there. Many participants of Iranian Theatre and film industry were among the migrants as they were either banned by the newly established regime or were under the huge pressure imposed on their activities. One example would be the pressure on Iranian actress Susan Taslimi on her cooperation with Bahram Beyzai[[66]](#footnote-66). Many of Beyzai’s plays and films only received authorization from the ministry of guidance on the condition that the actress Susan Taslimi would not take part in the production of that play or film[[67]](#footnote-67). The pressure on Susan Taslimi is an obvious example of minimizing the position of women in Iranian society by the Islamic republic, since she had no political activities and belonged to none of the political parties. Despite this she was constantly put under pressure for her works in Iranian cinema and her roles specifically in the works of Bahram Beyzai as one of the prominent and few strong female voices at the time. In an interview in 2009, the actress herself stated that at some point the ministry of guidance only allowed Beyzai’s films under the condition that she would not have the lead role.[[68]](#footnote-68) Why was her presence offensive in the face of Islamic republic’s doctrines? A significant example of that can be found in the play of *Death of Yazdgerd* where the wife of the miller portrays a central role in the plot of the play and the revelation of the truth behind the murder of the fugitive king of Persia. It seemed the newly formed government after the revolution sought minor and marginal role for females and thus could not tolerate the presence of strong central female figures in literature, theatre and Iranian films or politics. [[69]](#footnote-69)

Despite all the tensions, anxieties, inspirations and ambitions following the revolution of 1979, it still did not prevent a playwright of the time from challenging and questioning the post-revolution upcoming regime. Many plays of the time including the *Death of Yazdgerd* and *The Wailing* reflected the face of criticism towards the rising regime and its principals, yet due to great censorship and oppression such criticism had to be delivered in subtle and less direct ways and *The Murder of Cenmar* is a great example and so is Beyzai’s *Death of Yazdgerd* as both plays are set in ancient Persia and are retelling the stories of real historical figures.

**Methodology**

My research began with study of the history of performance and Iranian theatre which would consist of texts, performances, films and publications. I focused on a number of Beyzai’s plays which had been translated into English and had been staged in Europe and North America. I tried to focus on how these texts and plays could be introduced to foreign audiences and how they would be comprehended in terms of themes, characters, etc. Later on in the research, I began to focus on the plays and films of Bahram Beyzai and I used my knowledge of English and Persian to translate many of his plays which had never been translated to English before. Through such studies, I was able to combine my knowledge of ancient and contemporary history, particularly the political history of Iran, with the works of Bahram Beyzai. Through detailed studies, I was able to, identify many of the notable, political and social incidents of Iran which were being addressed in Beyzai’s plays. Thus, I had to further focus on the many publications, journals, analyses, and interviews based on the incidents in Iran in the past century to draw on points which Beyzai had addressed and debated in his works. Since most of my English sources on history and politics of Iran were published out of the country, there was less chance of intrusion or censorship while most of the sources coming from within the country were difficult to follow in terms of limited freedom of expression. Most of the sources regarding the two main plays in my research were either created in the past or were discussing old issues, therefore, I could retrieve them in books or journals. However the thread of my research introduces new works by Beyzai which are being performed at the moment in western countries and, with the help of social media, access to them has been made far easier. The playwright currently resides in North America away from the restrictions of his own country, therefore, I had the chance to contact him to ask for his point of view on a number of issues.

**Translation**

Translating *The Wailing* was challenging because the text is much more complex compared to other of Bahram Beyzai’s plays. Since it was based on contemporary history, the names, places, and incidents were much more complicated and detailed, and thus much harder to present to English readers, since this play is based on a contemporary political issue of his time rather than being an ancient tale retold. Many of Beyzai’s plays are based on old stories or taken from Old Persian poetry books; then the stories, characters, names, and locations are much easier to translate into and present in English because these stories are narrated repeatedly in different texts and so the events and the characters are less complicated and less culturally specific. In the case of *The Wailing*, the name of the characters, the locations, the historical and political situation, as well as the slogans and conversations, are much more complex. There are many titles, such as ‘Mir’ and ‘Haj’ that require detailed explanations in order for them to be comprehensible to English readers. The names are also complex as they are taken from historical and religious figures. Almost every one of the female residents of the brothel has a namesake, which needs analyzing. One of the women is named Masoumeh, meaning holy and virtuous in Persian, although that contradicts the fact that she is a woman selling her body.

Since the story of this play is taken from more recent incidents compared to those of Beyzai’s plays based on ancient tales, the characters of *The Wailing* had more modern names that are familiar and recognizable for Iranian audiences, yet it is still difficult for English readers to comprehend them. Many of the male characters in this play have names suggesting their occupations. Hajj Nilforoush, for example, primarily refers to a merchant, while such a name as Mir Baghi Khandagh Abadi suggests a noble person, probably an aristocrat from the old Qajar era.

In translating this play, I concluded that the best way was to change the names of many of the characters, since the names are complex in Persian and not necessarily significant in the analysis of that particular character. The name only signals the social class of characters, which could be easily explained by equivalent titles in English culture, such as Sir or Lord. It depends on how far the original text is meant to be kept close to Persian literature but my concern in this chapter was to be able to make an analysis and critical evaluation of the text and its characters, so I tried to choose less complex titles for the characters in order to focus on the analysis of their characters rather than their names.

Further, in my experience of translating and analysing Beyzai’s plays, I argue that he only chose names to represent classes of society and characters such as rulers, workers, and activists. The old names are often chosen to screen the writer from governmental criticism and avoid censorship. In my analysis of many of the plays, the character of the ruler is not that ancient king even if the name of a real ancient ruler is used. Instead, I presume that the character is the ruler of the Islamic republic of Iran and that is what I am concerned with in the interpretation of the play.

Yet I thought that the complex names would create confusion for the reader of the translation so I decided that the best way was to choose similar English titles to the ones chosen by the author. Some of the names of the characters did not pose any problem in translation, such as the character of Father, College Student, Son of the Parliament Member, and Soldier.

After complete analysis of all of these details, it was concluded that there would be need for further explanation regarding the translations especially with regards to the stage directions and performances. I have added translator notes to both of the translated plays as I found them necessary to their understanding for foreign audiences whom are unfamiliar with the numerous words, titles and historical references within the text. In order to reach this goal, I had also included many directions and references for the anticipated performing and staging of the plays, which either came from my own interpretation of the plays or the actual productions of the plays.

Chapter II: *The Murder of Cenmar*

This chapter focuses on Bahram Beyzai’s *The Murder of Cenmar*[[70]](#footnote-70)and my own English translation of it. It introduces the historical context of the play – the Iranian Revolution of 1979 - while focusing on how that particular point in history influences the narration of the play. The original story behind the play is an ancient Persian tale, yet all the themes presented in *The Murder of Cenmar* are current and relate to contemporary Iran. The playwright himself considers the political social state of Iran within his play and connects it to the historical context.

Although written in 1980, *The Murder of Cenmar* was only published in Iran in 2002; it was then staged for the first time the early 2000s until experiencing a recent revival in Iranian Theatres. New adaptations of this play over the last five years have received enormous critical acclaim and positive responses from audiences[[71]](#footnote-71). Beyzai adopts a unique approach to the narration of the play, thus creating a whole new story from the old tale. Translating the play was challenging since I had to present the dialogue in the same poetic style as the original.

The *Murder of Cenmar* does not really refer to the murder that took place in ancient Persia but, in fact, it is a critical metaphor for the catastrophic murder of thousands of political activists and critics of the Iranian government after the 1979 revolution. The dominant theme of the play focuses on the portrayal of the Iranian revolution and pursuit of European democracy and freedom. Iran is depicted as an uncivilized Arab community that faces obstacles in understanding the civilization of neighboring Persia. The final part of the chapter focuses on how Iranians, from 1979 to the present day, connect with this play. Despite the ban on Beyzai’s works, *The Murder of Cenmar* has been staged numerous times over the last few years and audiences have enjoyed increasingly more freedom to discuss and interpret the themes of this play.

 **Summary of the Play**

The play begins with the murder of the architect, Cenmar. Cenmar, along with others who take on different roles throughout the play, begins to narrate his story. Cenmar had encountered the ruler of Al-Hira, Nu’man, who, with promises of great rewards, convinced him to build a great castle to impress the king of Persia during his visit to Al-Hira. Cenmar begins the work on what he considered the masterpiece of a lifetime. Throughout the construction he clashes with Nu’man over numerous disputes and differences. However, out of love for his work, and for the love of the woman who has been promised to him, he decides to finish the construction. Upon finishing the Castle or the Khawarnaq as it was known, Nu’man decides to murder Cenmar which he carries out by throwing him from the multi-story building. In the final lines of the play, Nu’man foresees unfortunate incidents such as the overthrow of his reign and his own murder by the Persian King.

**Original text: Source of the ancient tale**

The tale of Cenmar was first narrated as a classical poem[[72]](#footnote-72) and it is the oldest remaining Persian text to have cited this story. Since the play is rooted in this ancient Persian Poem, it is useful to introduce the ancient tale and the way it was previously narrated in the poetry of Nizami in his poetry book of *Seven Beauties* comprising 5130 verses in Persian[[73]](#footnote-73).

The poetry of Nizami begins this tale with the Persian king Yazdgerd I who was childless. Upon the birth of his only son, he was encouraged to send him to the barbaric Arab tribes to be raised.[[74]](#footnote-74) For accommodating the young prince, the ruler of Al-Hira ordered Cenmar to create a palace fit for a prince. After the death of Cenmar, one of his apprentices suggests adding seven distinct chambers to the construction. The poetry focuses on the young prince, Bahram V or Behram Gur and his rise to the crown and emperorship of Persia[[75]](#footnote-75). In the narratives of the poetry of Nizami, the poet places great emphasis on moral lessons which are portrayed and discussed through the life story of the Persian Prince. The basic elements of this tale begin inside the Khawarnaq or Cenmar’s palace where the Persian prince learns of his fate and how he is destined to be the King after his father. The timeline of the verses is divided into seven phases where, in each phase, Bahram enters a different chamber of the Khawarnaq. Each chamber has a unique colour and there Bahram encounters princesses from Persia and neighboring regions such as China, India and Rome, and each of them narrate a story for him. Through these encounters, he learns that each of the princesses symbolize a region of the kingdom, which he is entitled to rule. So, upon learning of and grieving over his father’s death (Yazdgerd I), he leaves for Persia though he has been advised to stay and rule in the Arab regions. In Persia he negotiates and wins debates and fights to attain the crown of Persia after which he returns to the seven beauties, whom he encountered before setting off to Persia. In each of the tales that are about the Khawarnaq, significant ideals about life for a ruler are revealed. Nizami emphasizes, for instance, that one may reach their goals by righteousness or that the virtue of an individual could save that person from deceit and temptation. Most Persian verse at the time of Nizami Ganjavi in the 12th century was narrated through story telling; often the story of the life of the king from early years to his accession to the throne: the wars, the victories, love affairs, and, finally, death. What Nizami intended to show in the analysis of Bahram V‘s life was probably the instability of this life and how, despite the glory of the king, he ended up dead like any other individual.

You chased lives for a life time Bahram

But did you see how life chased you in the end?[[76]](#footnote-76)

Nizami either borrowed or was influenced by stories from other historical Persian epics including *Shahnameh* (The book of Kings)[[77]](#footnote-77). The seven narrators of the tales also symbolize the seven regions of neighboring Persia that are conquered by Bahram. However, it is the son of Nu’man, Manzar, who raises and teaches Bahram V before he reaches adulthood. Previously Nu’man had notoriously murdered the great architect of Khawarnaq and his feelings of guilt and the scandal had weakened his state as the ruler of Al-Hira[[78]](#footnote-78).

The poetry of Nizami[[79]](#footnote-79) (*Haft Peykar* translated into English as *The Seven Beauties*[[80]](#footnote-80)), also focuses on a prize, and is the basis of an Arabic and Persian proverb known as the “Cenmar Compensation”. The issue of the prize is first initiated by Nu’man’s own claims based on how he would thank and reward Cenmar for the accomplishment of his work. Later, he has second thoughts over what he has gained from the construction or how much gold and natural resources the khawarnaq has cost him.

**Historical and Political Context and change of emphasis in the play**

The ruler of Al-Hira, Nu’man, appoints a Persian Roman architect to construct a castle in Mesopotamia[[81]](#footnote-81), in modern Iraq. In brief, back in the ancient era, the Persian Empire consisted of many regions which had their own rulers[[82]](#footnote-82). Al-Hira[[83]](#footnote-83) was an Arabic region in the south west of the empire located in Mesopotamia (500BC- 700 AD). The historical background of the play goes back to the time of Bahram V[[84]](#footnote-84) or Bahram Gur, the fifteenth king of Sassanid dynasty (421-438). Like many other Sassanid princes, Bahram V was sent in childhood to one of the regions of the empire. According to mythology, the Persian king ordered the construction of a castle for BahramV, when he was sent to Al-Hira. BahramV grew up in Al-Hira, under the guardianship of its ruler, Mundhir. Later, Mundhir and his son Nu’man played a significant role in BahramV’s succession to the Sassanid crown[[85]](#footnote-85). Many other poets and authors have also mentioned Cenmar and the “Cenmar Compensation” in their works in order to address the notion of great misjudgment and tragic faith.

Heaven’s mercy is boundless if this life is based on creed

That I would share the same fate as Sanjar and Cenmar[[86]](#footnote-86)

Nizami wrote many books of romantic poetry such as *Khosrow and Shirin*[[87]](#footnote-87) or *Shirin and Farhad*[[88]](#footnote-88) which are texts that most Iranians would commonly have in their possession and that are taught in schools as part of Literature study. The tale of Cenmar is a political story focusing on the artisan classes and how the politicians take advantage of their work; and, finally, how they are treated or prized. The story is emotive and possesses several elements that could be paralleled to the situation of a young intellectual such as Beyzai himself in a society where art and artists are being victimized for the sake of their endeavors and service to the government and the society. It could be argued that it is the characters and the story which provide suitable grounds for the criticism of Iranian politics. The way in which Cenmar is victimized in this story is like the way that many Iranian political and social activists had been imprisoned, tortured and even executed.

Historical and Political Context

 In *The Murder of Cenmar*, Beyzai creates a new story within an old one to present historic issues related to the situation and events taking place centuries later. During the time when the play was written, in the late 1970s, Iran was in political and social turmoil as the nation had gone through a revolution that replaced the traditional rule of the monarchy with a republican regime. At the time Beyzai created this play, there was a great deal of oppression, censorship, and restriction affecting freedom of speech, media, and the film and theatre industry. [[89]](#footnote-89) Iran had already endured a huge phase of censorship and ban by the intelligence service of SAVAK, founded in Mohammad Reza Pahlavi’s reign following the coup of 1953. Following the revolution in 1979, Iranian media experienced a free domain for a period of two years but were soon victimized by the rising dominance and repression of the Islamic republic to the point that the Ministry of Intelligence was officially established in 1984.[[90]](#footnote-90) In the post-Shah era, the revolutionaries and opposing political parties who clashed with the theocracy advocated by the regime, were suppressed by the regime, as was their voice in media and literature. Several dozen newspapers and magazines opposing Khomeini's idea of theocratic rule by jurists were shut down.[[91]](#footnote-91) When opposing groups used newspapers to call for national anti-government protests, Khomeini angrily denounced them saying, "we thought we were dealing with human beings. It is evident we are not."[[92]](#footnote-92) With such an approach, the government easily legitimized their attempts to control and ban the media if they considered it to be against their doctrines. Between the years 1980 and 1981, at least 900 executions took place[[93]](#footnote-93) which were attributed, by Amnesty International, to unfair trials, false accusations, and the clampdown on human rights and political freedom. The impeachment of the Iranian president, Abulhassan Bani-Sadr, intensified things[[94]](#footnote-94) in 1981 and the number of executions increased, reaching its peak in 1988[[95]](#footnote-95).

 The number who lost their lives will probably never be known with certainty. Amnesty International documented 2,946 executions in the 12 months following Bani-Sadr's impeachment. A list compiled the following year by the Mojahedin-e Khalq cited 7,746 persons who had lost their lives through executions, in street battles, or under torture in the short period from June 1981 to September 1983.[[96]](#footnote-96)

After the revolution, SAVAK was officially abolished. However, in reality, it just evolved into a new organisation under the title of the Ministry of Intelligence that was instrumental in the execution of between 8,000-12,000 prisoners in 1980s, and 20,000-30,000 in total. Since oppression and imprisonment of dissidents was practiced by both regimes of Pahlavi and the Islamic republic, there were many activists who experienced imprisonment under both regimes and accounts by such prisoners stated that "four months under the warden of Ayatollah Lajevardi[[97]](#footnote-97) was as bad as four years of imprisonment of SAVAK"[[98]](#footnote-98). Such accounts of how political prisoners were treated under the regime provide an insight into the situation in which critical artist such as Beyzai found themselves. Since Beyzai was writing under the restrictions of such a government, it was impossible to openly express his views and criticism. The play focuses on basic issues regarding the formation of the very same government and the failure of the nation in pursuit of their demands towards democracy and freedom. Thus, to aid interpretation of *The Murder of Cenmar*, I have introduced the themes of the Islamic republic, the revolution, and the prior rulers of Iran.

**Analysis**

At the time the play was written, Iran was going through turmoil and transition; therefore, it could be concluded that Beyzai would not have wanted to just elaborate on an old tale whist ignoring the major events of the time. However, owing to the danger of censorship and the clampdown by the authorities, Beyzai’s work was concealed within the elements of an ancient tale so that he could exonerate his work from any allegations. This approach makes the play difficult to interpret in relation to current themes. To evaluate this issue, even minor characters of the play, such as the girl and the three nameless characters, must be analyzed alongside the central characters of Cenmar and Nu’man.

It is important to discuss how the Castle or Khawarnaq in the play represents the ideology of the revolution in 1979 and the dream of freedom, the pursuit of democracy, and the establishment of a modern democratic republic like that which existed in European countries. In this play, Beyzai offers an introduction about how such ideology appeared through the characters of the king of the uncivilized region and an architect who could make him realize his dream of construction. Later, Beyzai develops the idea that such a construction or ideology, as I suggest, requires much more than is assumed at the outset. The price paid for such a construction is huge and ruins many things including the architect who formed and built it in the first place. I argue that Beyzai depicts the revolutionaries and the reformists of the monarchic regime through the character of the architect. He shows that, like Cenmar, those activists had a plan for the construction of a new government, yet they encountered many issues, including how the nation would respond in the same way as we see in the play, the construction of the castle causes many tensions and disputes. So, it could be concluded that the kind of democracy and republic that political activists had in mind was merely a pattern of western democracy advocated by Iranian revolutionaries in the late 70s. In *The Murder of Cenmar*, the king asks for a castle that would be both Roman and Persian, thus representing both cultures. Beyzai might be referring to the idea of a republic being both related to western democracy and modernization as well as representative of the culture and religion. The calls for revolution within Iranian society in 1979 represented elements of freedom, modernity, and democracy while insisting on religious and ideological issues against the secular and capitalist-friendly policies of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. After all, the diverse sectors of Iranian society who revolted against the rule of the Pahlavi monarchy were of different ideologies from the clergy and religious people and to the proponents of the Soviet Union and communism. So, it can be argued that Nu’man’s insistence that the “Khawarnaq” should be both Persian and Roman, initiates a very risky and controversial plan for the future of his nation without considering its probable consequences and contradictions.

**Nu’man:** One who knows both the architecture of Persia and Rome!

 Yes, build a Khawarnaq, which is both Persian and Roman;[[99]](#footnote-99)

Nu’man did not consider many of the issues, including the effect the construction would have on the landscape. He also failed to see how his nation would respond to the changes or if the changes would contradict the nation’s culture and background. Later, these issues led to a huge conflict between Nu’man and the leaders of the Arab tribes of Al-Hira. Nu’man was the sole person in charge in Al-Hira thus, the decision to construct was his own. During this dictatorship, he never consulted the heads of the tribes and local leaders thus leading to huge discontent and disapproval among the people. Nu’man also showed a lack of understanding and knowledge about his own nation, their ideals, and whether they were as ready for civilization as he was. These failures led to the downfall of Nu’man’s plan for the construction. However, the failure of a ruler, whether it was Mohammad Reza Shah or the Revolution’s leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, was paid for by many sectors of the revolutionaries and intellectuals of Iranian society who were sacrificed during the course of the revolution and its aftermath.

Nu’man’s idea of a Persian Roman castle could also be interpreted as the ideology of Iranian revolutionists[[100]](#footnote-100) who wanted to form a republic that was both Islamic and Iranian and yet hold on to the principals of western freedom and development. These elements could be found in the aim of Iranian critics in finding freedom in the media and press and in the pursuit of human rights against the tyranny and suppression of the government by means of imprisonment and torture. On the other side, a huge section of the crowds who demonstrated against the regime in the days before the revolution of 1979, were among the religious sectors of the society and strongly emphasized the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini and the basics of religion while disapproving of the secular rulers of Pahlavi. The communist party was not in favour of religion but then scorned the close ties between the Pahlavi regime and capitalist powers such as the United States and their enmity to Russia.[[101]](#footnote-101) The communist party was pro-Soviet Union and also a supporter of the working classes of Iran as well as an advocate of democracy and modernism. Being founded in 1941-42, their party clashed with the Pahlavi ruler on a number of issues including their tendency towards Stalinism and also the attempted assassination of Mohammad Reza Shah by one of the members of the party. Such incidents let to a huge crackdown on the party especially after the coup of 1953 thus the party fully supported the revolution of 1979 and overthrow of the Shah. Despite their pro-revolution activities, they faced further crackdown after the establishment of the republic and during the Iran-Iraq war in 80s.

In *The Murder of Cenmar*, the construction and its great height killed the architect. So, according to Beyzai, the revolution victimized the revolutionaries and the political activists who had participated in forming the republic. At points in the play many issues arise in parallel to the construction including the destruction of many natural resources in Al-Hira when the cedar trees are being cut down. Some identical issues arise among the Arabs who begin to feel inferior despite the fact that the aim of construction is to glorify the nation of Al-Hira.

At the time of the revolution, it seemed that the diverse ideologies of different political parties and diverse crowds of nationals coming from quite distinct sectors of the society, was not an issue at all since they all targeted one major aim and that was the overthrow of Mohammad Reza Shah. For years after the revolution in 1979 this issue had been debated as one of the major impacts in the sabotage of the expectations of the revolution, which prompted freedom, independence and development in the first place[[102]](#footnote-102).

It could be argued that Beyzai’s *The Murder of Cenmar* intended to address the same conflict between the pursuit of freedom and the stand of the government and how the ideals of a nation and the decisions of the ruler raise tensions among a community. These political events directly linked to contemporary events in Iran. But how could these facts and incidents fit into a story based in ancient Persia? A story which involves the dream of civilization for a ruler in building a castle (Khawarnaq[[103]](#footnote-103)) and a Roman Persian architect who is appointed by him to realize this dream?

The ruling system of Iran, whether during the constitutional revolution, Phlavi reign, or the Islamic republic, had the tendency to suppress and also undermine many of the participants who had previously helped to create those systems and their ideologies. The exile and house arrest of grand Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, the founder of the rule of Islamic Jurists, is an obvious example of this issue[[104]](#footnote-104). Another example can be found in the case of Sheikh Fazollah Nouri[[105]](#footnote-105) who despite being nefarious among Iranians for his anti-democratic, anti-constitutionalism, and anti-freedom ideas and actions, was still one of the founders of constitutionalism in Iran but, by the time the parliament was established, he was considered to be an enemy and threat, so he was put to death on the grounds of treason[[106]](#footnote-106). So, it could be interpreted that the story of Cenmar can be seen to depict tragic political matters in the contemporary political history of Iran. In the midst of huge political transitions and conflicts, many of the participants in the creation of an intellectual political movement in Iran are later prosecuted and victimized by the same ideology and system that they helped to form. The character of Cenmar might have been one of the few characters in Persian Literature to have had a fate quite similar to the victims of the revolution or politics. By the time the construction is finished, Cenmar is no longer celebrated but is observed to be a threat to the uniqueness of the khawarnaq. In the same way, the descendants of the Islamic republic and the constitutionalism observed many participating individuals and parties as a threat to their foundation and, for them, the only way of survival was to obliterate all those individuals and political groups who could endanger it. This is what led to many political prisoners being executed in the summer of 1988 and to the number of prominent political figures of Iran being put to death at significant points of political Iranian contemporary history.

Despite huge similarities between the events of the play and the political situation of Iran in 1979 and afterwards, the play still does not directly take one character for a specific stand in facing the revolution. At many points in the analysis, I compare the character of Nu’man to Ayatollah Khomeini but, then, he could just as easily be compared to the character of Shah or the society of Iran. So, based on this contradiction, it could be argued that the villain of *The Murder of Cenmar* plays different roles throughout the play. Perhaps Cenmar represents a character of more complexity who faces numerous obstacles through his endeavors to accomplish his dream. At this point it could be concluded that the hero of the play, according to Beyzai, was the nation of Iran or the artisan class of Iranian society and, through their striving towards perfection, they encounter numerous setbacks mostly associated with the government and the rest of the nation. The antagonist against Cenmar in parts of the play is pictured as a tyrannical figure; at other sections, as an ideological government who cares for nothing but its own survival; and at other points, it is a nation who resists democracy and advancement due to their inferior state of mind and being.

 **Nu’man**: Why should I gift you the best camel I own?

 Why should this palace be named after you and not me?

 The workers of the Khawarnaq are appreciating you and not me!

Nu’man is reluctant to bestow the previously promised rewards on Cenmar. It also seems that Nu’man is jealous seeing someone other than himself glorified for the construction. This highlights the struggle between political activists and the dictators of Iran when one dictator in power either the Ayatollah or Shah neglects the rights of other citizens.

**Nu’man** Have you got no sense? I’m surrounded by my people!

Did you not see how they circled around me?

Didn’t you hear when the Arab Sheikhs,

Summoned me to their tent to the council of the sheikhs!

And discouraged me from building the Khawarnaq!

It seems that Nu’man’s fear of rebellion motivates him to sacrifice Cenmar to save his own reign and position in Al-Hira. This issue signifies the selfishness of the rulers who are willing to sacrifice anything, even their nation, for their own good. For instance, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi sided with Britain and the United States to overthrow Mohammad Mossadegh and the nationalization of the Oil industry of Iran just to save his own crown.

**Cenmar**

Cenmar is the protagonist of this play who has had the dream of a great construction for years before encountering Nu’man. Beyzai chooses an artist as the central figure in the play so he could be interpreted as being representative of the Iranian intellectuals who had the dream of a democratic modern government and society. I consider Cenmar to represent the artisan or intellectual class of Iran. Their ideal was to build a better future for the country just as Cenmar. In this case, Cenmar had the knowledge of both western (Roman) and eastern (Persian) construction. Therefore, he aimed to reach perfection by building the Khawarnaq on the sand in the deserts of an uncivilized land, something that had never been done before. Similarly, the community of Iranian intellectuals who were a sector of the revolutionaries had some information and knowledge about western democracy as well as being familiar with the history and culture of Iran. Through the revolution they aimed to spread modern western democracy in the form of a religious national Iranian movement. This might be why the activists accepted the leadership of the clergy during the revolution. They had meant to combine the new ideas of freedom and democracy with the nation’s religion and identity; probably they assumed these two should cohere.[[107]](#footnote-107) However, during the revolution and formation of the Islamic republic, religious beliefs soon clashed with the liberal and democratic ideals of the revolutionaries.

The character of Cenmar is only introduced and developed through the dialogues with Nu’man so, if Beyzai had left the slightest clue about the connection between him and any particular Iranian activist, I feel it would have become evident while translating the text. But Beyzai left scope for readers to create their own judgment about that, for instance, I could picture the fate of very distant and distinct Iranian political activists in the character of Cenmar: Sheikh Fazlollah Nouri and Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri. Sheikh Fazlollah Nouri was a proponent of religious dominance in society and against the education of women, while Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri was more pro-liberal rights and a critic of the Islamic republic over violations of human rights.

Analysis of the characterization of Cenmar is less complicated than that of Nu’man as I can easily connect this character’s destiny to many of the political activists of Iran who, for years, fought for the idealistic thoughts and beliefs which contradicted the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah. The rising power of his prime minister, Mossadegh, within Iran put Mohammad Reza Shah’s reign in jeopardy to the point that he fled Iran prior to the American and British supported coup in 1953 that overthrew Mossadegh and brought Mohammad Reza Shah back to power[[108]](#footnote-108). As quoted by Mohammad Reza Shah himself, after God he owed his throne to the British and the Americans[[109]](#footnote-109).

"I owe my throne to God, my people, my army, and to you"[[110]](#footnote-110).

Mohammad Reza Shah was not against the nationalist movement in its beginning just as Nu’man was the advocate for civilization in *The Murder of Cenmar* but, throughout the course of the play, he becomes defiant against the construction and the idea of civilization as it jeopardizes Nu’man’s own reign and power in Al-Hira. The nationalism of oil was beneficial for the Iranian nation just as the construction of the Khawarnaq would benefit the popularity and fame of Al-Hira throughout the Persian Empire and in the eyes of the Persian king. But, along with civilization, came some casualties in the play, such as the destruction of Al-Hira’s natural resources and raising negative national feelings among the Arabs and these are comparable to the events surrounding the campaign for nationalization of oil.

**Nu’man** You will displace my cedar forest?

**Cenmar** And I’ll transform it to the shape of a Khawarnaq!

Construction demands work and determination;

You can’t construct while not spoiling the nature!

Brick is clay; nothing you find is going to be intact!

And nothing remains intact when you build a Khawarnaq!

Nu’man had learned about Persian architecture and the magnificent constructions in capitals of the empire therefore he believed that by building one great castle he could impress the king and declare the state of Al-Hira a civilized state with great constructions. Quite similarly, the oil nationalization movement was an act of independence against the Western powers just as Nu’man wished to bring fame and benefit for his people but alongside came a number of issues like the reaction of western countries such as Britain’s economic sanctions imposed on Iran during the time of the nationalization of oil. Nu’man also had to deal with loads of criticism and protest from his people. Mohammad Reza Shah as stated that he had great plans and dreams for the Iranian nation which could have been turned into reality by the wealth achieved through the oil nationalization. On the other hand, during the movement, the Pahlavi reign became endangered by the likelihood of a revolution and abolition of the monarchy and that was not a price Shah would pay for nationalization. So, he chose to support Britain and the United States in the clash between them and Mohammad Mossadegh.

Despite the failure of the movement which was forfeited by the coup of 1953 and the suppression of opposing groups by the Pahlavi regime in the aftermath of the coup, the ideals of the opposition later founded the revolution of 1979 by overthrowing the monarchy. This matter coincided with the establishment of the Islamic republic and followed massive suppression of the revolutionary activists specifically those who were participants in the foundation of the revolution themselves. Similarly, Cenmar founded and built the Khawarnaq, a symbol of civilization, and the same ideal takes his life at the end.

**The other one** It was why they say the higher you build, the more horrific the fall would be!

[getting furious] and as much as he worked, he worked for his own death![[111]](#footnote-111)

Both Cenmar and Nu’man dreamt of the Khawarnaq being tall; taller than any other construction and, the taller it became, the deadlier it was when Cenmar was thrown from its rooftop by Nu’man in fear of betrayal. The ideology behind the revolution was to be harsh and strong to stand firm and remove the obstacles. It seems at the time they needed such harshness and resistance to fight against western countries, but the theorists and proponents of the idea did not comprehend how such a government could be treacherous and cruel to them and the Iranian nation as well. Neither did Cenmar comprehend that the higher he built the Khawarnaq the deadlier it would become and it could take the life of its creator just the same.

Evidently, advocacy of Islamic Jurists and the rise of the Shia clergy created conflict with neighboring Sunni regions and life under a theological governing system affected the lives of a generation of Iranians. So, I conclude that, since the political movement in Iran in early 1980s was so diverse, it brought more influence to the Middle East and also the nation suffered more casualties and suppression among different classes of society. The forced migration of Iranians to North America and Europe in 1980s could be mentioned as one of the consequences. Apparently, the nation underwent less dramatic changes and thus suffered far less in the case of the coup of 1953 and the constitutionalism. [[112]](#footnote-112)

The idea of building a Khawarnaq in the sand deserts of Al-Hira certainly proved tempting for Cenmar. From the outset, Cenmar is quickly motivated by the idea of building the impossible Khawarnaq and, throughout the play, he never shows any signs of hesitancy. This confirms that he has a strong and determined character.

After analyzing the character of Cenmar in depth, Bayzai’s intentions still seem ambiguous. The conclusion drawn is that Cenmar does not represent one character or a single person or community. Cenmar could represent the executed Iranian political activists, the intellectual class of Iranian society, or the artists who fail to survive in a domineering, violent and primitive society.

**The other** Yes- People’s names remain after what they build!

 And what they build is their true self!

**The other one**  umm-yes; Khawarnaq is the identity of Cenmar,[[113]](#footnote-113)

**Cenmar**  I told you I’m building only to accomplish something for myself.

In order to compare the character of Cenmar to the class of artists in a primitive society, it is necessary to focus on the background of Cenmar; the motivation behind his participation in building the Castle; and following his achievement, how he is treated by the society. If Cenmar is compared to the intellectual class of society, then it is important to consider the background of artists in the Iranian society and what had influenced them to take part in opposing and finally rebelling against the government. Once the goal, which, in this case, was a victorious revolution, is reached how was the intellectual society thanked or rewarded for their participation and contribution to the revolution?

By focusing on the character of Nu’man, one can see how he could potentially represent the leader or the head of the government. The new government of Iran, which arose from the revolution of 1979, shares many similarities with the reign of Nu’man of Al-Hira. Following the revolution, groups of political activists, mostly opponents of the previous regime, came to power. No wonder such a newly formed government had little or no background in governing a very diverse society of Iran. The then government was itself under fire from many hardliners and fundamental parties concerning many issues from foreign affairs to religious and ideological beliefs. It could be mentioned that there was a huge amount of fear among revolutionaries that foreign powers might plan another coup on Iran to overthrow the government just as it had happened back in 1953. The attack on the United States embassy and hostage taking of the American diplomats were attempts by the revolutionaries to sustain the state of Islamic republic[[114]](#footnote-114). However, such actions further isolated Iran from the international community which also created more pressure on the Iranians at the time. Under such power, many aspects of people’s social life were suppressed and restricted. The Iranian nation was left to deal with a dominating radical fundamental government which would suppress any opposing thought or voice. During such a pressured phase, the government prosecuted many of the activists and many of them faced imprisonment or lost their lives. Their destiny was similar to the way Cenmar was victimized by his own ambition and idealistic thoughts in creating something great. Cenmar kept his promise of the khawarnaq but once Nu’man no longer trusted him, he became the victim of his suspicions. Similarly, Ayatollah Khomeini had used western media such as interviews with BBC to shape and guide his revolutionary movement against Shah. But after the revolution, foreign media became a threat to the stability of his leadership in Iran and therefore he decided to cut ties with foreign powers and limit the presence of foreign press in Iran. By such policy, his government was somewhat successful in carrying out mass executions and prosecutions out of sight of foreign media and human rights watch.[[115]](#footnote-115)

**Nu’man**

Nu’man appears to represent several characteristics of the leader of the opposition and first leader of the Islamic republic, Ayatollah Khomeini. One of the notable similarities depicted in the early stages of the play is that, despite Cenmar’s great creation, Nu’man becomes cynical and plots his demise. In the same way, many of Khomeini’s critics considered him as an aging and ailing man developing melancholy and cynicism towards his competitors including that of Ayatollah Shariatmadari[[116]](#footnote-116) and later Ayatollah Montazeri[[117]](#footnote-117) , alongside his close proponents and aides such as Sadegh Ghotbzadeh,[[118]](#footnote-118). Nu’man clashed with his appreciated architect in the same way that Khomeini did with his greatest ally and friend Ghotbzadeh. Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, who was a revolutionary who played a great role in the formation of Iranian students against the Pahlavi regime and who later became a close ally and aide of the leader of the revolution, was finally executed by the same regime he helped to found himself.

Nu’man is the murderer indeed and the mass executions of political prisoners of Iran in 1989 took place by the direct order of Ayatollah Khomeini. Still, some aspects of Nu’man cannot be directly linked to Khomeini, since the king of Al-Hira is a local ruler under the reign of the King of Persia and one of his motives in the creation of the Khawarnaq is to impress the king, the plan that ultimately fails by the end of the play. Something that should be noted is that, though Nu’man serves as the antagonist of Cenmar, he ends up suffering from betrayal and deprivation similar to the fate of Cenmar.

**Cenmar** I told you to look at the paintings of the Khawarnaq;

-Where I had pictured my dreams-

There is a dead man under the feet of an elephant!

In my dream I saw a king with your name, of your descendants.

Pays for your crime![[119]](#footnote-119)

**Nu’man** Since in my dream I saw the birth of a female elephant

Which later had a male offspring,

That the Persian king shall ride to Al-Hira,

To kill a son of my descendants who bares my name and my crime!”[[120]](#footnote-120)

Here the play clearly predicts the future murders of Nu’man and his descendants by the Persian king and this is something which never took place in the political life of Khomeini. On the other hand, Mohammad Reza Shah was the ruler who shared a similar faith to his ex-prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh.

If Nu’man’s Khawarnaq represents the idea of the nation of Iran before and at the time of the revolution, it could be suggested that Beyzai is criticizing the complexity and the idealism of this plan in the first place. Did the Iranian nation want a democracy that was both liberal and, at the same time, in harmony with their culture and religious beliefs? Had there been any chance to pursue freedom from the suppression of the Pahlavi regime while taking refuge in an ideological government that propagates religion?

To evaluate such ideas, using the character of Nu’man, I would have to clarify that Beyzai created a play where characters speak their minds in their dialogue thus presenting themselves to the reader and making this play very different from the previous adaptation of this story in the verse of Nizami Ganjavi. Morality principles found in works of Nizami Ganjavi and efforts to depict the righteous and the fate of the people are very different from the contemporary concerns of Beyzai. It is evident that he was more interested in the debate about social and political reforms within the country and the plea for democracy and human rights. At the time of Bahram V or Bahram Gur, the state of Persia was at peace where almost no foreign invasions threatened the state and it was the arts and civilization which flourished at that time. So, the reign of Bahram and the state of Persia in the 5th century was not a suitable choice for a critic who wanted to address the turmoil of early 1980s Iran. Instead, the barbaric state of Al-Hira and dream for civilization was a suitable substitute for the play, so a marginal tale within the story of Bahram Gur became the hero of Beyzai’s play. Clearly, Beyzai wanted a setting that would fit the newly developed society of Iran that was comparable to the Arab region of Al-Hira rather than the civilized cities of Persia. Beyzai wanted a ruler who had to deal with numerous domestic and foreign tensions and whose reign and state of power was in jeopardy. All these features fit into the character of Nu’man.

By studying each character, the reality about them is revealed through the course of the play and each character shows their motives, talents, judgments, honesty, creed, and infidelity towards their goals and promises. This differs from the story of Cenmar in Nizami’s book of *Seven Beauties* which is delivered from a third person point of view therefore limiting the audience’s knowledge about the characters.

Nu’man was told of an architect of his standard

A famous Roman who could reshape even a rock

The whole world had seen his works and they all loved it

The demands of Nu’man were met by the Cenmar

So he had one sent to his homeland and brought him all the way from Rome

Nu’man asked Cenmar if he could build better if he is given more

Furious Nu’man ordered his envoy to push him down the Khawarnaq[[121]](#footnote-121)

The verses in “Seven Beauties” are plain and straightforward and only deliver the story and its circumstances. However, in *The Murder of Cenmar* as soon as the characters speak their minds and intentions, the audience is faced with a whole new situation where a nation’s future is dependent on the construction of the Khawarnaq. The leader of Al-Hira believes that the construction of Khawarnaq will bring fame and recognition for Al-Hira throughout the empire. The construction itself has the capability of glorifying a person whether that is the ruler of Al-Hira or the architect or of bringing them down to death. Nizami mentions how great and magnificent this work of architecture was but Beyzai’s Khawarnaq possesses ability to change the life of a character or a nation. In fact, it is more than a building, it turns out to be the compensation for the person behind its creation.

There are also similarities between the poetry of Nizami and Beyzai’s play, in the chapter following the death of Cenmar and when the King of Persia has arrived and settled in the Khawarnaq, he uses the seven chambers of this building to settle his seven lovers or the seven beauties. In the same chapter Nu’man is overthrown from power by the King of Persia and ends up wandering in the deserts of Al-Hira.

When Nu’man was overthrown from his kinghood he ended up in the desert like a lion

He gave up on fortune and reign as they conflicted with spirituality

He gave away the treasured gown and disappeared from face of the earth like a fairy

No one ever again saw him in his court though he’d been a king of his own time[[122]](#footnote-122)

I could connect this aftermath to similar situations in contemporary Iranian political history. Mossadegh led the fight for nationalization but it was eventually Mohammad Reza Shah who benefited from better oil deals with the west after Mossadegh was overthrown. Cenmar and Nu’man, in one way or another, pay the price for the construction but the only person who really benefits from this castle ends up being the Persian King Bahram V.

Nu’man’s characteristics of deceit, unreliability, and betrayal fit into the characteristics of the leader of the revolution. I should assert that the weak points of the character of Nu’man are revealed to the audience when, despite his ambition for the building, Nu’man seems ungenerous and displeased about the huge expense of this construction and the architect’s demands. Likewise, many politicians make big promises but when they are expected to keep those promises, they become reluctant. As frank and honest as Cenmar appears to be, Nu’man is more complicated as he is constantly plotting to reach his aim of construction even if he must commit cruel actions. Nu’man appears to be a self-centered person who neglects the others, including his own daughter and her feelings for the architect, for the sake of his own good.

**Cenmar:**  In my dream, she was dreaming of me;

I rubbed my eyes and said is it her or my dream?

**The Girl:** In my dream, he was dreaming of me;

I wanted to conceal myself but there was no veil![[123]](#footnote-123)

These quotations further reveal how characters such as Cenmar or Nu’man’s daughter are bold and honest in expressing their feelings and emotions. They confess and express their love for each other in the very first moment. On the other hand, Nu’man appears to be very deceitful. Though he had planned the murder of Cenmar from around the middle of the play, whilst it is still under construction, he still persuades Cenmar to continue his work and finish the Khawarnaq with promises of gold and his daughter’s hand. Even when Cenmar becomes reluctant and wishes to return to his family, Nu’man prevents his departure by every possible means. This suggests Nu’man is a Machiavellian politician and, for him, the end justifies the means. Deceit has been attributed to Ayatollah Khomeini in contemporary Iranian history as, in his early speeches to Iranian crowds, he promised freedom of the press and media but later on admitted that he had to use deceit for the sake of establishing his government[[124]](#footnote-124). Many politicians might be accused of deceit but, in the case of Khomeini, almost all of what he claimed and promised was overturned when he reached power. For instance, he promised that upon victory, he would leave for the holy city of Qom and develop a Vatican like state there with little or no influence on the government. Upon the victory of the revolution, he announced himself as the supreme leader of the Islamic Jurists and gained control of every single policy of Iran either from the hostage crisis to the Iran-Iraq war. Ayatollah Khomeini’s shift in opinion and policy was one of the main starting points for the clash between the political parties of Iran after the revolution and their opposition towards the Islamic republic.

Yes, we are reactionaries, and you are enlightened intellectuals: You intellectuals do not want us to go back 1400 years. You, who want freedom, freedom for everything, the freedom of parties, you who want all the freedoms, you intellectuals: freedom that will corrupt our youth, freedom that will pave the way for the oppressor, freedom that will drag our nation to the bottom[[125]](#footnote-125)

In the play, Nu’man praises the architect and his plan for civilisation and, then, mid-play, he has a shift of mind and begins to show enmity towards Cenmar, the same person he had previously seen as his only hope for civilisation. This corresponds with the standpoint of Khomeini who urged the Iranian youth to know their rights and to fight for them but then, later, announced that such rights and freedoms were no good for the nation.

**Khawarnaq**

The castle that Nu’man is longing for is called “Khawarnaq”, which is the Persian word for a palace with a beautiful arched ceiling. It is also interpreted as ‘the hall of sunlight’. Back in the ancient era, the sun and the light had great value and sanctity among Persians and their faith.

Despite all the obstacles and treachery associated with the building of the Khawarnaq, the palace is finally built so outstandingly high that nothing should be able to sabotage its glory and greatness. But, ultimately, two of the main figures involved in the creation of the Khawarnaq itself die for its the sake. The first victim is the architect who is killed by Nu’man in the very beginning. As shown in the lines below, many issues and tensions arise throughout the play from Nu’man’s greed in presenting Cenmar his prize to the public discontent that Khawarnaq had been created among the Arab community of the region.

 **Cenmar**: give me forty full cubits cedar trees;

So that I could make forty poles for the Khawarnaq!

Nu’man: You’re asking for the impossible!

You’ll humiliate me and have me blamed among Arabs!

Cenmar: It is you who wanted the Khawarnaq in the first place not me!

I was living my own life, my own dream!

It was you who summoned me to build your dream castle!

**Nu’man** Why should this palace be named after you and not me?[[126]](#footnote-126)

What I wish to highlight here is the connection between the rising conflict between the protagonist and antagonist throughout this play, which ultimately turns them against each other marking a fatal clash. Different political parties involved in the creation of the revolution and groups with very different points of view from fundamental religious to secular and socialist joined each other in fight against the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah to find a new government. However, in the outbreak and the aftermath of the revolution which I compare to the construction of Khawarnaq, the union between diverse activist groups shattered to the point where it turned them against one another as well. The Khawarnaq, is a metaphor or symbol of civilization - something that was not present in the Arab region but glorified in neighboring Persia. The freedom of the press, other means of political freedom, and human rights either did not exist in Iran or at many points were neglected by the Pahlavi rulers while such rights were fully adopted by European countries. So many of the activists prior to 1979 observed this issue and sought to bring such reforms to Iran, without considering the consequences regarding the state of the country and the nation. Similarly, Nu’man’s ambitions for civilization, which he thinks are achievable through one construction, fail to appreciate the consequences. What Nu’man fails to understand is that the palaces and khawarnaqs of Persia were just buildings and not the real civilization of Persian society which lies in the centuries of Persian history and many political historical factors which helped to develop and create this civilization. Nu’man naively believes that by constructing one special palace, his nation will end up civilized and his reign will be as glorified as that of the king of Persia. It should be noted that intellectuals of Iran, before the revolution, had had the same feelings and ideals and they thought that perhaps by the passing of a few laws by the government, Iran would turn into a democratic state like that of Europe.[[127]](#footnote-127)

Mohammad Reza Shah did not tolerate reforms and restricted the political involvement of different sectors especially after the coup of 1953. Any sort of criticism or endeavor to denounce the authority of Shah’s government and court was harshly rejected. Therefore, the campaign for democracy was never officially formed in Iran; instead some of the opposition groups turned violent and began guerrilla attacks [[128]](#footnote-128) from which I can mention the revolt of Siahkal[[129]](#footnote-129) by the leftists in 1971.[[130]](#footnote-130)

Though many other political activists did not engage in guerrilla fighting, they still lost hope in reforming the Pahlavi monarchy, believing that only the overthrow of Shah could refine and reform Iran’s political situation. [[131]](#footnote-131) Considering these issues, I conclude that from this aspect the position of Nu’man could not be considered close to the position of activists who promoted freedom in Iran before the revolution, especially since the activists and the intellectuals are the ones who pay the price but in the play of Beyzai, Nu’man ends up with his desired castle which he gains at no cost. So Beyzai pictures Nu’man as the winner just as he has been the winner in the chapter 8 of the verses in *The Seven Beauties*. So, based on this, I claim that Nu’man is the ruling government that could be either Mohammad Reza Shah who was the winner of the coup and the oil nationalism movement or Ayatollah Khomeini who won the revolution against numerous individuals and political parties involved in the revolution.

This is very similar to Nu’man, who was reluctant to pay Cenmar and have his daughter wed him; the established government post- revolution was not willing to share power with the political parties despite their involvement in the formation of that government.

 **Cenmar**: Just order and I will stop Nu’man!

 Just say the word and it will be done;

 If you order, I’ll give up on the Khawarnaq!

 **Nu’man**: I cannot say no nor yes!

 How could you give up Cenmar?[[132]](#footnote-132)

Here we see that Cenmar is given a task but then tormented by the person who had employed him. Beyzai is criticizing the political leaders who encourage involvement but, then, for various reasons begin harassing them. At this point, Beyzai is directly addressing politicians like Ayatollah Khomeini who called for the participation of crowds of people and political parties in the demonstrations against Shah’s regime but later had many individuals isolated and removed from the face of power for his own good. [[133]](#footnote-133)

 **Cenmar**: Nu’man, you’re insecure!

 You don’t know if you want civilization or not?

 You don’t know if you want your world as constructed or untouched?

 You want the build Khawarnaq without construction;

 For the desert to remain the same after you build a Khawarnaq on it?

 You seek the impossible!

 Or if I’m not mistaken, you’re reluctant to pay for it;

 You want construction, if someone else pays for it?

 Without change, effort, or price?

 How could civilization happen on its own?[[134]](#footnote-134)

Throughout the conflict between Nu’man and Cenmar, there is the issue of jealous greed, whereby Nu’man believes that when Khawarnaq is finished, the architect proves to be a danger to the glory of Khawarnaq and Nu’man’s newly established civilization. Despite Cenmar’s constant honesty and dedication to the building, he is not exonerated from the stigma of betrayal. Nu’man reveals his fear of how Cenmar could jeopardize the glory and uniqueness of the Khawarnaq by building another one for another king in neighboring regions. He also fears that Cenmar’s knowledge of the Khawarnaq would be a threat and danger to the construction itself. These suspicions coupled with Nu’man’s greed in not wanting to pay Cenmar, motivated him to kill the architect to finally dissipate the problems. By doing so, he could then wed his beautiful daughter to the King of Persia and thus gain further respect and influence.

**Nu’man:** If Cenmar had lived, he would have been mean to me and for the sake of a better prize-he would have made a better Khawarnaq for others![[135]](#footnote-135)

**Nu’man:** I asked him can you build again as fine as this one?

I told him is there anything greater than this in any one’s thoughts;

Even for Cenmar himself? Tell me can you build better than this?

**Cenmar:** I told him yes I could build better than this;

A Palace with seven domes and seven floors, just like heaven itself! [[136]](#footnote-136)

This story, as ancient as it may seem, is still relevant to the way the rising Islamic republic treated opposing political groups in Iran. Though they have been participants in the dissolution of the monarchy they still became worthless following the establishment of the republic. The political fractures posed a threat to the newly formed government as they came from a background of riot and resistance against Mohammad Reza Shah and they could have done the same to the Islamic republic. The political parties had too much classified information about the country and government, which could pose a threat to Iran in the Middle East region. Therefore, it could be suggested that Beyzai elaborates on the stand and ultimate fate of the political parties of Iran in the character of an architect. Thus, choosing the main character, as an architect was not a coincidence, he chose the architect because he should have intended to address the architects of the revolution of 1979 and how they ended up after accomplishing their aim. Just as Nu’man decided to banish Cenmar, the newly formed government had architects either suppressed or forced to exile in the early 1980s. At some point during the arguments between the two characters, Nu’man orders Cenmar to be chained to stop him from fleeing and thus leaving the building unfinished.

 **Cenmar:** is this how you prize men in Al-Hira?

 By chaining them for their talent?[[137]](#footnote-137)

The region of Al-Hira represents the oppression experienced in Iran in the early 80s, when in July of 1988 the leader of the revolution secretly ordered the execution of the already imprisoned members of the leftist group and other opposing political parties. It seems that the decision was made by one leader and his consultants rather than being the decision by the state and approved by the parliament and other heads of the government including the president etc. Nu’man’s decision on the fate of Cenmar symbolizes the tyrannical decision of the head of the country in abolishing the political activists of Iran under unlawful judicial procedures. The play emphasizes the unfair verdict and unjust destiny of Cenmar thus, implying that the imprisonment and execution of the members of Iranian political parties was also unfair.

 **Cenmar** I told him there are no boundaries in idea and dream. Yes Nu’man-even better than this;

 If I live long enough!”

**Nu’man:** I swear to god it was your honesty that destroyed you

Why didn’t you lie to me?

Why didn’t you say that there could be no better Khornaq to be built?

Why didn’t you say you would only build for me, the Arab king? And for no other ruler?[[138]](#footnote-138)

Nu’man directly addresses the idea of lies and deceit in the quotation above, stating that he would not have killed Cenmar if he had lied instead of being honest. The practice of lies and false promises has been at the forefront of the contemporary history of Iran; the leader of the revolution openly announced how, for the sake of need, he had used deceit[[139]](#footnote-139) by declaring the freedom of the press that was later retracted on his orders[[140]](#footnote-140). On the contrary, the character of Cenmar is far too honest and almost naïve to deal with a politician like Nu’man who uses deceit and plots to reach his objective. There is no trial for Cenmar but just the sole judgement of Nu’man who deems that Cenmar’s death is inevitable.

The trial and verdict of Cenmar by Nu’man could be a metaphor for the sole decision of the leader of Iran to destroy the two, leading opposing parties in Iran by the mass killing of its members in 1988. Trotsky and Robespierre state that “Revolution eats its children.”[[141]](#footnote-141) It is important, therefore to analyze why a revolution so often victimizes its very founders.

Beyzai used the Khawarnaq as a metaphor for the ideology behind the revolution points to the notion that the founders or the political activists are to blame for pursuing a dream so big that they were unable to control it. However, it can be argued that Beyzai offers a defense, saying that not building the Khawarnaq would have left him open to threat, too.

**Cenmar**  It was you who wanted the palace

If I had rejected you, you would have punished me!

You think I haven’t heard the threats,

And to build a construction so strong

That no wind could have torn it apart!

If I hadn’t built, it was you who would have had the sword and pride of an Arab!

You would have raged over me and attacked me through every mean![[142]](#footnote-142)

Another important issue worth considering is the Arab state and Sahara or the desert where most of the events of the play are set. Out of all the neighboring regions to Rome and Persia, why did Beyzai choose an Arab primitive nation? The first impressions of the play without analysis would point to the idea of glorifying the ancient past of Persia. The reader soon observes that Beyzai had such an intention. What Beyzai truly sought to do with Al-Hira was to depict the Iranian nation before and at the time of the revolution of 1979. Although Nu’man longed for the idea of civilization, it was not long after the construction began that the dispute among the Sheikhs of their tribe and the Arab community began to develop. There was ongoing gossip among the people about how the Khawarnaq would destroy the virgin land of the Sahara and their traditional lifestyle. The Arab community was supposed to have pride and glory over the Khawarnaq but instead they begin to develop conflicting feelings about it. They tended to regard the Khawarnaq as either too Persian or too Roman which did not glorify anything for them but rather signified their inferiority and uncivilized culture. Nu’man’s aim in the pursuit of the Persian civilization, hurts the feeling and honor of the Arabs as having to look up to Persia and Rome instead of their own.

**The Other One** Is it not shameful for you that Khawarnaq was built by a foreigner and one of your own people?

**The One** Is it no shame for you that your best camel, best horse and the goats were gifted to a foreigner?

**The Other** And worst of all- oh! Your daughter who is the most beautiful among Arabs?

**The Other One** No other king has ever been this wise to his people;

And appointed a foreigner on his people!

**The One** When did you consider us? Did you hear from us that we weren’t capable of building Khawarnaq?

**The Other** Why shouldn’t the King of Persian look down at you?

When you look down on us who are your own people.[[143]](#footnote-143)

Beyzai shows the argument Nu’man has with Arab leaders over the issue of race and nationality emphasizing that the ideas of democracy, freedom and independence advocated by the political activists and revolutionaries who had their own enemies and critics within the Iranian society before the revolution of 1979. Even though crowds of Iranians and activists from diverse political beliefs had joined each other in the fight against the Pahlavi regime, they still did not share the same thoughts and ideas about nationality and identity. While some activists like Nu’man were in pursuit of western democracy and modernization, others valued their own traditions and old customs, and some would go for a much less worthy construction only if it is to be made by an Arab rather than an architect of Roman and Persian blood. [[144]](#footnote-144)

As demonstrated in the quotation below, the hardliners of the Arab tribe are ignorantly asking for racial appointing of people for the sake of their Arabic nationality. A similar situation happened during the early 1980s in Iran when the government placed greater emphasis on Islamic, Iranian, and traditional ways of expression, literature, art, etc. The ideology appeared in most social cultural policies by stating a dress code for all individuals especially banning women from showing bare arms and hair in public. Some changes were directly imposed by Sharia laws of Islam such as the laws of Hijab while some were not religious such as emphasizing on proletarian clothing, manner, and customs as opposed to western values and styles formerly practiced during Shah’s regime. It suggests that how the community of artists in Iran in years after the revolution were suppressed and restricted in producing works of art, when there were sectors in society and government that were against anything which was unethical to them[[145]](#footnote-145). Here, the Persian-Roman architect appointed by the Arab ruler could refer to any type of artistic activity that would have elements of modernity or the Western culture in the society of Iran. Again, Beyzai had been able to deliver his criticism both towards the Iranian intellectuals of the revolution and the hardliners in power in the Islamic republic and the way they had suppressed an artist such as Cenmar who had no intention but to express himself through his art of construction.

 **The One** Nu’man has put us down and promoted Cenmar!

Was there no other architect in Al-Hira[[146]](#footnote-146),

That forced you to bring-a sinister- from faraway lands?

**The Other** You praised and glorified a foreigner and put down the Arab!

**The Other One** You’ve chosen a Roman of Persian blood;

Arab means nothing to you!

 **The One** What has he accomplished that the Arabs did not?

To put one brick upon the other is something that anyone is capable of!

**The Other** Doesn’t it bring shame on you to declare the incapability of the Arabs,

To build such tower?[[147]](#footnote-147)

In the play, three nameless characters take the role of the Sheikhs or Arab tribal leaders, attacking Nu’man over the construction and appointment of Cenmar as the architect for a national project of the Arabs of Sahara. The situation can be likened to how Iran’s government had to deal with hardliners who promoted their own ideals and doctrines who were insisting on making the whole society Islamic. Islamic fundamentalism in Iran goes back to the time of the constitutional revolution of Iran. After the revolution, and the establishment of the parliament, some religious hardline clergies who had active roles in the foundation of the constitution began to oppose it since they found many of the new reforms contradictory to Islamic principles. The most notable clash between the hardliners and the constitutionalists was the execution of Sheikh Fazlollah Noori (1843-1909)[[148]](#footnote-148). Upon the victory of the 1979 revolution, the conservatives and radicals took over governmental positions in Iran and thus established many regulations in favor of their Islamic ideals. Therefore, the fundamentalist parties and individuals within the country and government targeted any sort of art, literature and media, which they perceived to be western or modern.[[149]](#footnote-149) This is quite similar to how the Sheikhs criticized Nu’man’s ambitions and standards in building the Khawarnaq.

**Nu’man** Didn’t you hear when the Arab Sheikhs ,

Summoned me to their tent to the council of the sheikhs!

And discouraged me from building the Khawarnaq!

Yes, words of kindness and yet threat! [[150]](#footnote-150)

The way Nu’man had behaved towards hosting the arrival of the King of Persia through the construction of a great monument was something rather controversial for the Arabs. I could refer here to a well-known example which took place in Iran during the reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The character of Nu’man at specific points resonates with the monarchy rulers of Iran, specifically Mohammad Reza Shah. In 1971, the Shah decided the country had well advanced and had gained enough wealth, so he decided to show off this wealth to western leaders. Thus, he planned a series of festivities to celebrate 2500 years of emperorship in Iran from the time of Cyrus the great who had founded the first empire in Persia. The celebrations were held in the southern city of Shiraz in the province of Fars which was once the headquarters of the Persian Empire and where ruins of the capital Persepolis remained. Almost all foreign western leaders were being invited to this show of Mohammad Reza Shah and the whole celebration cost millions of dollars.[[151]](#footnote-151) Mohammad Reza Shah himself had announced that these festivities had been created in an effort to demonstrate the great economical advancements of the country under the leadership of Shah. However, it was mentioned earlier how the Iranian nation was drenched in poverty less two decades before the oil nationalization movement of Iran. In 1971, the same generation faced Shah’s extravagant spending in glorifying the civilization of Iran. It was previously discussed that socialism and communism cult was quite popular among the literate and educated class of Iranian society due to many reasons including the yet remaining state of poverty, illiteracy and discrimination in society of Iran. Under such circumstance, Shah’s imperialistic policies and extravagant spending made his leftist opponents furious which led to national hatred and criticism against the Pahlavi monarchy[[152]](#footnote-152). The imperialistic reign of Mohammad Reza Shah faced further criticism and opposition from crowds of the nation and the leftist intellectuals of Iran.

 Beyzai could have addressed weak policies in his play as the naive decision of Nu’man in creating a castle as great as the constructions of Rome and Persia. However, the crowds of Al-Hira were not in favor of this move, just as the Iranian nation who criticized Shah’s million-dollar celebrations.

Alongside this, the sense of idolizing of the race and nationality of Arabs was promoted in Al-Hira thus neglecting those related to Persia and Rome. At so many points of the play it is mentioned that the Arabs would prefer to live in the tents rather than great palaces. The Sheikhs criticize Nu’man by saying he had humiliated the Arab’s identity making them far more inferior in the face of Persians and Romans. Such thoughts and beliefs were also part of the ideology of revolutionaries who condemned the ties of the monarchy regime with the western world.[[153]](#footnote-153)

**The One** You responded with Roman glory to their glory!

Made us beg the Romans!

**The Other One** Arabs have always lived in tents then what do we have to do with the Persian domes?[[154]](#footnote-154)

Cenmar is obviously innocent as he was primarily appointed and tempted by Nu’man to realize his dream but, when the hardliners pressured Nu’man over the construction, unfortunately it was Cenmar who had to pay for it. I argue that Beyzai had meant to primarily address the failed policies of rulers and how it provoked the nation against it.

On the other hand, in case of Nu’man and the Sheikhs of the tribes, it could be concluded that some of the decisions were made under excessive force from other parties. Though I compared the construction of Khawarnaq to the million-dollar celebrations of Mohammad Reza Shah, I was unable to find any events relating to the fate of Cenmar in that era. Instead I tend to relate the position of Cenmar to the prosecutions and executions after the revolution of 1979. So, it might be suggested that in the early 1980s, there was extra force on Ayatollah Khomeini in dealing with the political prisoners and thus he was pressured to do something about them, which finally led to their death sentences.

The death sentences of those political prisoners were passed so easily and were simply the result of a series of questions regarding their personal religious beliefs and willingness to repent. So, in this case, prisoners showing remorse and repented, they faced a reduced sentence, while those who failed to do so received the death penalty. The prisoners were not aware that their replies would either save or cost them their lives.[[155]](#footnote-155) In a similar manner, Nu’man asks Cenmar a series of simple question such as whether he could or would build something better than Khawarnaq in the future. Cenmar was unaware his answer would cost him his life. Nu’man was afraid that Cenmar’s future constructions would undermine the position of his Khawarnaq and, simply by murdering him, he would no longer be a threat, and nor would he need to pay Cenmar. In 1988, it is possible that Khomeini and many of his officials thought that by diminishing the huge number of political prisoners, it would be beneficial to their state of power, so they decided to murder them all.

**Cenmar:** If I was to live again,

And if I knew that I shall die from falling from my own construction;

Still I’ll do it again!

And if with every brick I hear the sound of my breaking bones;

Still I shall build a Khawarnaq as tall as I can!

As high as the human soul![[156]](#footnote-156)

 Through the words of Cenmar, Beyzai captures the will and beliefs of thousands of prisoners who were determined to reach their goals and perfection even though it cost them their lives. It is estimated that tthousands of lives were destroyed in the mass executions and that they were mainly of those who refused to repent[[157]](#footnote-157). Cenmar, too, was stubborn and frank and refused to lie or give up on his dreams. In his final words, Cenmar notes that Nu’man had tricked him, kept him working by lies and deceit and the dream of the prize and the girl so that Nu’man could have his castle. In the early days of the revolution, the politicians in power insisted on the grounds for freedom and establishment of rightful government that would represent the ideas and aims of all the nation and, in this way, they kept the support of the people and different political factions. But, as soon as they had the power reinforced, they ignored their initial promises and suppressed all those who objected. Freedom of press in the very early days of the revolution is an example of that short-lived freedom which was soon put to an end by the orders of Khomeini.[[158]](#footnote-158) Through suppressed media he was able to secretly commence the order of executions probably to minimize the publicity of this event and to avoid later blame and condemnation by international human rights organizations[[159]](#footnote-159). The executions would further ruin the status and reputation of the Islamic republic in the face of United Nations and the rest of international community who would observe this act as sabotage of human rights and political freedom.

 **Nu’man:** Give me back my reputation

 That fell along with him from the Khawarnaq!

No! The wind is taking away my name in disgrace?

But don’t go any further; don’t ruin my reputation in the world![[160]](#footnote-160)

Here Nu’man hideous murder even shames himself and he wishes to conceal this matter in any possible way so that no one would learn of the fate of Cenmar. Likewise, the bodies of the executed prisoners were all buried secretly and anonymously in a cemetery in Tehran County.[[161]](#footnote-161) The government did not allow any press or media to cover the secret mission at all. Most of the prisoners belonged to the two political parties of Iran which themselves had taken part in the revolution of 1979 but then in the years after the revolution began to oppose the government[[162]](#footnote-162).

**Nu’man:** Don’t mention the name of Cenmar and forget about him.

Don’t talk of the buried corpse in the center of Khawarnaq![[163]](#footnote-163)

The efforts of the government, similar to those of Nu’man, to keep the killings hidden and away from media were never successful and, to this day, much is known about the executions, especially about the final interrogations.[[164]](#footnote-164) Beyzai like the rest of the nation had observed this mass killing where about 5000 or more political prisoners vanished but, due to the very restricted media of Iran, he wasn’t able to directly address this issue.

Nu’man also talks of his fear about how the news of the tragedy could be scattered in the Middle East region and how it could taint his fame and glory as a leader. Despite the government’s efforts in hiding the 1988 executions, huge criticism arose against the actions of the Islamic republic against humanity[[165]](#footnote-165) both within Iran and internationally as Human rights watch and Amnesty International both condemned the unlawful trials and executions of the detained activists.[[166]](#footnote-166) In the final dialogues of the play, Nu’man himself admits that he fears the news and story of the murder of Cenmar would reach everywhere and ruin his reputation as a just ruler.

 With me, the reputation of Nu’man fell from there.

 A great man, who demanded a Khawarnaq as great as his reputation.

 Khawarnaq that became known worldwide;

 Bad reputation!

 From the moment he was thrown from up high, my reputation was ruined. [[167]](#footnote-167)

**Position of Women**

In the ancient tale there is less talk of women and less consideration given to the female characters of the story. The women were merely depicted as prizes given to the glory and success of men but Beyzai has given the only female character of the play a voice to speak for herself. The two characters, Cenmar and the girl, only meet briefly. The girl quickly develops feelings for Cenmar but, in her own words, she is to remain as a prisoner of the Sahara until the very end. Beyzai may have been referring to the state of women in Iranian society after the revolution and under the government of the Islamic republic. The position of the girl both in the plot of the play and, also, as only a minor character, reinforces the fact that women were marginalized in the Islamic republic.

**The Girl** I wish I weren’t the Arab beauty!

I wish no one could see my beauty;

They sing songs about me;

Those who do not know how hurt I am inside,

I’m a prisoner in my tent and sand land!

I wish I could walk singing;

In the ever lasting Sahara and the roaring river!

I wish my tautened soul, had a face of its own;

To reveal how tortured it is.[[168]](#footnote-168)

Beyzai cannot ignore the role of women in his plays, and looked at how they were treated during the course of the various political, social and historical events of a particular era. In *The Murder of Cenmar*, there is only one female voice which belongs to the famous Arab beauty, the youngest daughter of Nu’man, whose hand in marriage has been promised to Cenmar and who later inspires him to reach his goal of perfection in life.

The female character has no name or identity except for the way she is seen by other as being beautiful and desired by men. She is also the extraordinary gift and prize promised to the architect upon completion of the Khawarnaq. The character does not appear in the play until later, when work on the construction has already advanced. The three unnamed characters play the role of her servants who are eunuchs with whose help she sneaks to the site of the construction to meet the man behind the Khawarnaq. The character of the girl must be analyzed to fully understand the position of women. Examining the historical context of the play, Mohammad Reza Shah - the son and successor of his father Reza Shah - has been introduced as a secular ruler with capitalist elements in the economy and an interest in the social growth of the country. The position of women during this era is rather ironic as, though from the time of modernization by Reza Shah, they had been given the chance of education, the conservative society of Iran still assigned many restrictions to women and their families even after marriage. Following Islamic laws and customs practiced prior to the reign of Reza Shah, women’s dress code consisted of a fully covered cloth not even allowing their faces to be shown in public. However, Reza Shah, in just one day, declared the law of “Unveiling”[[169]](#footnote-169) and thus unveiled the female community of Iran via a quick and sometimes forceful procedure whereby they were no longer allowed to be veiled in public. Women gained more influence during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah when they were allowed further to advance their knowledge and working positions within the country, especially by gaining the right to vote and to seek judiciary positions in government departments. Despite these advances, they were still deprived of many rights, including the custody of their children. The dress code of Iranian women is an ongoing issue concerning their rights and the restrictions imposed upon them by the state. Although women were ruled to be unveiled by Reza Shah, a few decades later they were ordered to be veiled by Ayatollah Khomeini. It is significant to recognize that a fraction of the intellectual community of Iran at the time of the revolution and a huge section of the political activists before, at the time, and after the revolution were women. So many victims of the mass executions of 1988 were women from either leftist groups or other political parties. The way the Islamic republic treated women is a debatable issue as, following some religious ideologies, women were not held fully responsible for their actions so, many of the female political prisoners at the time were given a second chance to plea and put under the supervision of men who would guide them. In *The Murder of Cenmar*, the character of the girl is under the authority of her father and, by his decision, she is traded to Cenmar for the accomplishment of the Khawarnaq. However, she eventually finds her own voice and, on meeting Cenmar, the two find that they have feelings for one another. The feelings, which spur Cenmar on in the quest to complete his construction, also leave the girl heartbroken by his murder.

**The Girl:**  In my dream, he was dreaming of me;

I wanted to conceal myself but there was no veil!

The others concealed me,

Here, Beyzai mentions the word “veil” in the first lines spoken by the girl. She wanted to veil herself, but she could not and, therefore, her eunuchs or servants veiled her. Beyzai may be pointing out that, although there were restrictions placed on women by their male guardians, they also suppressed themselves at times. The term “veil” suggests that Beyzai wants to depict the social and personal restrictions imposed on women during the 1980s Iran. The veil of the women turned into something very political which further imposed religious and traditional restrictions upon women while taking away some of their social rights. Banning women from holding positions of judgment in Iranian Islamic court due to sharia law, could be mentioned as an example of such treatment. The character of the girl in the play is socially and physically restricted quite similarly to Iranian women. However, she shows freedom of thought and, like Cenmar, develops feelings for the architect quite freely.

**Cenmar:** We talked in each other’s dream.

Her voice was a song she has never sung!

Beyzai noted another issue regarding the state of women in society which is to emphasize, just like the girl in the play, that women had a voice but were not always able to socially and personally express that. Through this encounter with Cenmar, she becomes a great inspiration for the architect. Her dream and the dream of her love seems to be what Cenmar had longed and waited for all his life -as if it is her dream that has brought him to this estranged land. In the beginning of the play, Cenmar is enthusiastic about the realization of his dream and the plan for building a Khawarnaq on the sand but, later, as he works on the construction with each brick he puts on the building, he constructs his own self. He begins to discover himself and the sophistication and maturity of his work towards accomplishment. Finally realizing it was not just the building that had him enchanted but rather what he had encountered in the eyes of the girl and with whom he wished to return home to Rome.

 **Cenmar** : Don’t let me go unless you send me towards her chamber![[170]](#footnote-170)

**Cenmar:** Ah Nu’man! I swear to god this has got nothing to do with the creation of the Khawarnaq;

 It is you, who is being re-created!

 All of us are being re-created!

 I’ve never known a great person,

 Who without accomplishment became great at all!

 Have the Khawarnaq’s legacy all to yourself, if that’s what’s bothering you![[171]](#footnote-171)

Although the girl is nothing in the beginning other than being part of a prize and something that is not of much interest to the architect, through the play she develops importance and she becomes the sole reason for Cenmar finishing the Khawarnaq. This shows that, as weak and marginalized as women might have been in Iran, they could still exert enormous influence over events. In response to this matter, Nu’man is enraged to the point of having his mind changed over the reward and his daughter.

Nu’man still desires to have his khawarnaq and the glory and honour that comes with it, yet he hates the idea of sharing this glory with Cenmar. He begins to despise Cenmar as, through his insecure delusional mind, he sees Cenmar as the winner: the one who shall be praised and loved for this khawarnaq and not him. Here, again, the authority of the ruling system is questioned, the artists who were practicing their works were receiving appreciation, which the government wanted for itself. The huge impact of politics on the artistic works during the decade after the revolution during Beyzai’s theatrical practices is demonstrated here. It was not just what the government had restricted and censored but it seems that government only funded and supported works of art that they believed would bring fame and praise upon themselves. Nu’man, only cared for the construction of khawarnaq for the benefits it would bring him. He never wanted the khawarnaq for them but for himself to be distinguished in the face of the Persian Empire. So Beyzai may be saying here that the government cares for nothing but its own good.

On the other hand, Cenmar at some point announces how the khawarnaq has changed his inner self and how he is able to find the greatest inspiration and motivation for his career as an architect and his own life in Rome. With this Beyzai asserts that, despite all the persecution directed towards the artists, they keep on working, as it is their only way of self-presentation and self-construction. In the same way, the political participants in the revolution, who had helped found this ideology and the movement, did not intend to leave the revolution they had fought for.

**Cenmar:** I told him yes, I can build better than this;

If I knew then that she would be my prize.

That famous beauty;

Through whose eyes, my inspiration lies,

I would have built a much greater palace for her love!

A palace, which would revive by each passing day!

A palace, in a hundred colors like peacock’s feather;

A Palace with seven domes and seven floors, just like heaven itself!

Other than the inspiration that the character of the girl brings for the artist towards his mission of self-construction, Beyzai might have pictured the role of women in society.

**Numan:** I’ve done such a wrong thing to have promised her in the first place [to Cenmar]!

And from now on knows the Arab beauty as his wife;

And he glorifies her as the prize of the efforts on this work!

Still I have doubts to let her embrace him at all;

Or gift her to the Persian King that is more beneficial![[172]](#footnote-172)

The Islamic republic of Iran, through its formation in the early years of the revolution, established many laws that targeted the women of the society. One of the most important ones was the law of Hijab (translated as veil), which obliged all grown up females to cover their hair and body in public. It could be argued that Beyzai intended to portray how women were not involved in formation of laws that targeted them and their personal life.

It is probable that the character of the girl is representative of the same tensions, despair, torments, and oppression that the women felt during that time in the Iranian society. Beyzai has suggested, through the unnamed female minor character, that women could feel traumatized under the cover of the regime that controls their lives without their involvement. In the case of the girl, she clearly feels emotions for Cenmar and is happy to wed him yet, still, her lack of independence and autonomy over her life and her choices severely torment her. The girl is known to all as a beauty and is desired by all but, despite her beautiful looks, she is enduring enormous agony as not having the power to control her life and make her own decisions instead of those made for her by her male guardians. Here, Beyzai is acknowledging patriarchy, which was practiced in the last century up to the time of the revolution and even after that in Iranian families whereby young women were not able to make their own life choices. This sort of trauma was further intensified under the Islamic republic that granted men more rights in dominating women and limited laws in support of women.

**Cenmar :** I told him there are no boundaries in idea and dream.

And that is the perfection of my dream.

Is it not the time to have my prize which I am being promised of?[[173]](#footnote-173)

**Performance History**

Bahram Beyzai has presented this story in the form of a tragic play as the central character, Cenmar, dies tragically upon finishing the construction of a castle. This story has been narrated in forms of Persian literature, so its ending was already known to an Iranian audience, thus Beyzai had no need to deliver the tale in the same way. Instead he has chosen to begin the play with the mourning ceremony of the deceased character, who, through the technique of “Shabih Khani”[[174]](#footnote-174), poetically narrates the story from the end. It should be noted that Shabih Khani was actually part of Ta’ziyeh performances for mourning which thoroughly introduced in the first chapter of the research. However, Ta’ziyeh ceremony changed drastically through centuries and at some point, Shabih Khani which was a variation and part of Ta’ziyeh became a distinct performing method. In fact, Shabih Khani could refer to any type of performance when a person could read out different stories and tales on stage and it does not need to specifically concern religious Shia figures. Therefore, comedies as well as tragedies could be performed through Shabih Khani. Women also traditionally played a major role in the Shabih Khani style performances, in fact, this method of performance was widely practiced in the Harem[[175]](#footnote-175) of the Qajar court where the king would solely attend these performances by women of his court. This play has been produced and performed in the Iranian House of Theatre and on other Iranian theatres using the Shabih Khani method, particularly the very recent adaptation by Shiva Javadpour in 2015, in diverse cities and the capital Tehran.

Bahram Beyzai’s plays were the subject of censorship and ban for the three decades after the revolution by the ministry of culture and guidance which closely examines all publications and performances within the country.

Despite the ban and restrictions on publishing and, later, staging of *The Murder of Cenmar* during last two decades, this play is currently staged in Iran particularly in the City Theatre of Tehran. The oldest performance was in 2002 and the latest in 2016. The book of the play itself spent years being considered by the ministry of culture before it was certified for publication. A simple example regarding the restrictions on the works of Beyzai would be his play of *Four Boxes* written in 1968 and banned in the same year by the Pahlavi regime. In the short state of freedom after revolution the play was once again published but then soon after banned in 1980. *Four Boxe*s is Beyzai’s most political play to date. It is far more explicitly political than *The Murder of Cenmar* and was not based on ancient tale. In fact, in this play, Beyzai used metaphors by different colors to create the characters in the play and they begin to worship a scarecrow. Once scarecrow gains enough power, he begins to cage all the sectors in boxes forcing the boxes to revolt and in time only the color black breaks free from the box and is sacrificed due to the fear of the other boxes[[176]](#footnote-176). This play of Beyzai’s was consequently banned more than any other play of his. \*\*\*\*

This work of drama [Four Boxes] shall be taken off the stage each and every time.[[177]](#footnote-177)

Perhaps this experience prompted Beyzai to conceal his ideas and criticism within his future works in hopes of having them presented to an audience far in the future. Indeed, it took a long time for many of his works to reach the stage within Iran. *Four Boxes* has never been staged in Iran at any time but only once in Malaysia and Norway.[[178]](#footnote-178) *Murder of Cenmar* had also a long wait to reach this current situation to be presented to audiences and to undergo analysis despite the efforts of the directors to conceal the harsh criticism.

In the productions of this play from late 90s to the year 2005, the ancient setting of the tale has been dominant and, due to the expenses of the stage decorations for the setting of the play, most of the actors have been appointed to follow the technique of “RouKhani”[[179]](#footnote-179) to enforce the acting potential through the dialogues by the actors and actresses. RouKhani is a traditional method of performance that goes back to the religious ceremonies of Ta’ziyeh where the actors sit behind a table or on the ground and read from dialogue and it has been used in *The Murder of Cenmar* probably due to the difficulties of setting the stage in a desert at the sight of a construction. The performance was like a rehearsal reading with less action on the stage and more of reading on stage. Shiva Javadpour, who claims to have brought in new theatrical techniques in reviving *The Murder of Cenmar*[[180]](#footnote-180), directed the most recent and notable production of this play. As mentioned before, this play has been performed in the past and thus received recognition from audiences mostly based on the idea of the creation of a new story within the old tale of Cenmar. Some reviews have expanded on the glorification of Persian history and the journey of mysticism the architect goes through in this play. Such accounts only praised Bahram Beyzai in the revival of the old Persian texts in a modern and new form of theatre which corresponds to the contemporary audience and helps to further establish the Persian national theatre and literature.

The director has tried to involve the audience with each and every brick Cenmar lays for building Nu’mans’ Khawarnaq, but it was a pity that such involvement wasn’t given further attention in efforts to announce the greatness and glory of the Persian architecture. They could have used music in the production in praise of the nationalistic feelings of the audience furthermore which was never heard during the performance. [[181]](#footnote-181)

As this quotation from the review clearly states, it seemed that some critics were focused on nationalism in this play and the old story of the death of an architect by the hands of a foreign ruler. Whereas it could be interpreted that the construction is not all about architecture but could stand for the symbol of progress and enlightenment. At the current time, the historical past as great as it may be, is not the issue but rather the current state of that glorified empire where artists are not tolerated by the regime and the primitive society.

This statement means that playwrights intentions should not be about glory of the ancient history of their country instead it would concern the state of artists and how they are being treated.

However, what impressed me the most is the significant shift in the point of view towards this play in the recent productions, particularly by the director Shiva Javadpour. Shiva Javadpour in an interview on her production, which has been staged in diverse theatres in Tehran, has noted quite similar ideas about the play to the ones discussed and analyzed in this chapter. Shiva Javadpour has also considered Cenmar not as the architect or ancient Persian figure but as the class of intellectuals of the society. Unlike the older reviews, which emphasized Persian architecture and history, this production offers the audience a chance to have a clearer understanding of the play that is, in my opinion, very political and critical of the society and government from 1980 to this day. The response of the director of the production and many of the reviewers is indicative of how much the analysis of the audience and reviewers had changed from a decade ago. It marks the start of a phase of critical analysis of theatre in Iran although I should note that some reviewers have still not been able to totally shift towards the actual ideas and themes within this play and they have emphasized the absence of epic music on stage in performances of this play[[182]](#footnote-182).

Shive Javadpour herself stated in her interview that *The Murder of Cenmar* is one of the most distinctive plays by Beyzai, and the language and literature of Beyzai’s play responds to world-wide audience. This play has something to offer around the current situation in Iran as it holds views based on the Arab invasion of ancient Persia and the affiliation of power of rulers against thought and intellect.”[[183]](#footnote-183)

Shiva Javadpour has mentioned the ideas from previous reviews, which debated the glorification of the Persian past, but she has also pointed out the most significant current theme that would be the clash between the government’s power and the intellectuals of the society. Considering that her production of *The Murder of Cenmar* has been created and then staged in Iran with the endorsement of the ministry of culture of Iran, she might not have been able to go through details and make connections to the specific icons of the Iranian regime or go through particular details of the restrictive society for the artists. Instead she focused more on the clash between the class of artists and the government in general. Although nowadays, directors have more freedom in presenting political plays on Iranian stages, they must confine themselves to the limits appointed by the ministry of guidance where harsh criticism towards the government or the history of the Islamic republic would not be tolerated. Therefore, Javadpour is careful when addressing such issues and she might have chosen not to directly point towards the mass executions held in the 1980s. The executions of 1988 remain at the forefront in Iran since recently Ahmad Montazeri, son of grand Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri faced charges and a 21-month jail sentence after publishing a tape attributed to his father denouncing the executions of 1988[[184]](#footnote-184).

 On the staging and performing of the play, Shiva Javadpour stated: “Our performing method is close to physical theatre and is an actor-centered performance which focuses on the gestures and movements of the actor. In this performance, with the help of architecture, gestures, and movements of the actors, we tried to deliver to the audience, what is underneath the text of the play by Bahram Beyzai.” As Javadpour states, it is obvious to her and her audience that there is more to this play than just what is written in the text. I should note that during the translation and study of *The Murder of Cenmar*, it was hard to make connection between sentences, words and phrases of the play and the specific events behind the text or as Javadpour asserts the subtext. I did not find a single word among those of Cenmar or the nameless characters or Nu’man or his daughter that would, in Persian literature, signify anything related to women’s rights, the political rise and downfalls or the massive executions of 1988. Nor did I find any official statement expressing the reasons behind banning the play. One assumption would be that the government did not approve of Beyzai’s works since they were political and in numerous cases had a central female character and this was not something in favour of the Islamic republic doctrines.

This play is so political that there would be no need to have any historical cultural sign or symbol on the stage. I agree with Javadpour when she says that, when dealing with this play, there is no need to focus on mythology etc. The play is, indeed, political and the effects of the stage and costumes must assist the audience to point out the revolutionary movement of the country. So, the costumes should not be ancient Persian clothing but instead representative of the movement. Therefore, Javadpour’s choice of costumes for the actors and the stage decoration did not serve to revive an ancient setting on stage but instead symbolized elements of politics, social issues, etc. The production also presented elements of musical theatre as the musicians tried to turn the voice of the actors into music where the musician has recorded the voice of the actors beforehand. The traditional drum instrument was used in the performance to represent elements of fear, anger, and sorrow during the play.[[185]](#footnote-185) The play had also won the award of music in the Fajr Festival of Iran.

As noted, more thorough reviews of Javadpour’s production have found that the play focuses on a primitive society where the intellectuals are being victimized by the governors and who, despite the high and mighty constructions, are still feeble minded and dogmatic. According to those reviewers, such society has a long way to go to reach civility and is no place for art, knowledge and love. This society victimizes Cenmar who had stuck to his hope for changing it.[[186]](#footnote-186) In the play his own mother alerts Cenmar by wondering why he has not made the Khawarnaq in Rome instead of the primitive land.

My mother asked when you knew how to build a Khawarnaq why didn’t you built it for the Romans?

Why didn’t you bestow your art to those who admire it?[[187]](#footnote-187)

I have concluded that Beyzai has taken the side of the intellectuals and the political activist despite their flaws and failures and blamed the old ruling systems for their tragic fates. The reviews in 2016 made the same point and concluded that Beyzai had taken the side of the individuals and humanity rather than the politicians and their policies[[188]](#footnote-188). Generally, the critics who went to watch the performances of *The Murder of Cenmar* in Tehran, Yazd, Isfahan, Kashan, Shiraz, and Kerman had noted in their reviews that Cenmar is representative of the class of Artists who are victimized by a society and government that is both primitive and violent. According to the critics, the work and art of Cenmar is fit and precious for the society and it shall promote the state of that society both artistically and intellectually[[189]](#footnote-189). So, it could be concluded that the idea of civilization was right and so were the opinions of the intellectuals who promoted it, but it was the negligence of the society in not being able to understand and adjust themselves with the new reforms and the weakness of the government in handling this transition which ended up with the murder of the advocates of democracy[[190]](#footnote-190).

In the production by Javadpour, the character of Cenmar in some scenes is portrayed as half naked, making the point about Cenmar’s indifference to materialism, and the other characters have used Arabic costumes. [[191]](#footnote-191) The play has been staged not only in Tehran but also in different cities and towns in Iran which suggests the recent connection of the different classes of regions of Iran towards the play. The production has been nominated in the Fajr International Theatre Festival where it received positive reviews that have made similar points to those of the analysis within this chapter.

Beyzai’s Cenmar is involved and caught between two matters: dictatorship and the crowds of people! He is a hero who is being crushed under the force of these two. This is how it has been in Middle Eastern regions where intellectuals are being victimized by the oppressing rulers and uneducated primitive crowds of people and worst of all even their legacy and names do not remain.[[192]](#footnote-192)

 The director had used effects which had helped the audience and reviewers to better recognize the critical points regarding political issues left in the play by Bahram Beyzai and this could range from choice of costumes to use of colors on the scene. For instance, the actors did not have ancient Persian costumes, instead they were dressed in a way that could fit into any era. Things that could not be directly told on stage could be pictured. Since considering the previous reviews and productions of *The Murder of Cenmar*, there seems to be a problem for the audience to understand the political play. This could be connected to these changes in the performing of the play which enables audiences to better connect with the themes of the play.

The director, Shiva Javadpour, stated “I have been very sensitive in choosing a play which I wanted to be in accordance with current standards and paragons of the time being. I have chosen this play as I interpreted it to be the voice of our society at the moment and a demonstration of what society is suffering from. The text of this play depicts how intellectual movements contradict with the doctrines of the ruling system. This play is all about the intellectuals who are always victimized and Cenmar is a symbol and metaphor for the intellectual class of the society”[[193]](#footnote-193).

Many elements of the play *Macbeth* have been spotted in the production and it is likely that Shiva Javadpour’s familiarity with British drama could have helped to influence this[[194]](#footnote-194) Both plays are very political and signify the sufferings that is associated with the sabotage of power for personal gain and benefit. They also signify the treacherous endings which result from misdeed and victimize of individuals. It is evident that her education and experiences with British theatre influenced a modern production that could present a satirical critical play to the people rather than just the re-delivering an ancient tale. Shiva Javadpour stated[[195]](#footnote-195) that she was to create this theatrical production by focusing on the very current themes of the society in current Iran. Such method could further facilitate the analysis of Iranian Theatre in order to better understand and review works of pioneering playwrights such as Beyzai who created plays in the midst of political turmoil. Shiva Javadpour focused on the intellectual class of the society, their efforts to change the primitive society, which ultimately victimizes them. Javadpour emphasized physical acting on stage for this play as she asserted that it would bring the production closer to current modern theatre.[[196]](#footnote-196) This is contradictory to traditional drama practice in Iran. The experience of Shiva Javadpour in focusing on current themes in interpreting the play and also modern means of performance is outstanding evidence to support the fact that focus on old techniques of traditional theatre and cliché celebration of Persian literature and history do not create a production which would be able to connect with Iranian and international audiences.

**Conclusion**

In my final words on this chapter, I need to declare that, like Cenmar, I went through a mystic journey myself to discover a whole new truth about the work of Bahram Bezyai. Translating this play helped me to better realize how Beyzai actually read and studied the Old Persian texts from where he could revive many Persian tales from mythology. But it was the year that the play was written in 1980, which had truly inspired the intellectual playwright to tell the stories about the causalities and political social catastrophes that the communities of Iran went through during that time. I knew about the old tale of Cenmar and the political events of Iran during the eighties yet, through analysis of the text, I was able to highlight how directly those events were linked and addressed within the play. The theatrical practices of the play have yet again proven that focus on current themes would create more room for audiences to fully comprehend this play and themes developed by the playwright.

Chapter III: *The Wailing*

**Summary of the Play**

*The Wailing*, like many of Bahram Beyzai’s plays, is a story within another story. It narrates the story of the life of a young girl named Zeynab during the rise of a revolution in early 1900s Persia. Poverty and greed have driven her family to sell her off into prostitution. She lived in the brothel for a few years before her murder during a confrontation with Cossack soldiers. Zeynab had experienced frustration as well as physical and emotional torture by working in the brothel. In the same house she had managed to grow out of her naïve rural past and learn about new efforts and voices for change in favor of the vulnerable sectors of the Society. This enlightenment later on persuades her to become a revolutionary while confined indoors. She learns much about the reality of her past including the betrayal of her former lover and falls in love with one the customers of the brothel. Being influenced by the ideas of freedom, justice, and constitutionalism, she finds the courage to turn down the courtship of the commander of Cossack army and despite all the dangers takes a pistol and joins the guerilla fights against the army. There, during the fighting and shootings, she meets a tragic death but not before shooting Obbeydallah, her former lover, to death whom appears to be the most sinister in the play. Her story in one way or the other portrays two different characters: one, the Holy Zeynab, the granddaughter of Prophet Mohammad and the other, a sector of Iranian women and their involvement in the revolution of 1979.

The issue of time is another important factor in the play as *The Wailing* is set at the time of a revolution that took place in the early twentieth century and founded the first Iranian parliament. The Iranian Constitutional Revolution brought cataclysmic changes to the old order of Persia towards modernity, creating boundless opportunities for the political future of the country. The course of this revolution involved almost all Iranian society and the lives of people from all sectors of society were, at this point, changed through the constitutional revolution. Much like the central character of the play, the timeline of *The Wailing* considers specific points of time in the political history of Iran, whether it would be the dominancy of Shia faith in an all Sunni Muslim Middle East or the rise of the nation against the government in favor of fundamental reforms within the country.

The story in the play of *The Wailing* begins in the capital of Persia, Tehran, under the rule of the Qajar dynasty, during the time of the constitutional revolution. At the point when the tensions are high in society, fighting breaks out throughout the country bringing insecurity and chaos to the whole society, affecting the lives of all citizens of Persia. The main character of the play, Zeynab, who is a young and beautiful rural girl, appears with her father and fiancée, who are all victims of the chaos and poverty which has spread through the country. Despite her initial misunderstanding about her whereabouts and the truth about her fate in a brothel, Zeynab comes to understand that her family has sold her into prostitution and that she has no choice but to continue to live there. In this place there are many women who share a similar fate to Zeynab and the house is constantly visited by different men who make the residents aware of what is happening outdoors. The male characters come from different social classes and occupations and hold different points of view about the situation in Iran and the revolution. Through their conversations, it is evident that tensions are high, and the Persian King sought help from foreign military forces, such as the Cossack Army, to oppress the revolutionaries. At different times, the men intend to find sanctuary in the brothel as all the cafés and gathering areas are attacked by these forces or closed for the strike that is happening in Tehran’s Bazaar. The visiting men, despite their social status (some of them are even clergymen), often entertain themselves in the brothel while being able to discuss the political chaos and propaganda of the time. In this house, by the companionship of these men, women, including Zeynab, learn about constitutionalism and the revolution. Zeynab is also introduced to new ideas, the position of each citizen, their rights and their will and fight for freedom. These new ideas give the women the courage to identify with themselves, recognize themselves as lawful citizen with rights and more inclined to take part in the revolution. In spite of their newly found spirit of freedom and democracy, the house is raided in the mid stages of the play by the Cossack officers and soldiers, leaving the women vulnerable and defenseless against their attack.

Zeynab, who is the most favoured girl in the house among the customers, becomes the mistress of the leader of the Cossack army and learns that her fiancé, who sold her to the Madam of the house, is fighting for the Cossack army, and has shot dead many of the revolutionaries. In the light of the new ideas and her self-identification, Zeynab finds the power to take part in the revolution, as well as taking control over her own life. She becomes romantically involved with one of the customers, the College Student, who is exhausted by the fighting and aims to flee the country in fear of the killings and repression. His escape to exile would also terminate the romance between him and Zeynab which becomes another motive for her to join the fights.

**“College Student** Tomorrow I am headed to the Ottoman land[[197]](#footnote-197). I have got myself a ticket and a passport. Why do you look puzzled? I have come for the very last time. Farewell Zeynab. I shall carry your memory all around the world with me. The world shall be filled with memories of you and all the places where I shall call your name.”[[198]](#footnote-198)

At the beginning of the play, the fearful and feverish Zeynab learns of her whereabouts and out of desperation gives in to the demands of the Madam and becomes a sex slave in the brothel. However, through the transition that she undergoes, she finds the strength and will to fight and resist. Thus, she donates her necklace, gifted to her by the leader of the Cossack army, which she was sworn to wear at all times, for the benefit of the revolution. Zeynab even finds the courage to take the only pistol in the house, leave, and join the fighting; and with that pistol she shoots her ex-fiancée dead while he is fighting against the revolutionaries. Zeynab dies in the fighting herself and the women of the house mourn for her death. Then they narrate her story from her arrival with her family, her resistance against becoming one of them and how the Madam of the house forced her to embrace the first customer while she was feverish and still in shock. Through the memories of the women and the political debates and conversations of the customers, it is revealed that Zeynab had been a strong and likeable woman who had the courage and will to stand on her own and resist the oppressors when the Cossack soldiers invaded the brothel. Thus, Zeynab is depicted as a veteran who took part in the revolution and sacrificed her life in an attempt to fight the oppressors.

Roshangaran press first published Bahram Beyzai’s play of Nodbeh or *The Wailing* in 1992 in Iran. Just like most of Beyzai’s political plays, *The Wailing* is set at the peak of an important historical point: The Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905-1907)[[199]](#footnote-199). According to the period and setting, this play mainly deals with the events following the constitutional revolution of Iran (1905-1907), which took place late in the reign of the Qajar dynasty (1785-1925). The play can be seen as depicting the turmoil in Iran during that period and the tensions and suffering of the Iranians in the midst of the Iranian constitutional revolution until the 1908 bombardment of the parliament of Iran, which was an artillery attack of the Persian forces, by the order of Qajar Shah, with military aid from the Russian army. Beyzai, in *The Wailing*, has highlighted the role of women in the formation of a movement and their participation in the fighting during the revolution. By naming the constitutional revolution and setting the play early in the twentieth century, Beyzai was able to interpret the state of women at the time of the revolution of 1979 and their involvement in fighting for change. Through such means, Beyzai was able to allude to a few incidents surrounding the revolution of 1979 that targeted and victimized women, including the historical invasion of a brothel neighborhood within Tehran. The play itself is delivered through a Ta’ziyeh ceremony (ritual mourning for the deceased) over the death of the protagonist of *The Wailing*. This play has connections with the religious history of the Shia Islam and historical tragic events that promoted the ritual of condolence theatre in Iran for centuries afterwards. Likewise, many features of *The Wailing* are quite different from the rest of his modern work.

Initially one would assume that this play, which is delivered in the form of Ta’ziyeh,[[200]](#footnote-200) is solely focusing on the history of performance in Iran. However, a closer look at the play alongside critical analysis would clarify many more issues such as the history of formation of Shia Islam in Iran, and also the rise of a revolution in 1979. Throughout my analysis I make a connection between the religious and political elements of the play and how they come together in the character of Zeynab.

The timeline of *The Wailing* considers specific points of time in the political history of Iran from the Middle Ages to 1900s. The play narrates the story of a girl in the early twentieth century at a time when the country was in political turmoil. The political tensions were formed over disputes among Iranian society and the court of Qajar King in 1905. The turnout of the fighting and protests finally led to the establishment of the Iranian parliament and the withdrawal of absolute monarchy, which had previously been the ruling system in Persia for centuries. Although the play narrates the Constitutional Revolution of Iran (1905-1907), it was written in 1978-79, around the time of another revolution. To further analyse *The Wailing*, it is necessary to introduce the historical timing and events regarding both the Revolutions. However, the other influential factor of the play is the religion of Shia Islam, which has its own historical context that also needs to be analyzed. Furthermore, all these timelines and political religious elements have to be interpreted through their impact on the lives of Iranian women who are represented in this play by the character of Zeynab. Zeynab lives at the time of constitutionalism and, despite not being involved in the movement, the revolution drags her in to the fighting and chaos. Since censorship and restrictions on media and theatre had been practiced by both monarchy and the Islamic republic at the time *The Wailing* was written, Bahram Beyzai had to use the setting of another revolution in order to criticize and analyze the politics of Iran without the fear of censorship and prosecution. Censorship in Iran was highly regulated, which was almost a tradition in the history of media and literature of Iran. For instance, the Intelligence Service during the last decade of Pahlavi reign, cared hugely about words since language in literature regarding the communist party was censored, including the name that was derived from the name of one its activists Khosrow Golsorkhi who was executed by the regime on some terrorism charges[[201]](#footnote-201). This is an example to show the extremity of censorship that was imposed in Iran at the time when the use of a simple word “Golsorkh” aka red rose in Persian was banned since it was the family name of a leftist martyr. In another example, leftist Iranian poet Ahmad Shamloo had written a famous poem in praise of a leftist activist but then the verses named a female character, however, it was obvious that the poet was referring to the Martyr who had been a cellmate of the poet before and at time of his death[[202]](#footnote-202). Since the cellmate who Shamloo had known during his confinement was later murdered while under torture, it is obvious that the poem referred to him. Shamloo had intentionally chosen a female name to hide this matter, however, a slight consideration would reveal who Shamloo had meant to address in the poem. So, I assert that, back at the time of the revolution, the intelligence system paid more attention to the names, events, and historical timings rather than the content which links the play to the politics of 1979 and afterwards. Maybe this was due to the lack of intelligence, knowledge, or literacy of those in charge of censoring. After all, SAVAK could not hire literary critics to check the texts instead their employees would have been regular clerks with modest educations following some protocol which was prepared by a person of higher rank in the organization. Therefore, the emphasis was mainly on specific words, names instead of critical contents of the texts. However, it suggests why Bahram Beyzai could easily escape censorship or any prosecution as he had pictured the play on a story from 1908 but developed it based on the 1979 revolution.

Such a technique has been practiced by Beyzai many times in his works including The *Murder of Cenmar*, but what has made this play distinct from his other political plays is that a different time and setting is represented not only in the plot of the play but also in the main character who represents women at three different points of history: the middle ages, constitutionalism, and the revolution of 1979. Zeynab is introduced as a prostitute during constitutionalism but her character represents the faith of women who are drawn into political tensions amid a revolution, which stands for Iranian women in 1979, and how the revolution changed their lives. The character of Zeynab also symbolizes a prominent Middle Ages religious figure of Shia Islam which has been the dominant religion and identity of Iran for centuries. The tragedy took place in 680AD when Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad and his family, were killed in the battle of Karbala. In the play, *The Wailing*, there are numerous connections between the historical tragedy of Ashura[[203]](#footnote-203) and the story of Zeynab in the brothel. Her involvement in the constitutional revolution is a symbol of the fighting of the descendants of prophet Mohammad and their tragic deaths.

Therefore, I conclude that it is essential to know about the two revolutions that changed the destiny of contemporary Iran in a single century and how and through what means women were involved in these transitions of power and social metamorphoses. I have referred in detail to the two revolutions of Iran in the previous century in the introduction chapter therefore I would briefly address them in this chapter.

 It could be said that *The Wailing* goes even further back into the history of the rise of Shiism. The main character of *The Wailing* bears great resemblance to the Sister of Emam Hussein[[204]](#footnote-204) who was part of the tragedy of Karbala and is known in history for her role in condemning the killings of her family. They have identical names, yet Beyzai’s Zeynab can be seen to represent the women of Iran through two revolutions.

**Political and Historical Contexts of the Two Revolutions**

The first timeline in the play is the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. This political movement rose from a local protest but ended up replacing the old order of government. The presence of women throughout the fights and revolts is a distinctive feature of this movement. During the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, when the transition of power from monarchy to constitutionalized institutions took place, a movement was shaped in Tehran and other provinces of Iran and involved different sectors of the society, including women.[[205]](#footnote-205) Iranian women at that time were confined indoors, mostly illiterate, and without any social rights, yet they joined the fighting, carrying arms. This is where the characters of *The Wailing* are drawn from: those involved in the resistance against the Qajar king and the foreign forces appointed by the court against the parliament and the revolutionaries. The resistance of the people ultimately led to the victory of the revolution and the Iranian parliament continues to exist to this day. The revolution also weakened the Qajar Dynasty (1785-1925) and finally a coup of an army commander against the last Qajar King, brought an end to their dynasty. Reza Khan was the commander in charge of the coup and he became the next Shah of Iran and the founder of Pahlavi dynasty.

The Pahlavi monarchy was a modern secular government which treated Iranian women in a different way compared to how women were treated for centuries during the Qajar era. Although slavery was not officially practiced during their reign, yet women were much under the control of patriarchy. As seen in the play, a father or husband could force a girl into marriage or prostitution in exchange for money or other interests. One of the ideals of constitutionalism was to recognize the individual rights of each citizen of the country so that they would not be victims of slavery and abuse by local rulers or alternatively the head of their families. After the victory of constitutionalism, the parliament debated the right of education for women for the very first time. Women’s education was finally officially recognized and practiced during the Pahlavi reign. Reza Shah’s interest in women’s participation in industry and education gave them the opportunities to be educated, have employment, find financial independence and further participate in the society.[[206]](#footnote-206) The Pahlavi dynasty continued to pass laws in favor of women’s rights, such as the right to vote, although it was highly criticized by the prominent clergy of Iran and this later became a critical issue of dispute between Shah and his conservative opponents. Despite all the changes in favor of the social situation of women and their advances towards professionalism and education, they were unable to find their place in society and to raise their own voice. Many were confined to their family and patriarchy, which limited their control over their lives and destinies. [[207]](#footnote-207)

The second timeline relevant to the play is the Revolution of 1979, when Mohammad Reza Shah’s incumbent reign was overthrown by massive opposition and strikes throughout the country and also by the support of military forces, who backed the leader of the opposition, Ayatollah Khomeini. The second timeline is close to the time that play was written by Beyzai, which is quite significant, since I am arguing that Beyzai intends to focus on and interpret the issues of this period. To escape prosecution and censorship by the new regime, Beyzai set the play at the time of the previous revolution, in 1905. Through such means he was able to convey his point of view; but what matters most is that Beyzai has chosen to focus on the role of women in the transition of power and formation of a revolution.

Another crucial issue which requires further discussion and analysis, is the role of religion within this play. *The Wailing* is, indeed, a political play like many of Beyzai’s works, but it is also a play which deals with the issue of religion more than any of his other works. *The Wailing* not only looks at the Islamic faith of a Middle Eastern nation, but it specifically addresses the Shia Islam which is the dominant religion practiced in Iran in contrast to the rest of the Middle East which generally practices Sunni Islam. In the introductory chapter I developed the ideas of the formation of Islam theory and practice in Iran but, more specifically, on how the Iranians turned Shia instead of Sunni.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, Beyzai had always focused on and glorified the identical features of Iranian literature and theatre in his works including Ta’ziyeh, the ritual mourning ceremony. As *The Wailing* is the one of Beyzai’s works to have extensively dealt with religious factors, he chose to open the play with a mourning ceremony. Unlike the actual Ta’ziyeh where the actors represent the story of fighting and later the murder of Emam Hussein and his family and apostles, Beyzai’s actors and actresses gather on stage to picture the late life and murder of the central character Zeynab. Zeynab’s name, which is a very common name among Iranians, is also the name of Emam Hussein’s sister who had survived the tragedy of Karbala. The antagonist in *The Wailing* is Obbeydallah whose name is derived from a historical figure who oversaw the army which was responsible for the tragic invasion of the camps of Emam Husssein. The elements pertaining to the history of Shia Emams and the tragedy of Ashura[[208]](#footnote-208) marks a third timeline in this play which is set in the Middle Ages and narrates the tragic killings back in 680 CE. The third timeline does not have political influences on the two timelines associated with other revolutions. However, the second timeline regarding the 1979 revolution of Iran is massively associated with religious features and, indeed, the tragedy of Karbala has had great impact on it. During the rise of demonstrations and protests, there were huge crackdowns by the government attempting to ease tensions and control the opposition led by Khomeini. During the month of Muharram, Khomeini and protest organizers planned a number of protests to culminate with the regular religious demonstrations of people during the month of Muharram for mourning the death of Shia Emams. The protests became massive becoming millions in the streets of Tehran and other cities and in the same month of Muharram, Shah stepped down and Khomeini returned to Iran from exile.

**Role of Religion and a Third Timeline**

The religious tone of *The Wailing* is related to ancient Shia history and the death of the third leader of Shia Islam Hussein. He was the grandson of prophet Mohammad whose murder on the 10th day of Muharram of Islamic calendar is glorified as a remembrance of the deceased figures of Shia Islam in 680 CE. These events belong to the Middle Ages, during the reign of Arab dynasties whose followers today are Sunni Muslims. Zeynab was the sister of Hussein who was among those who survived the massacre in the holy land of Karbala. Later, she began her own fight against the caliphate and she is glorified, especially in Shia history, as a symbol of resistance and bravery.

O Yazid! Do you think that we have become humble and despicable owing to the martyrdom of our people and our own captivity? Do you think that by killing the godly persons you have become great and respectable and the Almighty looks at you with special grace and kindness? You have, however, forgotten what Allah says: The disbelievers must not think that our respite is for their good We only give them time to let them increase their sins. For them there will be a humiliating torment.

You (Yazid) may employ your deceit and cunning efforts, but I swear by Allah that the shame and disgrace which you have earned by the treatment meted out to us cannot be eradicated.[[209]](#footnote-209)

Her character inspires Bahram Beyzai’s Zeynab in *The Wailing* since she shows great courage and bravery. In other terms Zeynab in The Wailing has a very different life, coming from a low-class family drenched in poverty and illiteracy with little or no social rights. Holy Zeynab was considered as an aristocrat as she was the granddaughter of the leader of Islam, yet Beyzai’s Zeynab basically is nobody but a victim of poverty and social injustice. However, despite her humble past and her notorious occupation, Zeynab becomes engaged in a somewhat similar battle to that of the battle of Karbala when she is faced with the shootings on the streets of Tehran among the revolutionaries and foreign forces. As mentioned earlier, by the rise of Safavid and their advocacy for Shia Islam in 963, the mourning ritual for the descendants of the prophet became a tradition in Persia, and the Theatre of Condolence became a propaganda tool for the Shia faith of the Safavid rulers of Iran. Since this type of theatre has influenced Bahram Beyzai, he has used many elements of it in *The Wailing*. However, the actual setting of the play is at a distant time when a major transition of rule in Iran established a whole new structure in the traditional order of the Qajar Monarchy (1785-1925). On the other hand, the era when the play was written coincided with another political transition, which was widely influenced by Shia Islam as the head of the opposition against the monarchy and reign of Mohammad Reza Shah was a devoted Shia clergy, Ayatollah Khomeini.

As mentioned earlier, the play deals with two distinct timelines regarding two revolutions of contemporary Iran. Therefore, the playwright had already two phases to discuss the political issues he wished to address in his play so, why should he then introduce another timeline from the ancient history of Iran around the ideology of Shia Islam? I should note that the Revolution of 1979, which could be the primary timeline and concern of the playwright in *The Wailing*, was a religious movement. Although it was noted in the introductory chapter that several opposition groups of diverse ideologies unified to fight against the Pahlavi regime it should still be regarded that there were numerous religious factors, influencing the formation and outcome of the opposition which led to the final victory of the revolution and establishment of the Islamic republic. It should be obvious that a critic of society like Beyzai had to witness and evaluate a massive movement, which is strongly influenced by religion. Throughout the mass protests, a clergyman became the head of the opposition who was guiding the demonstrations and opposition parties from outside of the country. At many points, Ayatollah Khomeini had addressed the crowds of people to engage in fighting while comparing their fight against the regime of Shah to the fighting of Emam Hussein against the caliphate. [[210]](#footnote-210) Therefore, he had been able to influence the religious feelings of the nation into rage and hate against Shah’s secular regime. Comparing the nation’s fight against the regime to the battle of Karbala injected further strength into the opposition groups making the protesters believe that they were following the footsteps of their holy Emam. For centuries Iranians had glorified the defeat and death of Shia leaders believing their death to be the symbol of resistance and righteousness. And, in 1979, they came to believe that their revolt against the monarchy was like the actions of their idols, and that even defeat, or death, would bring them no harm but glory and redemption. At so many points, the leader of the opposition, Ayattollah Khomeini, had pointed towards the battle of Karbala to provoke Iranian crowds to take to the streets to protest at what they believed to be the head of oppression[[211]](#footnote-211). Khomeini’s manifesto and statement, which was released in the holy month of Muharram in 1978, promoted opposition to a great extent[[212]](#footnote-212).

 I will evaluate the religious influences of the revolution of 1979 further through the aftermath of the capitalist secular government of Iran which was replaced by an ideological Islamic state. The importance of the presence of religion is that it makes the movement and revolution of Iran distinct from many other leftist movements against capitalism and imperialism throughout the world at that time. In the analysis of this chapter, I shall present the Shia ideologies and elements mentioned in this play and how they were connected to the way political leaders would persuade people to engage in demonstrations.

**Background of the Play: Position of Women in Iranian Society amid the Two Revolutions**

Some of the earliest participation by Iranian women in politics can be observed during the fights for constitutionalism. Most of these activities were marginalized, and there was not much evidence to show mass participation by women. However, many female figures played an important role in resistance against the Cossack commanders and forces backed by the Qajar Shah and the Russian forces who, subsequently, attacked the positions of the revolutionaries in different provinces of Iran. Bibi Asaad Bakhtiari[[213]](#footnote-213) was one of the proponents of constitutionalism who took part in guerrilla warfare on the streets of Tehran and supported the parliament against the governmental forces. Away from the military fights and the armed forces, many of the female participants in the revolution were intellectuals who also supported women’s rights, such as Seddige Dolatabadi.[[214]](#footnote-214) Many Iranian intellectuals of the time proposed the idea of women’s rights, such as the right to vote, the right to be educated, and the right to abolish the Hijab, or the female Islamic veil.[[215]](#footnote-215) However, the majority of people and the parliament did not support these proposals and it was not until the rise of Reza Shah and the formation of a modern secular government, which for the first time officially supported education of women and also through secular means such as banning Hijab, women were allowed more free presence in the society[[216]](#footnote-216). In 1936, education became accessible to women of the nation and the Hijab was banned in Iran. The first constitutional laws were established in Iran in 1906 which greatly eroded women’s rights in marriage, divorce, the custody of children, and also the right to vote or to be appointed to judicial positions.[[217]](#footnote-217)

**Analysis of the Play**

**Characters**

There are more than thirty-five characters in this play*,* which is unusual when compared to most of Beyzai’s plays, where fewer number of characters are involved. I shall dedicate part of my analysis of the play to the characters and consider why Beyzai has employed so many, given that a large number do not play a significant role in the course of events. There are nine female characters, of whom Zeynab and Golbaji, the head of the brothel, are the only essential ones. Although the characters of Munis, Manzar, Mastoureh, Fitna, Hagar, and Masoumeh play a part in telling the story of Zeynab and through their conversations the truth is revealed about Zeynab’s fate, nevertheless, all of this could have been easily delivered through one or two characters, such as the main characters of Golbaji and Zeynab. So, in my opinion, there was no need for this many female characters, unless the playwright wanted to present a full picture of a brothel, as if *The Wailing* was a novel rather than a play to be staged. This play has many features including three timelines of history of Iran and it has placed women as the central sector of the society, therefore, the numerous number of female and male characters might have been presented in the play to show the participation of the whole nation and how distinct they are from one to the other. For instance, the names of the women of the house each has a significant meaning suggesting Beyzai means to present women with different personalities; yet he glorifies the character of Zeynab above all of them as the symbol of righteousness and bravery. For instance, Manzar in Persian is equivalent to “point of view,” Fitna is “conspiracy”, and Munis is a “companion and friend”[[218]](#footnote-218). Zeynab and Hagar are the only character who bear well-known names of religious figures while other women’s names are just examples of popular names among Persians.

Even if the play was not intended to be performed at the time he wrote it, there still might have been prosecution and punishment for the playwright if the hardliners felt that Beyzai was addressing the Islamic republic in his criticism. Beyzai may have hoped that the ply could be staged later, perhaps at the point when the tensions had eased and when theatrical practices were more tolerated. However, for the real staging of *The Wailing*, it is more convenient for the director to seriously cut the number of characters as apparently having this number of people on stage would be difficult to manage. Since all the female characters have distinct names then they cannot be replaced easily on the stage and at the same time having such a huge number of actors and actresses on stage would not be possible during the staging of the play. To figure out why Beyzai had included so many characters in the play, I intend to focus on their titles, which hint at what the playwright intended to address in this play. Zeynab and Hagar are the names of important religious female figures, as Zeynab is the name of the sister of third Emam of Shia Muslims and Hagar is a biblical figure. Golbaji and Mastoureh are old Persian names for a woman, whereas Fitna, Manzar, Munis and Masoumeh are names that are derived from Arabic. The names of Masoumeh and Mastoureh suggest “virtue” and “a veiled lady” which are ironic, since they live in the brothel as prostitutes. The title of Fitna, which means temptation and sedition, does suit the character in the play, as, despite being a minor character, she plays a significant part in raising tensions among the residents of the house and intermingling with the outsiders, including the customers and the Cossack soldiers. It may be that, Beyzai chose the names of the characters in a very astute way. Despite the fact that there are numerous characters, Beyzai had intended to focus on each of them by giving them names which are linked to their personalities, background and their roles in the play. The female names, unlike the male titles, do not represent their background, instead the meaning of the name emphasizes on the type of personality they had and how this quality has played a role in their destiny. The Persian and Arabic names refer to the national and religious background of Iran. Each of these female titles represents a role that is appointed to women in a male dominant society. For instance, Munis means a companion, Masoumeh means virtuous, Gohar means precious and Fitna means the evil. So, based on the titles given to women in the play, it could be interpreted how Iranian society defined the role of women as they could be either a beloved one or the devil. As mentioned earlier, the female titles do not say much about their social classes, which is contradictory to the fact that most of the titles of the male characters in the play only represent the occupation of the character and his social rank such as College student, Merchant, etc. In this case it could be argued that Beyzai had mentioned a marginal state for the women in the society where they were not involved in education, industries, trade, or governmental positions. Therefore, regarding this point, he had pointed to the social rights women gained in Iran after the constitutionalism and the fact that efforts of those like Zeynab and the price they paid had benefited other women of the society. As previously described, following the constitutionalism and rise of Reza Shah, women found many rights and the chance of participation in the society therefore they would be no longer restricted to the traditional roles of housewives and sex slaves.

Golbaji has a Persian name, meaning Lady of Flowers and the name does not represent much expect for the fact that she is the head of the house and in charge of the women. In Persian literature, a flower is used as an allegory for a woman thus suggesting Golbaji is the madam of all the girls in the brothel. In Iranian Literature females had been numerously compared to a flower due to their delicate nature therefore it could be concluded that her name states her role as the lady of the house and the leader of those women. Golbaji is the madam, head of the brothel, and she plays a double role in this play as a vicious woman who has forced the very innocent and defenseless Zeynab into courting men. Golbaji persistently emphasizes the price she paid for Zeynab and continuously urges Zeynab to work for her in return for her so-called expenses, such as food and medicine. The other female characters at such points tend to take Zeynab’s side by saying that she barely even has a single meal each day or they beg Golbaji to release her from encountering men when she is ill and feverish.

**Golbaji** They did get the money; I gave them, the money in exchange for you!’

**Gohar** Madam, please stop it; she’ll faint.

**Mastoureh** *[crying]* I still remember she went to her room, she fell sick and feverish; she was sick for ten whole days and it was when the first men approached her.

**Gohar** No Baji; not now! She is feverish; sweating and shivering. Not today! Give her some time, stop that hypocrite.

**Golbaji** This hypocrite told me he’d pay well. Actually pay more than any one has paid for it. He just paid and he wants it right away; for a virgin! It’s a whole lot of money; I hope that she is still intact.

**Hagar** [Begs Golbaji] No Golbaji; it’s not fair! What if she dies?

**Golbaji** You are right; so we should rush to make some money out of her.

**Masoumeh** [Begs Golbaji] Baji, this is not fair; she is dying of fever! She is speaking nonsense! What if she dies of fear of this bully?[[219]](#footnote-219)

Despite the mourning of the women and their sympathy towards what Zeynab has endured in the brothel, they still tend to be quite envious of her, since she turns out the be the fairest and the most favored woman in the house for almost all customers, so much that she becomes the mistress of the head of the Cossack soldiers, who bans anyone else from touching her. However, her popularity attracts almost anyone; even her former lover Obbeydallah, who had planned to pay a very high price for Zeynab, leaves in fear of his commander, once he learns that Zeynab is his mistress. Through this encounter, truth is further revealed thus strengthening Zeynab’s will to seek revenge and justice. Obbeydallah bears the name of the commander of the
Army of caliphate, which attacked the camps of Emam Hussein and his family. Following the invasion and the murders, the survivors including Zeynab enter the palace of caliphate where, as history tells us[[220]](#footnote-220), she had a famous confrontation with Obbeydallah. Beyzai had pictured the same confrontation when the character of Obbeydallah encounters Zeynab in brothel. This encounter leads to Obbeydallah’s fear and Zeynab’s determination to punish him for the crimes he had committed against her and the revolutionaries.

As for the male characters, again, there are many of them, as Bahram Beyzai has about thirty male characters in *The Wailing*. It should be noted that though Beyzai had given significant care in choosing the names of female characters, yet it had been men who were in control of society at different points in history whether back in the Middle Ages or at the time of constitutionalism. Though Beyzai had focused on the fight and participation of women’s sector of the society in the middle of huge political transitions yet Beyzai’s male characters had been given names which says more about them and introduces their political social stand that they held in society. The characters’ titles directly present the character’s family history, background, occupation, and social status rather than the female names which represent their personalities. There are men who are merchants and their names such as the Tent maker says what they do while the character of rich kid is titled as the son of a district attorney whose social rank in Iran was similar to that of an English Lord. In contrast, such analysis cannot be applied to females as their names could have been drawn from any family, social status etc. suggesting that back then women in general lacked any formal titles, ranks, or occupations to be known by names. As the rich youth was known by his father’s rank yet the same man’s daughter could be simply named as Mastoureh, Munis, Zeynab, or Gohar without any specific notion of background.

By choosing these specific titles, such as college student, the Watchmaker, Mullah, Apothecary, Beyzai has clarified the social background of the character and the position of the character in the face of the constitutional revolution and political front. For instance, the student stands for the reformist sections of the society who are more familiar with new ideas and western modern doctrines while the Watchmaker is a jeweler that can present the rich class of merchants who thrive for chances of better trade deals and economy of the market. Mullah represents the clergy who has great knowledge of theocracy and whose occupation is reliant on the religious influences of the society. The more religious the society is, Mullahs would be entitled to more power and influence. Mullahs who were active participants in the constitutionalism movement began to oppose it after the establishment of parliament as they felt most of the new reforms were contradictory to Islamic faith.[[221]](#footnote-221) Mullahs showed great enmity and contradiction towards women’s rights. They opposed the idea of education for women and women’s right to vote before the revolution of 1979. As evaluated in the timeline of the historical events, the action of the play takes place in Tehran during the early twentieth century and the titles are derived from how people were named in that era according to their occupation or family roots. Iran was not fully modernized, even after the victory of the constitutional revolution, but it was during the reign of Reza Shah when several reforms took place in Iran such as issue of birth certificates and family names for each citizen of Iran. Back then people were titled by surnames only if they came from aristocratic families or else they would be titled by their occupation, such as Secretary, College Student, and Watch Maker. Through these names, Bahram Beyzai introduces different sectors of Iranian society, who were participants in the drive for constitutionalism and the revolution. The characters that were named as merchants of the Market care too much about its closure during the strikes and the fighting whilst the academic characters emphasize the need to modernize and develop the country as had occurred in European countries.

Hajj is a title given to any Iranian who has travelled to the holy Mecca. Most merchants of the Market have that title in the contemporary history of Iran, so many of the characters have the title of Hajj, followed by the title of their business, such as watchmaking. The title of Mir suggests that the person belongs to the descendants of holy figures of Shia Islam and this is followed by the characters’ occupation, such as weaving or selling fabrics. So, the characters of Haj-Nilforoush, Haj-Saati, Mir Nadaf, and Mir Shalchi are the merchants of the Tehran’s grand Market. These characters are introduced when they enter the realm of the brothel as customers seemingly taking refuge from the tensions of the revolution. One thing they debate the most is the closure of the market and oppression by the army. Due to their background, they lack knowledge and understanding of political points of view, the theory of constitutionalism and modern western intellectual movements.

**“Hajj Saati** (Merchant) Are you talking about me? I am to lose in either way. I am a woman and the proponent of the government and the outlaws! And I haven’t been to the communities to fight for reform and development? I am glad that I haven’t betrayed my country. I shall be the servant of my country whether the constitution wins or the government!

**Sahib-Jam Secretory** I am the poorest here as I do not know who is in the right here! Neither the constitution nor the dictatorship would do me any good. It requires knowledge to understand these and I am not that knowledgeable.”[[222]](#footnote-222)

On the other hand, the academic characters, such as the College Student and College Teacher, tend to be more focused on European communities and their process of forming a modern constitutionalized society.

**“Mir Shalchi** He is the Teacher at Daro al Fonoun[[223]](#footnote-223) college and the other one is the student of the college. They are well educated students not just commoners. They say we want freedom and a republic and how long should we be under the rule of Lords and rulers. They are writing the constitution.

**Watch Maker** Nonesense! If divine law was wrong, then it would not have been in holy books of god. These constitutionalists just walk around with their French hats, canes and glasses and say that we are this and that, and the law should be based on such facts, if these guys faced any of the soldiers and arms, they would run away like crazy.”[[224]](#footnote-224)

The college student becomes romantically involved with Zeynab towards the end of *The Wailing,* most significantly when she finds out the truth about her ex-fiancée Obbeydallah. It is through a brief encounter, when Obbeydallah, proud and bragging about his position as a Cossack soldier, visits the brothel. He has been told of Zeynab and her popularity among men and he thinks that, with his money and charming new figure as a soldier, he deserves to court her. Upon his arrival at the house he is unable to recognize Zeynab and thus asks of his own old fiancée about her whereabouts. Zeynab, who is curious to figure out the truth about the past, plays the role of a housemate and, through the conversation, realizes the true personality of her ex-lover: that he never cared for her and what mattered to him was being a Cossack soldier and attacking villages and the revolutionaries. He brags about the way he plundered homes and the number of constitutionalists that he had murdered. This conversation between Zeynab and Obbeydallah directly refers to the famous and well-known debate between the historical Obbeydallah and holy Zeynab which historically took place in Muharram of 680 in city of Kufa where the captives of the battle of Karbala were summoned to the court of Obbeydallah. Obbeydallah had noticed a woman in modest clothing entering the palace surrounded by her ladies in waiting. Upon realizing she is the granddaughter of the Prophet, he points out to the defeat and murder of her family because of their deceitful claims to the throne. Zeynab in return had denounced his claims, defending her family’s bravery saying that they shall seek justice in the judgment day[[225]](#footnote-225). This debate is of great importance among Shia Muslims who believe she won the debate by condemning him and glorifying the resistance of her family who fought against his army. In the play, this confrontation enlightens Zeynab and dismisses the slightest doubts from her regarding the tragedy of her life. Upon this matter, she totally comes out of her naive past and fearlessly takes control of her own life for the first time as she is no longer prepared to obey the oppressors in her life but to take matters into her own hands. At this point, she donates the necklace to the benefit of the revolution and with taking the necklace off her neck, she tears apart all the burdens forced upon her by society, family, Golbaji, and the head of the Cossacks.

The final awakening of Zeynab is the greatest development that her character accomplishes through the play, which is even more outstanding than her role in the climax of the play where she shoots Obbeydallah. Obedience and confinement of women by the male figures of their families or men who had control over the brothel neighborhoods of Tehran had been the most significant feature of the sex slave cult in Iran during the two decades prior to the revolution of 1979. Following the coup of 1953, the brothel neighborhood of Shahr-e-No became increasingly populated and many women were drawn into sex slavery in the houses situated in this neighborhood. Most of them had been outcasts of the society or victims of poverty and discrimination. In the 1970s, Ebrahim Golestan, an Iranian filmmaker made some photo documentaries which became a film about the women living in a slum neighborhood of Tehran, Shahr-e No, where uneducated women from rural areas were brought into prostitution and lived a miserable life.The neighborhood was also under the control of mobsters where women had little or no chance of freedom or control over their lives. According to the photographic documentary of Tehran’s red-light district by Kaveh Golestan on Shahr-e-No[[226]](#footnote-226), women rarely even had the chance to walk outside of the walls surrounding the neighborhood. The only time of the year when they were allowed out was during the holy month of Muharram when women had the chance to march the street following the ritual of the mourning of Ta’ziyeh[[227]](#footnote-227).

It could be argued that Beyzai had observed the confinement of Iranian women by patriarchy and how it had ruined their state of identity and individuality. Therefore, the heroine of his play and the only one believed to have broken free from the devastating fate of courtesans is Zeynab who revolts against the enforcement that men had over her life. Such behavior is observed in the middle of the Iranian revolution of 1979 when some women found the will to join political parties and they took part in political activities without men and guardians monitoring and controlling their involvement.[[228]](#footnote-228)

**Structure of the play**

*The Wailing*, as in many of Bahram Beyzai’s plays, begins with the death of the main character and, in the first scene of the play, the female characters attend a mourning ritual for the death of Zeynab. Through their very first dialogue, the characters mourn for her death and curse whatever attributed to the tragedy. Through their memories, they begin to narrate her story from the very beginning with her arrival and at this point three characters enter the stage; one of them is the already deceased Zeynab. Something significant about this play is the numerous flashbacks and the change of time during a single conversation between two characters. In a few words, the setting of the story could flashback to a year ago since during the conversation the characters suddenly begin to recall memories from the past and they express those imaginations freely with no concern. At many points in the play, the characters, whether female or male, tend to speak to themselves rather than the other characters present on the stage. This issue is present in both of Beyzai’s plays so far, for instance, at a point in the play Cenmar raises a discussion on how Nu’man tempted him to start the construction but then in the following words admits that he would have wanted to build the castle even if he knew about Nu’man’s plot.

This could be a clue as to the way the playwright meant the actors to say their lines on the stage, as what they say is about their own imagination and their own words, without a direct addressee. Moreover, based on what they say, the next act involves the arrival of new characters who would play that memory of the character. For instance, in the final stages of the play, Zeynab has gone to the main square of Tehran where she has presumably shot Obbeydallah. At this point, the female characters of the house are also involved on the stage and, as soon as Zeynab finishes her line by saying that she has spotted Obbeydallah, the women begin to speak about her and mourn for her death.

**Zeynab** How quickly I got to the “Toopkhaneh square"[[229]](#footnote-229). It is filled with armed men and drunken outlaws; thousands of soldiers, so many corpses hanged on the gallows.

I am looking for a man; his name is Obbeydallah

**Drunken man** We are all Obbeydallah

**Zeynab** I see you all but he is the head of you. He is the head of the cannon shooters and the bombarding.

[*back to the brothel house*]

**Munis** Oh Zeynab! Why did you have to die like this?

**Golbaji** Don’t be absurd! Don’t presume the fighters are dead! They shall be revived glorious and mighty”[[230]](#footnote-230)

 During such conversations in the play, it is hard to recognise where the event is happening and where it is in the imagination of the characters presumably remembering what happened in Tehran’s main square. In the same episode of the play, some of the men rush into the house to bring news of how a woman has shot the head of the Cossack fighters and that she has been slaughtered at the scene. This is the notion of an actual murder of the protagonist, at the same time, the whole act could be part of what the women have in their memory of the experiences of the day Zeynab died.

One of the most difficult issues regarding *The Wailing* is considering the line between reality and imagination. There are so many points throughout the play where the characters indulge in their own imagination, as if they don’t have any sense of time, reality and their whereabouts. They speak their minds as if no one is around and they have nothing to do with what is going on.

**Zeynab** I wanted to do a chore today; my god I have forgotten everything. I wasn’t like this before. I tried to sew and injured my figure; I tried to light some fire and I burnt my hand; I cooked and burned the dish; and couldn’t wash the clothes. I tried to get some water but it fell from my hand. What has happened to me?[[231]](#footnote-231)

Rather than being addressed to the audience, at this point it seems that Zeynab is delivering an interior monologue. Why she does that? The play focuses on individualism and how a person self-identifies and sees her place in the society. In *The Murder of Cenmar*, the main character of the play wants to reach perfection while, in *The Wailing*, the central character has to learn about her position before stepping up to fight against the oppressors of the society so at many points Zeynab’s audience is no one but herself as she is trying to figure something out on her own.

One of the other issues is the presence of the large numbers of characters on the stage who take part in continuous dialogue without leaving the stage. The stage is set in the hall and the yard of the brothel where the women spend most of the day entertaining and the customers are served with refreshments. So, the play depicts a huge number of women and men on the stage and in a sequence, they take part in dialogues as if many of the characters are just listeners, so their presence is not mandatory on the stage. They tend to be silent during long conversations between the main characters. It is never mentioned if they left the stage, so they could be either present on the stage or seated with the audience in this interval.

Regarding the staging, since many of the characters are not involved they could be part of the audience throughout the long dialogues. I suppose Bahram Beyzai has left room for the director to decide on a strategy from a range of approaches, such as having the actors and actresses as part of the audience in the theatre production. So in case of conversations between women, three actresses could be on stage reading their lines while the rest stay off the stage unless they appear to announce something such as the invasion of the soldiers. It would not much differ in the case of male characters as they do not have to be on stage as in most of the scenes, the play narrows to focus on the conversation between two characters at a time.

Following the effects of the structure of *The Wailing*, I must conclude that Beyzai might have chosen to adopt many flashbacks in the play to draw a line between reality and imagination on the stage.

By using such a technique, Beyzai has provided the readers and the directors the chance to develop the story of the play through their own understanding and judgment. Since the play offers criticism of the revolution, it is a suitable technique which leaves room for the judgment and analysis of the audience themselves. After all, the revolution is a chapter of Iranian contemporary history which could be interpreted differently by diverse points of view.

The women of this house identify themselves with different political views in their encounters with different customers who secretly visit the brothel and come from any social rank, even the clergies. The conflict of this play does not only reside in political debates and disputes but in attacks on the brothel by the two groups of pro- and anti-constitution forces.

One of the main focuses of the analysis is on the character of Zeynab, since this character is unique among all other characters and Beyzai, arguably, gives the most consideration to her, as she is forced to work as a sex slave and suffers a tragic death. Like others of Beyzai’s main characters who suffer tragic deaths, she finds herself a motive to take part in the revolution as a protest against the sufferings of people of her kind.

**Woman as the main figure of the play**

The involvement of women in constitutional revolution might have been a motive for Beyzai to centralize his play on the character of a woman. Beyzai situates his play in a house of women and relates the political events through their point of view and their fate. In this case, this brothel symbolizes the society of Iran and the Iranian population of the time, and how they were victimized during political conflict. Given that the evidence does not primarily reflect the same situation as the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, I argue that Bahram Beyzai, in the late 80s and the early 90s when he wrote the play, was evaluating the aftermath of the Islamic revolution, especially how the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran treated the community of Iranian women.

The revolution of 1979 was the voice and cry of the victims of the previous regime, including the women stranded in the notorious neighborhood of Shahr-e-No who were victims of poverty, illiteracy, and social injustice. But shortly after the revolution, the victims became victimized again when the revolutionaries attacked this neighborhood in Tehran[[232]](#footnote-232) to abolish corruption and sin from the face of the earth[[233]](#footnote-233). According to some documented historical events, some of the women were injured or even murdered by the proponents of the revolution. There is little evidence to indicate any intervention from legal forces[[234]](#footnote-234) to prevent this attack or possible protection for the inhabitants of this district of Tehran in 1980. However, the question remains: what really happened to the residents of that district after its abolition? After all they were the main concern in this confrontation.

 It could be argued that Beyzai meant to address a contemporary incident, yet, due to the restrictions of his time, he was not able to directly refer to this event and so he returned to the period of the Iranian Constitution as an analogy for it. Taking advantage of the similarity between these political events, Beyzai was able to depict a similar atmosphere to the incident at Shar-e No, while representing the state of women in the early years of the 1979 revolution and how they were treated in Iranian society, and by the government and political activists. In *The Wailing*, the brothel is attacked many times by either the Cossack forces or even the revolutionary fighters. Just like the events in the year of the 1979 and 1980, there is no security to defend the women against those who invade the brothel and even the customers of the house intend to leave the women unarmed when the Cossack soldiers attack. This feature of the play is similar to the attack on Shahr-e No, where no security forces, police or army appeared at the scene to stop the fire or defend the women. At the end of the play, when women are mourning for the death of Zeynab and she has appeared as ghost, again the cannons are marching towards the brothel and the destiny of the women is left to the audience’s imagination whether they survived this final attack after the men fled the scene leaving them unarmed again.

Beyzai did not clarify the fate of female characters of the play other than Zeynab in an effort to highlight the uncertain destiny of the prostitutes of Shahr-e-No after the invasion. Although the attack was documented in history[[235]](#footnote-235) very little attention has been given to the fate of the one thousand, five hundred women who resided there.

About a year after the revolution in 1980, the Islamic republic executed at least five women based on charges of promiscuity, prostitution and running brothels[[236]](#footnote-236). The only account of the rest of the women is that they were taken from the neighborhood to some governmental buildings which had been seized by the revolutionaries and the revolutionary guards. There they were asked to repent and wear black veils to join the forces of the Islamic republic and they were told that this would be the only route to redemption from their hideous past. Therefore, many of the survivors of the Shahr-e-No were taken into custody and the guardianship of the revolutionaries. The former prostitutes were once again obliged to follow the command of men who forced them to serve the goals of the revolution. Though they were no longer sex slaves, they became the slaves of the new government who used them as agents on their own missions. Some women were trained to attack female political activists belonging to leftist groups and some of them were appointed as guards of the women’s prison. In *The Wailing*, other than Zeynab who found her ultimate freedom, the rest of the women were left to the mercy of the invading forces, as if they were waiting for new rulers to take control of them and decide for their future. The pitiful residents of Shahr-e-No suffered just like the residents of the brothel in the play. They were taken from one guardian to the next and they became slaves of the different invaders and oppressors. While the prostitutes were victims of the sex market before the revolution, in the aftermath they became the victims of the Islamic republic, which would appoint them to pursue their own means including the torture and prosecution of its opponents.[[237]](#footnote-237)

In *The Wailing*, Beyzai further develops the men or antagonists of the women of the brothel. They come from different classes of society. Some have been around for centuries and others had emerged from the new regulations of the governing system, such as clerks and governmental employees whose numbers probably increased during the time of constitutionalism. For instance, Sahib-Jam Secretory is a character who represents the class of governmental employees and Beyzai pictures how they may have reacted towards the political issues of Iran.

 **Sahib-Jam Secratory** Guys! Take it easy, I am a clerk, I have no opinion on anything. They pay me for being like this and how well do they pay me? The money coming from customers’ bribes is the main source of income.[[238]](#footnote-238)

Beyzai presented his criticism and analysis of different sectors of the Iranian society while introducing them to the audience. Why Beyzai went into such details regarding the title of the characters may well be that he could refer to the different classes of the society and the various political parties that were involved in the revolution of 1979. The communist party was the oldest enemy of the Pahlavi regime and, at the time of the revolution, there was great discontent among the clergy and the religious sector of Iranian society who advocated the religious figure of Ayatollah Khomeini instead of the secular reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.

Beyzai chooses women as the central characters among these different social classes due to their limited rights. A notable example would be famous Iranian Poetess Forough Farrokhzad (1935-1967) who was divorced in her life time and never got to see her only child until her death. The aggression, sorrow and anxiety that such women went through have been highlighted in her poems. In “A poem for you” the poetess expresses her personal frustration and sorrow over the distance between the mother and child and also her hopes of reunion in future.

Let the Shadow of me the wanderer

Be separate and far from your shadow.

When one day we reach one another,

Standing between us will be none other than God. [[239]](#footnote-239)

In the 1980s, women did not have authority over their decisions and intentions in many cases and their lives were controlled by the male figures in their families. In *The Wailing*, the protagonist, Zeynab, is viciously murdered but she returns as a corpse and shares her own opinions after the death.

**Zeynab** What lessons are taught by these puppets and yet we never listen. The puppets were lifeless and yet they could live, we are alive but it is as if we are not

**Golbaji** You fools! Do not presume the murdered to be deceased! They shall return high and mighty!

All you damned! They killed her [Zeynab] and yet she is alive. She approaches while they are asleep. Who can say she is not alive?[[240]](#footnote-240)

Zeynab at this point compares the residents of the house to the puppets expressing that no matter what you are, it is your opinion and point of view which shall bestow you a real life therefore a lifeless puppet would be more of a human if it has been given the chance to speak up. Golbaji appears to believe in this fact that Zeynab short life was worth more than the rest of people who just spend their lives by simply eating and sleeping.

The play also depicts the rise of the social status of women, whose independence had been undermined by the guardianship of their fathers and husbands for decades. The outbreak of the revolution, and the total transformation it brought to all the sectors within the traditional society of Iran, spurred the women on to speak for themselves. Even though they might not have been the main decisive figures in society, the new government, the ideal of the revolution and the Islamic republic, saw Iranian women begin to speak for themselves and learn to define their place within society in order to survive the tensions they faced from 1980 onwards.

The generation of Iranian women at the time of the revolution of 1979, were similar to those living in the brothel of *The Wailing* in a sort of ‘solitude’ where their fates relied on their families, mainly the male family members, such as their fathers and spouses. Despite the fact that many were marginalized in the patriarchal society of Iran, they were still involved in the outbreak of the revolution, just as it involved each and every sector of Iranian society. They suffered from the shift of power from monarchy to an ideological religious government, although many of them did not actively take part in the revolution and politics. Yet the transformation the country went through involved women and even victimized them. It was at this point that this sector of society began to realize who they were and what place they had in society and politics, and thus they began to present a new voice for themselves. This is paralleled to the way the character of Zeynab finds herself in her environment and through encounters with the customers, she gets to know about constitutionalism to the point that she dedicates her gold to the benefit of the revolution. The constitutional revolution turned Zeynab into a revolutionary and a fighter who finds strength in herself to attack those whom she finds wicked and unjust.

**Position of Women in the Iranian Society and the Constitutionalism**

Despite all the changes in favor of the social situation of women and their advances towards professionalism and education, in the years following up to the revolution of 1979, still Iranian women were unable to find their place in society and to raise their own voice. Many were confined to their family and patriarchy, which limited their control over their lives and destinies. Bahram Beyzai presents Iranian women during the years before, at the time and after the revolution of 1979 in the characterization of Zeynab.

For instance, Zeynab has no control over her life and she is put into prostitution quite easily by her guardians without her own consent and despite her agony and resistance. Coming from a needy family in a rural area, Zaynab finds herself in a circumstance where a young girl is observed as the property of male family members who fear their daughters being robbed by mobsters and outlaws in and around the country. So, the father and the fiancé make up their minds to make some money out of her by selling her to a brothel, assuming she will be better off there. In this case, Beyzai must have meant that women from the lower classes of society were victimized by impoverishment and lack of education, even after decades of rule by a secular modern government.

The situation of Shahr-e No, where the residents were forced to stay within the district and had insufficient allowance to leave, is similar to the way Zeynab is introduced at the beginning of the play. I believe that this brothel in *The Wailing* is the representation of the fate of this notorious district in Tehran, which was totally abolished after the 1979 revolution. I shall develop this view of the events of the play, which includes the Cossack soldiers and the political partisans around the time of the constitutional revolution attacking the house, and the death of Zeynab, in the future. Like many of Beyzai’s plays, this also deals with the revolution of 1979 and the attack on this house mentioned in the play is related to the violence against women that took place in Iran at that time.

The character of Zeynab is mostly in agony and suffering and still unable to deal with her fate and to rise on her own whereas male characters enter the play and they open doors for her to understand about the society and the changes favoring people like her.

 In the earliest conversations between Haj[[241]](#footnote-241) Saati, and Pharmacist, it is suggested that people were discontented with the local governors and demanded a House of Justice in order to complain about them. In the early phase of demonstrations in 1905, violence and force repressed such actions, thus agitating the crowds to continue fighting and even increasing their demands[[242]](#footnote-242), since they have paid a great price in resistance against the government. Such resistance reached the point where some of the protestors sought refuge in European embassies during the fighting and violence. It was in the European embassies where the refugees were introduced to the idea of constitutionalism and thus promoted their demands for a single house of justice, constitutionalism, and a change in the government.[[243]](#footnote-243)

Zeynab is introduced to the group of men in the midst of these conversations about the turmoil and the violence. As they bargain for the price they will pay for her, she shows a different side of her character rather than just being the girl of choice in a brothel. She resists being called Flirticia, the name newly given to her on admittance to this house, and insists on her own name Zeynab. She also continues to insist on her purity through the bargaining of the men. Therefore stating that she refuses to underestimate herself by accepting herself as a prostitute and no matter how much pressure is put on her, she refuses to denounce herself. This is intended to address the fact that women or any individual must believe in themselves and resist all those who try to undermine them by any means. Therefore, in the first phase, Zeynab stands out as a success when she insists on believing in herself, her purity, and being a person rather than a love interest for men. In this phase, Zeynab symbolizes the purity of the land and the mother figure. She insists that, regardless of what men do to her, she shall still be pure. Golbaji, the head of the house and the girls who work for her, suggest that Zeynab has been forced to be with many men and yet Zeynab maintains her innocence. At this point, Zeynab begins to learn to speak her own words and to defend herself, unlike in the early days when she was so naïve that her only reaction was to fall ill.

**Golbaji** The customers were so pleased, Flirticia. What did you do for them? They were so content. You whore! What were you like?

**Zeynab** I am not a whore. I am pure.

**Golbaji** You bitch, do want me to count them all? The migrant from Ishk Abad? The horse-keeper? The musician? The revolutionary? The clerk? The guy with green eyes? A couple of soldiers?

**Zeynab** Even an army of your invaders cannot taint my purity.[[244]](#footnote-244)

Most of the Iranian women confined in the notorious district of Tehran like Zeynab, were victims of poverty. Other women in the Iranian society suffering from patriarchy and other social injustices, could only stand for their rights and fight partriarchy if they would believe in themselves, their voice and their power as an individual. However, in the brothel, only one character manages to do so, therefore suggesting that maybe only a small sector of Iranian society meant to fight for real change.

In several parts of the play, as expressed in the opinion of the merchant quoted below, the barbarity of the people is implied, noting how many outlaws took advantage of this series of political events and the turmoil in order to rob and harass people.

**Mir Nadaf** I fear the day that people begin fighting the government with artillery and the forces appoint outlaws to attack the protesters to support the government.

**Tent Maker** Some news came that they have fed the people of Varamin[[245]](#footnote-245) made them drunk to shout out load that they wanted no constitutionalism.

**Sahib-Jam Secretory** I don’t see a bright future for Iranians. First, it’s murder and loot and then chaos and turmoil. Lucky for those who passed away or left the country. I see the chaos and bloody riots right in front of us. It won’t be long before the tensions increase and destroy everything.

On the other hand, the male characters of College Student and College Teacher insist on the industrial development of Western countries.

**College Student** I have seen the developments in the West; just like the steam or electric carriage but none of them astonished me except the cable that lightens the streets of Russia. The photography industry was astonishing on its own, as if men and women were walking around for real.

**College Teacher** The foreign nations have sought their advances from our history - if you want to advance like them you must develop your industry.[[246]](#footnote-246)

‘**Sahib Jam Secretory** I am personally a fan of constitutionalism but my income is given by the dictators. I do not know what to say. You cannot break free when you are chained.[[247]](#footnote-247)

**College Student** What is all the fear about? Journalists and newspapers haven’t changed their ways in these tough days and they’re writing whatever they must. They write stuff that is astonishing. They shoot with their pens! There is no time to waste; government must open the house of Justice soon; otherwise the media would publish the rest of it.

The political tensions go on through the conversations of the male characters of the play in the brothel. At some point in the play, the women and the costumers begin a little puppet show put on by the Tent Maker who employs three puppets, the Tyranny, the Constitution, and the Religion to present the struggle between these different parts of the social infrastructure. This is probably when Zeynab, for the first, time realizes how valuable it is to be able to speak for oneself and defend your ideas and opinions.

**Zeynab** Why should I turn him [College student; her lover] away? When I long for it [their love affair] so bad!

You came so late but come to me;

Maybe our love shall breed constitutionalism! [[248]](#footnote-248)

Here Beyzai is implying that to understand freedom and to have it, are two different things. Though at this point, Zeynab recognizes her rights as a citizen but that would not mean that the society and the government would do so as well.

At this point Zeynab faces a new challenge when she has to be strong enough to find confidence and bravery to think about breaking free from the torture she endures in this house.

**Zeynab** Have you ever thought about running away?

**Masoumeh** I am so afraid. What if she tells on me to Golbaji? Oh my god! I never thought about running away.

**Zeynab** And I told her, who are you afraid of Masoumeh? Me?[[249]](#footnote-249)

This is the part that Zeynab of the play is identified with with the Holy Zeynab of Karbala. Holy Zeynab was a person who fearlessly walked into the palace of a commander who had just brutally murdered her whole family. Without a moment of hesitation, she attacked Obbeydallah with her words defending the legacy of her murdered family. This would have been a matter of life and death as in the historical narration, Obbeyollah only condones Zeynab’s attack when others intervene by saying that she is a woman and thus should not be held responsible for what she says[[250]](#footnote-250). This means that their war of words could turn bloody and cost Holy Zeynab her life but nevertheless she chose to speak her opinion. In the play, it is a different situation as the Cossack soldiers would viciously attack and murder anyone either men or women who would fight against them. Likewise, Zeynab of the play does not survive.

**Role of Religion and Ta’ziyeh in *The Wailing***

The significance of this maturing bravery in Zeynab is more than the process of establishing an identity for herself but a reference to a historic figure. The story of Zeynab is the resistance of her and her family against their enemies, which ends up with the death of most of them, including her father. This tale delivers the story of the fighting and martyrdom of the descendants of the prophet Muhammad while resisting the forces against them, the Arab rulers in the holy land of Karbala[[251]](#footnote-251). Zeynab was part of this fight and was among those who survived the killings who later faced and attacked the murderers. The bravery she showed in confronting the enemies and defending her family and her martyrdom, while attacking the oppressors, made her a symbol of resistance and courage in Islamic history.

Since Beyzai’s works always involve the influence of the tradition of Ta’ziyeh, it is very likely that the name he chose for his main character was derived from the religious figure of Holy Zeynab. Obbeydallah also sells himself to the Cossack forces which attack the revolutionaries and the supporters of the constitutionalism. Obbeydallah is the name of one of the vicious commanders of the army, which attacked the family of Emam Hussein and Zeynab. [[252]](#footnote-252)

In this play, Zeynab’s fiancé is called Obbeydallah, suggesting he is her enemy. At one point in the play, when the tensions among the revolutionaries and the Cossack army rise, despite the dangers, Zeynab leaves the house to kill Obbeydallah, who has deprived her of her virtue and freedom. Although the historical Zeynab criticized what the army did to her family, Beyzai’s female protagonist uses the pistol to deliver her word to those who did her wrong. She kills the anti-revolutionaries who were murdering the supporters of constitutionalism through guerrilla warfare rather than by criticism and civil campaigns, like the historical Zeynab in the incident of Ashura.

Bahram Beyzai knew the historical incident regarding Zeynab and I argue that the reason why the playwright chose to depict the similarity between the two female characters was to emphasize the issue of violent resistance and civil campaigns. It is a fact that most of the fighters for constitutionalism, including the female supporters, were armed. The practice of guerrilla attacks also took place by the time of the 1979 revolution when many of the opposition groups and parties were involved in guerrilla operations against the Pahlavi regime. After the formation of the government of the Islamic republic, the same political activists made guerrilla attacks on the government forces. Beyzai might be criticizing the use of armed force in seeking political reforms, which was a very common approach during the years of the revolution.[[253]](#footnote-253)

**Apothecary** It’s all about politics and nothing else! They make cocktail Molotov themselves and then they blame, imprison and attack people for it! Some news came that they captured Heidar Khan over night for making a Molotov cocktail. There is no security in this danger zone. Oh Mir Naddaf what has been done to you? What is this injury you have?[[254]](#footnote-254)

Other women who were involved in the revolution as either activists or protesters, others were also affected[[255]](#footnote-255). During the attack on the notorious neighborhood, the firefighters made a deal with the revolutionaries not to stop fires voluntarily and so the whole bleak neighborhood was destroyed once and for all. Some madams of the district were all arrested and in an astonishingly short amount of time they were put to death by the order of the court of the revolutionaries. In *The Wailing,* although the women of the house have no control or actual participation in the political fighting, they tend to be the very first victims of the disputes and violence. The women of Shahr-e No, as the records show, lived a very similar life to the ones that the female characters of the play experience in the brothel. The new government, after the revolution, was supposed to be the voice of the people, especially the oppressed and the poor, but due to its very strict doctrines in pursuit of virtue and righteousness, it attacked one of the most suppressed minorities in society during the early days of the revolution. The residents of this neighborhood, during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, were at some points appointed by the parties to support or attack their enemies. For instance, in the midst of the American coup of 1953, many of the men and women of this district were hired by the Shah to protest in the street against the Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadeq[[256]](#footnote-256).

**Conclusion**

I conclude that Beyzai had included Ta’zieyeh and characters with similarities to holy Shia figures in attempt to picture the numbness of the Iranian nation against ruling powers. In *The Wailing*, he was able to picture how an ordinary illiterate girl could walk out of her slavery and naivety to the point of joining an intellectual movement and fighting for it. By contrast, many other like the women of the brothel and even men of higher social standings either ignored or fled the tensions. By the final scenes of the play, the residents of the brothel play an important episode: holding a mourning ceremony for Zeynab who after her death had become the symbol of bravery and martyrdom. Beyzai has depicted the nation of Iran who every year during the month of Muharram mourn for the icons whom they worship for their will in freedom while living under dictatorships and oppressing rulers throughout years.

*The Wailing* was written between 1978 and 1980 but published only after more than two decades in the early 90s in Iran and the United States. Just like Beyzai’s two other plays, *The Wailing* is set at the peak of an important historical moment, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905-1907).[[257]](#footnote-257) By analyzing this play I found that Beyzai, typically, tries to conceal the actual setting, which would be a necessary practice in order to avoid censorship, while criticizing the Iranian political system and the actions of the government and the people as well. This is a very significant issue which makes *The Wailing* different from many of his other political plays where Beyzai had placed most of the blame on the government and the ruler rather than the crowds of the nation. For instance, in *Murder of Cenmar*, he sympathizes with the artistic intellectual class of the society and though he mentions the barbarity of the Arab nation yet he primarily blames the ruler for the tragedy. Whereas in this play, Beyzai had placed the criticism on the people of Iran who for centuries cried for the passion of the martyrdom yet did not show any tendency in their own lives towards what and whom they praise. In such society, the rest of the nation does little but to mourn for the passion of the brave ones.

 Considering Beyzai as a victim in the society, it should be mentioned how his works were banned and he could have been subjected to prosecution. The ministry of culture in Iran had been instrumental from the early years of the establishment of the Islamic republic in controlling theatre and film productions that aimed to challenge the revolution and the Islamic republic foundation. Therefore, Beyzai’s depiction of the notorious Shahr-e-No was concealed under some brothel in 1900s Tehran where women are being both victimized by the tyrannical society before and after the revolution.

During *The Wailing*, the female characters take part in a gathering which is a stereotype of mourning for the tragedy of Ashura and Karbala for the deceased Shia Emam.[[258]](#footnote-258) What is significant is that, those who are praised in the Ta’ziyeh mourning ceremony are those who symbolize bravery and resistance. This is what the character of Zeynab learns in the face of those who did her wrong when she walks out with a pistol and shoots the unjust ex-lover Obbeydallah. The other part related to Ta’zieyeh is that in the performances of mourning theatres, the enemies of the Emam Hussein are always pictured as corrupt and devious as is the character of Obbeydallah in this play. He is responsible for Zeynab’s predicament in the brothel and he kills protestors and revolutionaries in the streets by the Cossack leaders’ request. Thus, Zeynab murders Obbeydallah not just as a personal revenge, but as revenge against corruption. Other than the protagonist and the antagonist, the third party would be the spectator group which is the brothel women who in this play, passively observe the tragedy. They are pictured as victims themselves who in reality are being attacked after the revolution of 1979 and go from sex slaves into slaves of the newly formed government of the Islamic republic who employed them as mercenaries to fight the opposition.

In *The Wailing,* the character of Zeynab could be interpreted as advocating the necessary use of violence for political reforms and this is what the female revolutionaries of 1979 who were mostly participants in different political parties, had chosen as their way of fighting the dictatorship. However, in her final lines, the character of Zeynab seems to specifically criticize women. She asserts that women are responsible for raising a family and unless they can speak up for themselves and identify with their state as a woman in society, they are not able to pass this to the next generation. She also mentions that women just like men are responsible for the violence outside which is victimizing women alongside the others.[[259]](#footnote-259) I believe that *The Wailing* concludes the fact that women must participate in society and the politics and their ignorance and withdrawal can have disastrous consequences. Zeynab undergoes change in the final stages of the play and her behavior is contradictory to the passiveness of the rest of the women who give in to violence and oppression which would have replicable impacts on the society and women in particular. In the course of the play, the women all suffered from violence and oppression still only one of them, Zeynab, stands up for her rights and fights back. She found the courage and enlightenment to seek truth about the past and to take steps forward by rejecting her so-called guardian thus gaining independence and freedom from the oppressive torturing male-dominant life.

For the portrayal of a female fighter, Beyzai has focused on the most notable female fighting figure from the Shia faith, the holy Zeynab who was a survivor. However in the play, the heroine learns about the constitutionalism through her encounter with the College Student, therefore she joins the fight and ends up as a martyr. The mourning crowds who appear at the beginning of the play reappear to continue their mourning. Apart from the themes and Beyzai’s historical and religious characters, *The Wailing* is similar to Ta’ziyeh where in their performances, time and setting in are not fixed to any extent, and time may flow from any point in the past to the future. In actual Ta’zieyeh performances, there is also one stage and one setting, where everything is performed. Of course, the audience can assume the change of setting but the actual staging does not alter. *The Wailing,* likewise delivers the story within one location, the brothel, and time is not expressed throughout the play. The audience may assume what is happening outside the brothel or at which stage the revolution might be during or by the end of the play. Historically, the time and place of the battle of Karbala is determined, however, in Ta’ziyeh, the play suggests a somewhat different context, in which time and place could be anywhere. It is common for Shia communities to take tragedy as an incident that could happen anywhere at any time; therefore, the incident of Karbala is also taken as something universal. Beyzai had adopted this characteristic of Ta’ziyeh in *The Wailing,* so that it is not possible to visualize the specific setting of the play. Place is not determined in any episode of the play; a revolution is happening but the play is limited to the setting of a brothel and the gossip of the women narrating the story of the revolution.[[260]](#footnote-260)

Chapter IV: Conclusion

Bahram Beyzai is a prominent figure and pioneer in modern theatre and modernity in dramatic plays. Yet he mainly chooses the settings and periods of his plays according to historical points in Persia’s past when notable transitions took place. Yet almost all the themes of his plays are contemporary ones, usually in accordance with very recent social political events within Iran at the time Beyzai wrote the plays. Beyzai uses a very distinctive technique, he places his criticism and analysis of the current political issues in the context of history. This technique allows him to express and discuss his viewpoint on these issues, which it may not possible to debate openly. In choosing to use such a technique he made it feasible for this complex play to be translated and presented to a foreign audience so that the political theatre of Iran could be introduced to the world and the events which took place at the time of the revolution could be presented in an artistic and critical way, while presenting it safely under the cover of a previous, more historically distant event.

There is also a tendency for the revival of many ancient Persian elements in his works, depicting glorious ages of Persia. This may have less to do with the government and the censorship of the press and publication, but more to do with Beyzai’s own interest in the history and identity of Iran. As a pioneer of modern theatre, Beyzai also emphasizes the significance of national identity in the contemporary theatre.

In the play *The Murder of Cenmar*, Beyzai focuses on the government and the corrupt nature of the leader, and only considered the people as an Arab tribe who might not have been ready for civilization and democracy and freedom in reality. *The Murder of Cenmar* is about the construction of a palace, which is expected to bring civilization to a savage region whose people are used to living in tents. Bahram Beyzai has depicted the community of Iranians before the revolution as the Arabs of that region who sought civilization but could not handle such a transition easily. In *The Wailing*, I assert that Beyzai goes deeper into the society of Iranians before the revolution and explores the presence of women and their status in society, and particularly during the 1979 revolution, in a much more detailed analysis. In *The Wailing*, Beyzai focuses more on the people, the characters, and the presence of women. Following such stereotypes, he focuses on the role of women in the constitutional revolution but actually his intended focus is on the role of Iranian women who participated in the revolution and generally their position in society at that time. This movement and revolution changed the history and fate of Iran, previously Persia, forever. It totally transformed many socio-political aspects, including freedom of expression and a free media.

When studying and analysing the importance of drama and theatre in the politics of Iran, I myself went through a journey which ultimately enlightened me. In fact, I can consider myself as a delegate for the educated, freedom seeking class of Iranian society who pursue reforms in favour of democracy but yet remain in vain due to the political social failures in the past century. My journey included the study of the drama and performance in the history of Iran to learn how Persia was able to develop a distinct diversion of Islam and how the diversion of Shia affected the politics of Iran in formation of territories and powerful dynasties. So I began to look differently at the literature of theatre and began to read plays and text critically. That shift ultimately enlightened me and opened a new phase for me to explore the literature of theatre according to historical political issues which took place at the time they were written. Therefore I conclude that as I became enlightened so the society would be enlightened once they are introduced to the realm of political theatre. That enlightenment could persuade the nation to take more proper decisions in developing and following more comprehensive ideologies rather than communism and Islamic jurist rule as they did in the last century. Thus we, the Iranian nation would find the society and the ideals we always wanted from the beginning of the 20th century when the nation was initially introduced to constitutionalism.

This research has narrated and analysed the contemporary history of Iran through the plays of Bahram Beyzai. Beyzai’s concerned plays has narrated where we came from and where we stand today alongside the cry for freedom and democracy which began about a century ago and continues to this day in the Iranian society. Works of Beyzai had focused on the contemporary history of Iran which stands out among the Middle East regions for having seen fundamental transitions in power such as experiencing two revolutions in one single century. One of the main concerns of this research was the place and role of artists particularly playwrights and theatre in the Iranian society and politics and the effect they posses in the midst of such political transitions. The other critical issue would be the failure of political transitions and intellectual movements to form a democratic and free society in Iran.

Political theatre of Europe and Britain could affect and enhance critical analysis and intellectualism thus connections between the theatre industries in Europe and Iran could make this possible if a virtual bridge of intellectual research and study would be made between the two countries. Recently some reforms have been appointed by the government to limit the study and research of English Literature among programs of humanities in Iran. The positive side of that would still be a chance and room to focus on studies of Iranian drama and theatre and comparative study between Persian and English texts without fear of prosecution and ban. However the downside to that would be the limitations imposed on researches on politics especially if those research that would focus on current political issues of Iran.

I have personally had the chance to experience such matter and it amazes me how much I can contribute at this point to the study of Iranian plays and theatre and if I could share my studies with the new generation of Iranian English Literature students. However there is a downside to that as I may never be able to make it to that point regarding a number of policies practiced by the current Iranian government which bans Iranian students from having thesis and dissertation topics, related to the country in any way. Therefore, my dissertation may never be approved by the ministry of education to allow me to find research positions in Iranian educational institutions. So similar to Beyzai who is currently a scholar at Stanford University, I may intend to stay abroad to further enhance my research and knowledge in the realm of researching political theatre.

At this point, as clear as it seems, my journey is somewhat similar to that of Beyzai in his youth. My knowledge of Persian texts as well as my personal historical studies from ancient Persia to contemporary history Iran, has helped me to begin this research just as Beyzai had began his career as a playwright by studying Persian texts and historical performance of Ta’ziyeh in Iran. However what I had to learn was the knowledge and expertise in analysis and criticism to combine my knowledge of Persian mythology to the political events addressed in Beyzai’s plays. An example would be from *The Murder of Cenmar*, where an old tragedy regarding the betrayal of an architect by a devious ruler goes thousands of years ahead to address the massive executions of 1988. An event that remains critical to this day, as the Islamic republic of Iran refuses to accept or condemn these killings. I have concluded that Beyzai’s interpretation and criticism of Iran’s 1979 revolution was that the nation, particularly the intellectual educated sector, knew what was wrong and that they needed reforms towards freedom and democracy but they did not know through which means they could reach such goal, that is why they went from one dictatorship to another. In a similar manner, Nu’man idolized civilisation and the fame it shall brought upon himself and his region. But then by killing of the architect, he destroyed his reputation as his crime in the “Prize of Cenmar” was to be narrated among people for thousands of years. Similarly, the executions of 1988 remain as a dark point in the history of human rights and democracy in Iran. Cenmar was condemned and silenced just as the architect of the ideology behind the Islamic republic, Grand Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, who lived the remainder of his life under house arrest, and his family and peers are facing prosecution to this day.

Despite all the downsides, thankfully there has been much improvement in critical analysis among Iranians in the previous decade. This could be observed in much more outstanding theatrical productions of Bahram Beyzai’s plays as well as in better responses from the audience. Therefore suggesting that individuals are succeeding in better defining and analysing political theatre as well as recognizing their individual and citizen rights in the society thus finding the knowledge and will to interpret and reflect their point of view on plays and performances. However, unfortunately there is still a huge crackdown on media, literature, theatre, cinema and works of art which remains as an obstacle for Iranian scholars, critics, artists and audience.

Shiva Javadpour who had been educated in United Kingdom is one the pioneering young directors in Iran who is focusing on staging of Beyzai’s plays now that many of Bezyai’s plays are no longer banned from publishing or staging.

Like many other notable filmmakers and playwrights such as Jafar Panahi and Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Beyzai had chosen to migrate to North America to finish his lifelong research on the state of Iranian art of performance. In his latest production of *Tarabnameh*, which was written in 90s in Iran but then staged in California in 2016[[261]](#footnote-261), he had insisted on the significance of local Iranian musicians and entertainers in the last century. Beyzai believed that these groups of entertainers had no access to official education, institution, association thus they were not able to establish a recognizable place for their art in the performance industry. So in *Tarabnameh[[262]](#footnote-262)*, he had focused on Iranian musicians who for about a century would travel from city to city and house to house to perform in the back yards of people houses usually on a stage which was set upon the house pool. It was an Iranian tradition to place wooden stage on pools to create stage for dancers, singers, musicians or actors and this was so popular that the participants of this kind of performance and entertainment were titled as “Rou Houzi” aka “on the pool”[[263]](#footnote-263). The significant feature appointed in this production by Beyzai is the technique of “Sayeh Bazi” or playing with shadows which was a form of traditional performance where actors would depict shapes and figures with shadows on a wall to present the story of the play. In his works, Beyzai points out unique old Iranian theatrical methods by asserting the significance of them in the history of Iranian theatre and how those techniques and methods could be used in modern Iranian or even foreign plays and theatres. In terms of content, the play and production of *Tarabnameh* is a sum and conclusion of many of Beyzai’s works and plays in his lifetime. In the production of this play, the spectator could find almost something from each of Beyzai’s previous play whether it would be the victims of poverty and oppression or the prosecution of artists within the society. An episode of the production begins with the public execution of a poet while the rest of the characters deal with slavery and forced prostitution. In the final episodes of the production, the issues of deceit among people and how they deceive closest family members as well as the ban on the performances of the entertainers by the governors and prosecutors is debated. Like all of his works, Beyzai had focused on the situation of Iranians and their societies both in and out of the country. He has pictured a nation who had travelled a long way from the years of the revolution but still suffer from somewhat similar casualties and restrictions. The society still possesses elements of barbarism and aggression towards the artists and this could be found through the lies and conspiracies attributed to the poet. The issue of murder is still at the table just as it had been in case of Cenmar when the poet is to be put to death for the sake of his poetry. Social injustice and suppression of women is evident which reminds all of the sufferings of Zeynab. However what has significantly changed in this production of *Tarabnameh* is the characters, particularly the heroes and heroines and how much stronger they have become in comparison to old characters of Cenmar or Zeynab. In *Tarabnameh*, the poet is struggles to survive and fights for his innocence until the very end which encloses a very different personality than that of Cenmar who easily gave in to the tortures of Nu’man. What is even more outstanding is the rescue and freedom of Beyzai’s characters after almost four decades. The victimized girl is saved, her lover finds his true place and successfully claims his estate and identity, and even the poet’s soul is reincarnated into a poetess’s body suggesting that all the heroes and heroines of the Beyzai celebrate their victory and freedom by the end of the play. This is ironical as Beyzai had created characters in his plays for decades who would end up dead such as Cenmar, Zeynab, and even the intellectual occupant of the last box in *Four Boxes*. It seems Beyzai is suggesting that our nation whether artists or regular citizens have came forward to the point of that they survive the tyranny, the prosecution, the crackdown, the deceit, and even murder and execution. The government might be the same as it was four decades ago, the prosecution and restrictions may be imposed, but it is each and every individual who has become stronger, smarter, and found more ways to successfully survive and reach their goals and rights. Beyzai’s play and production suggest an alarming message to the government indicating that the nation has become stronger and possessed more means for reaching their aims and ideals. Therefore the government will not be able to treat such a developed nation the way they had treated their parents and grandparents in the past. This suggests hope towards future that sooner or later the Iranian nation within Iran or within the diaspora shall find the strength and knowledge to reform their government, the constitution, the rules and the society in general.

In this society, I had been able to find better understanding and analysis of political theatrical works and their connection to the history of performance in Iran. I have also learned about the role of political theatre in reforming the government and the society. *Tarabnameh* also briefly addresses the necessity for union and cooperation of individuals within a society which I conclude to be a crucial element in reforming the principles of the society and the government.

In the past, the hero and heroine in Bahram Beyzai’s plays lost their lives in an effort to find their ideal whether it was to build or to fight the oppressor. But today in Iran, we are dealing with a nation who are not only trying to identify themselves and find their place in the society but are also striving to survive even if that would force them to migrate to other countries where they could fulfil their ambitions in theatre, films, literary works etc. In fact, today, Iranian artists similar to Cenmar intend to present their works of art in societies where they would be appreciated and have protection by law rather than fear of prosecution and murder. And victims of poverty, illiteracy, sexism, and religious discrimination such as Zeynab would take refuge in developed countries where they could find better lives. So as it could be seen, not much has changed and the plays of Beyzai could stand for any time or any nation who are striving for freedom and justice in the face of politics and individualism. The way Beyzai narrated his plays and the techniques he used in presenting dialogues by the characters has left much space for directors in developing political themes in the productions of the play.

In the last words, I wish to quote Shakespeare as “All the world’s a stage, And all the men and women merely players;”[[264]](#footnote-264) After such long research, this phrase makes more sense to me than ever as it signifies the importance of theatre and how the plays, films, actors and actresses play the role of the reality that is going on in the world. The Iranian theatre and film industry has been merely the depiction of what has been going on in the face of history at exact points in history. The existence, development, and flourish of performance in Iranian history points out to the huge political social transformations which took place in the country.

Finally I conclude that my research and translation of the play have helped to form a system to better introduce the political Iranian theatre to the world and thus create an atmosphere were intellects, ideas, and conversation could be formed among different literary and practical participants of the political theatre.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Ahmad Kasravi. *Tārikh-e Mashruteh-ye Iran* (History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution) in Persian, (Tehran: Negah Publications, 2003)

Ahmad, Kasravi. *History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution: Tarikh-e Mashrute-ye Iran*, Volume I, translated into English by Evan Siegel, (California: Mazda Publications 2001)

Bahram Beyzai. *The Wailing*. Translation. (Tehran: Roshangaran Press, 2003)

Bayat, Mangol. *Iran’s First Revolution: Shi’ism and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1909*, Studies in Middle Eastern History,(Oxford University 1991) p. 336.

 BBC. “Ayatollah Montazeri’s Account from Imprisonment to Isolation.” 17 December 2014. www.bbc.com

BBC. *Speaking with Bahram Bayzai, Day Passes By*, in Persian, BBC Persian, Sunday 6 January 2008.

Bahram Beyzai. *The Murder of Cenmar*. Translation. (Tehran: Roshangaran Press, 2003)

C. E. WILSON. *The Haft PAIKAR* (The Seven Beauties). Translataed from Persian VOL XII and VOL XIII. London: Probsthain & Co.

Cyrus, Ghani. 2000. *Iran and the Rise of the Reza Shah: From Qajar Collapse to Pahlavi Power*, I.B. Tauris, p. 1. ISBN 1-86064-629-8.

Ervand, Abrahamian. *Tortured Confessions.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.)

Ervand, Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, (Princeton University Press, 1982)

Ervand Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup in Iran," in *Science & Society*, 65 (2) (Summer 2001), p. 211.

 Farzaneh , Milani. *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992) pp. 19, 34–37.

François de Blois. Haft Peykar // Encyclopædia Iranica. (2002) V. XI. — pp. 522–524.

Pejman. Rahimi, ‘Narration of Nodbeh of Constitution by Bahram Beyzai.’ *Socialists*. (2011)

Peter.J Chelkowski, *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran. (*New York: University Press, 1979).

Shahrough, Akhavi. "The Thought and Role of Ayatollah Hossein'ali Montazeri in the Politics of Post-1979 Iran". (2008) Iranian Studies **41** (5): 645–666. *Doi*:10.1080/00210860802518301*.*

Secondary Sources:

Ahmad, Ashraf. International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society. **15**: 237–256. doi:10.1023/A:1012921001777*.* Retrieved 7 January 2017.

Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, Muhammad b. Muhammad al-. *Al-Irshad*, Ed. Mu'assisat Al al-Bayt. , Qom: 1413 AH.

Ali Hasouri, *Siavashan ,* (Tehran: Cheshmeh Publications, 2005).

Arash Fanaian. *Gofteman-e Iran*. (Tehran, 2008).

Asghar, Schirazi*. The Constitution of Iran*. 1997.Tauris.

Bahram, Beyzai. *Four Boxes*. 1980. In Persian. Tehran: Rouzbahan Press.

Baqer, Moin.Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah. Thomas Dunne Books. (2000)ISBN 0-312-26490-9.

# Baqer, Moin. “Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri” *The Gaurdian*. 2009. https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2009/dec/20/grand-ayatollah-hossein-ali-montazeri-obituary

Bayor, Ronald H. (2011). Multicultural America: An Encyclopedia of the Newest Americans, p.1076. ABC-CLIO. ISBN 978-0-31335-787-9.

BBC Persian. Interview with Susan Taslimi. 5 September 2010. http://www.bbc.com/persian/tv/2010/09/100906\_hardtalk\_susan\_taslimi

Behrooz writing in Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran, Edited by Mark j. Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, Syracuse University Press, (2004)

Brooklyn Museum, 2009, 1997. https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/161186

C.E, Bosworth “Iran Under Buyids”. *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 4: From the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran*, Tauris, 1997 p.51

Cyrus, Kadivar. "We are awake. 2,500-year celebrations revisited". *The Iranian*. 25 January 2002. http://www.iranian.com/CyrusKadivar/2002/January/2500/

Ebrahim Nabavi, ‘Shahr-e No was burned and the prostitutes were killed’, *Radio Zamaneh*, (2008), http://www.zamaaneh.com/revolution/2009/01/post\_218.html

Elnaz, Amirkhani. Theatre Festival, No 34. (2015). http://theaterfestival.ir/

Encyclopædia Britannica. 2009. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online.* http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/413374/Nezami*.*

Ervand, Abrahamian. (1992-10-01). *The Iranian Mojahedin*. ISBN 9780300052671, pp.120-137.

Ervand, Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, (Princeton University Press 1982)

Ervand, Abrahamian. *History of Modern Iran*. 2008. Columbia University Press, p. 181, p.122

Everett, Rosenfeld. "Muharram Protests in Iran, 1978"*. Time. Time Inc.*28 June2011. Retrieved 7 May 2015.

Farah, Lalani. “A Thousand Years of Firdawsi’s Shahnama is Celeberated.” *The Ismaili*, (2014) http://www.theismaili.org

Farideh, Alizadeh; Hashim, Mohd Nasir. "When the attraction of Ta'ziyeh is diminished, the community should inevitably find a suitable replacement for it". 2016. *Taylor & Francis, Cogent Arts & Humanities*. **3** (1). doi:10.1080/23311983.2016.1190482

Farzaneh, Milani. Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers. 1992. Syracuse University Press. p. 12. ISBN 1-931847-26-6.

Forough, Farrokhzad. “A Poem for you”. Translation in English. http://www.forughfarrokhzad.org/collectedworks/collectedworks2.htm

Gholam Reza, Afkhami. The Life and Times of the Shah. 2009. University of California Press. p. 398.

Guity, Nashat*. Women and revolution in Iran.* 1983. Westview Press*.* [ISBN](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Standard_Book_Number) 0-86531-931-6.

Hamid, Dabashi. *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*. (Verso. New York: 2001) p.15

Hamid, Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent* (1993), pp. 419, 443

Hassan, Parsaei. Honaronline. http://www.honaronline.ir/

Hooman, Majd. "Persian Cats." *The Ayatollah Begs to Differ*. 2008. [*Doubleday*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doubleday_%28publisher%29). [ISBN](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Standard_Book_Number) [978-0-385-52334-9](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special%3ABookSources/978-0-385-52334-9).p 26.

Huffingtonpost. “Tehran’s Red Light District-A Side of Iranian Society We Don’t Often See” 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/03/kaveh-golestan-\_n\_4697141.html

Ibrahim, Ayati. A Probe Into The History of Ashura. 2014.The Islamic Republic of Pakistan: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. p. 252.

Iran Chamber Society. “Islamic Revolution of 1979.” www.iranchamber.com (2015).

Isna. “Report on the performance of Four Boxes in Malaysia.”

James A.F , Watson, James A.F. (March 2015). "Stop, look, and listen: orientalism, modernity, and the Shah's quest for the West's imagination" . The UBC journal of Political Studies. Vancouver: Department of Political Science at the University of British Columbia. 2015. 17: 22–36: 26–28.

John, L.Esposito. Oxford Dictionary of Islam. Ed. (Oxford University Press, 2003)

Katouzian, Homa. "State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajars and the Emergence of the Pahlavis", (I.B.Tauris 2006). p 327.

Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolutiion, 1906-1911*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996)

Kristin, Thompson and David, Bordwell. *Film History: An Introduction*. Third Edition. McGraw-Hill press. New York: 2010. p. 608. ISBN 978-0-07-339613-1.

Mahnaz, Afkhami. The Women's Organization of Iran: Evolutionary Politics and Revolutionary Change in Women in Iran from 1800 to the Islamic Republic By Lois Beck and Guity Nashat. 2004. University of Illinois Press.

Margaret, Mills, “The Secret of Laughter: Magical Tales from Classical Persia” *Iranian Studies* 43: 441-43. (2010) Doi: 10.1080/00210861003694099

Martin, Scorsese. http://www.film-foundation.org/world-cinema. Retrieved 6 December 2017.

Martin, Vanessa. “NURI, FAZL-ALLAH”. *Encyclopædia Iranica*. June 19, 2014. Retrieved 27 June 2016.

Mary, Boyce. "Middle Persian Literature" *Handbuch Der Orientalistik* I. Abt., IV. Band 2.

Massoud, Fathi. “Siahkal: A loss that turned into a Legacy.” BBC Persian. 2011. http://www.bbc.com/persian/iran/2011/02/110204\_l13\_siahkal\_masoud\_fathi

Massoud, Mehrabi. “The History of Iranian Cinema.” (2006) www.massoudmehrabi.com

Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*, I (New York: I.B. Tauris 2000) pp.69-70

Mehdi, Yavarmanesh. http://fitf.theater.ir/fa/5908 Fajr International theatre Festival.

Michael M.J Fischer, *Iran, From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, (Madison, WS: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003)

Michael P. Zirinsky; "Imperial Power and Dictatorship: Britain and the Rise of Reza Shah, 1921–1926", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24 (1992), 639–663, Cambridge University Press

Mohammad Gholi, Majd. *Great Britain and Reza Shah: The Plunder of Iran, 1921–1941*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida 2001), pp. 209–213, 217–218

Mohamadreza, Sharifi. *The Culture of Farsi Language* (Tehran: Nashr Now Publications, 2008).

Nelly, Caron. “The Ta’Zieh, the Secret Theatre of Iran.” *The World of Music*. 17:3-10. https://www.jstor.org

Nikki R. Keddie, Yann Richard. *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*. (2006).

# RadiofreeeuropeRadioLiberty. “Tehran Jails Son Of Top Revolutionary Cleric Over Execution Tape.” November 28, 2016. http://www.rferl.org/a/iran-son-of-top-cleric-jailed-executions-audio-tape/28143740.html

# Radio Free Europe, “The Performance of a Ta'zieh During Ashura In Iran”. (2013). http://www.rferl.org

Ruhollah, Khomeini. *Sayings of the Ayatollah Khomeini : political, philosophical, social, and religious* (1980).

S. G. W. Benjamin, *Persia and the Persians*, (London, 1886).

Said Amir, Arjomand. "Shi'ite Jurisprudence and Constitution Making in the Islamic Republic of Iran". In Marty, Martin E.; Appleby, R. Scott. *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance*. 1993. University of Chicago Press.

Sandra, Machey. *The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation*, New York: Dutton, c. 1996 p. 298. , pp. 150-5

Sepideh Zarrinpanah, ‘Shahr-e No; Another Narration of the Prostitutes’ BBC (2013), www.bbc.co.uk/persian

Shafiq shamel, *Goethe and Hafiz* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013) pp. 85-100.

Shapur A Shahbazi, 1991. *Ferdowsi: A Critical Biography,30-49*  (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1991).

Shahla, Mirbakhtyar. *Iranian Cinema And The Islamic Revolution*. (McFarland & Company Incorporated, 2006).

Shaul, Bakhash.Reign of the Ayatollahs. Basic Books (1984),ISBN 0-465-06888-X.

Shirin, Ebadi. *Iran Awakening*. (2006) New York: Random. Pp. 90-1.

Sotodeh. “Khornaq, Behzad, Senemar, and Beyzai’s Masterpiece.” (2009) http://setodeh.wordpress.com.

SourehCinema. http://www.sourehcinema.com

Stanford. Hamid and Christina Moghadam Program of Iranian Studies. http://iranian-studies.stanford.edu/

Stephen C. Poulson. Social Movements in Twentieth Century Iran; Culture, Ideology, and Mobilizing Frameworks. 2006. Plymouth United Kingdom: Lexington Books. P.56

Terri Ginsberg and Chris Lippard. *Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema*. 2010. Plymouth UK: The Scarecrow Press. Pp.65-66.

Vista. “Majlese Ghorbani Senemar.” Last modified April 11. (2012) http://www.vista.ir

Warner, Arthur and Edmond Warner, (translators) The Shahnama of Firdausi, 9 vols. (London: Keegan Paul, 1905-1925)

"Audio file revives calls for inquiry into massacre of Iran political prisoners".  *The Guardian*. Retrieved 7 April 2016.

*Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, Edited by Mark J. Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, Syracuse University Press, 2004, p.xiv

**Appendix**

Translation of The Murder of Cenmar aka Majlese Ghorbani Cenmar

Translation of The Wailing aka Nodbeh

**The Murder of Cenmar**

Translated by Niousha Mesdaghi

**Translator’s Note**

During the translation of this play, I felt that there was less need for interpretation, explanation and involvement from the translator’s point of view as I believe this work of Beyzai was intended to engage audiences from anywhere in the world. The play is very similar to the playwright’s other works written around the same time such as *Death of Yazdgerd*. Due to tensions at the time, it is clear that the play was intended to communicate political issues with foreign audiences and to be staged abroad. Because it is less complex, there are fewer characters presented with Persian titles which means they are easier to identify. As for simplifying titles, the playwright has left many characters as unnamed, such as “The Girl” whom at first glance could be identified as Cenmar’s girl or that of Nu’man. Nameless characters of “The One”, “The Other” etc. was a clever choice for the playwright so he could present a nation, including soldiers, workers, tribe leaders, etc. with less complexity, minimal variety of titles and less need of explanation for them. The background of ancient Persia is yet another area which needs little explanation as the play shows a region that could be anywhere and a local ruler whose character is more undetermined and closer to any unspecified politician than an actual historical figure. Again, therefore, no necessity to explain to an audience. In fact, the characters of the ancient tale are not very important historical figures. Even the source of this tale which is a poetry book mainly focuses on the life of the prime character: The Persian King rather than a local ruler and his architect. This suggests that a very concise introduction of history would be sufficient both for the actors and the audience.

On the other hand, the text of the play is complicated as, throughout of the play, the action or the dialogue is mainly between two characters. The characters seem to be solo when giving their lines so there is no audience on the stage which is unlike what is observed in *The Wailing* where the stage is an actual home with numerous residents and visitors who become part of the play on the stage in long interval. Going back to the play and the main characters, I believe in this situation there is no necessity for a round stage as the topic of discussion of the characters can be set right behind the two actors for instance, the constructional work of the castle. So, I conclude that there is no specification in case of the setting of the play whether it is a desert or else. As mentioned earlier, the setting could be pictured behind the standing characters on stage whom are wrought in a constant nettle of words, debates, etc. In contrast, the feelings of anxiety, sadness, anger, and despair need further stage direction and use of sound, music and imagery to convey this to the audience; many musical elements are used in the performance. The use of sound effects could be common ones such as the beat of a drum which usually announces the entry of a person of higher rank - in this case, the Persian King. The same drum could be used to represent and convey a sudden feeling such as fear, shock, or a sudden realization or final conclusion.

**Characters of the Play**

Cenmar. The Architect

Nu’man. The King of Al-Hira

The Girl. Daughter of Nu’man

The One.

The Other.

The Other One

*[They play different roles including builders of the castle, servants, beggars, mullahs, heads of tribes, the glorious ones, chevaliers, and such like.]*

*The stage crew in black [They make sound-effects and are there to move scenery and props, assist with wardrobe and play musical instruments.]*

*A double door at the right-hand side of the stage made from fancy wood and well caved befitting a Khawarnaq (aka Palace, castle); a glimmer of light, which intensifies each moment that passes by. In the middle of the scene, the stick stands horizontally and the whole stage is covered in sand. Somewhere at the left side of the stage, stands a dry carinal. One or two ladders and a few barrows and a wheelbarrow are scattered on stage. In the barrows there are bricks and clay, enough for decoration. Also, pieces of fabric colored blue, purple, black, brown and gray for making turbans, scarves and caps which have to be kept hidden until the right time. In the end they take them all along with the stick except for the ladder where Cenmar was hung.*

*[All darkness. Local music; something close to a cry and yell; a cry which is cut short by the fearful scream of some men and with the light on the stage, the body of Cenmar appears lying flat on the ground. With the last sigh of Cenmar and the fall of his hand, which seemed to have been raised for the very last ray of hope, the stage is lit. “The One” is frantically running in the dusty clothes of a camel man, “The Other” dressed in sailor’s clothes runs from the left, and “The Other One” who had sat on the left side holding his face in fear, fearfully gets up to find courage to look at the corpse. He’s dressed in a mudded hat, belt, and pole of an officer.]*

**The One** *[ just arrived]* Who is this person lying on the ground;

 Whose throat is cut, face bruised, and his back broken?

**The Other** *[just arrived]* say this broken man, with dying breath, last sigh!

**The One** Who are you and who shall mourn for you?

 Who shall seek your revenge? From which tribe are you?

**The Other** What is your name-that someone may know?

 How can we know who you are?

**The One** What did your mother or father name you?

**The Other One** *[still staring at the corps]* Cenmar!

**The One** *[frowns]* Hah? It’s him who built the Khawarnaq?

**The Other** *[examines the corpse in disbelief]* It’s him and I wouldn’t recognize?

**The One** *[ignores]* No-don’t believe it; he was so dear!

**The Other** *[curious]* and why did he die so tragically?

**The One** *[looks high above the Khawarnaq]* and why didn’t we fall from there, ha?

**The Other One** Since he built a construction so high and mighty;

As high as forty people above each other;

And we didn’t!

**The One** *[in denial]* So he fell from what he built himself!

**The Other One** For sure he was thrown from what he had built.

Khawarnaq so glorious;

That made all to stare, to find in the height of sky.

Soil, water, wind and fire together,

Created such a tower so astonishing, from which he was thrown down!

**The One** *[still unbelievable; towards the corps]* you poor thing fell from your own construction;

What was the point of this construction?

**The Other One** *[furious]* what’s it with the construction; since they order to have you thrown?

**The One** *[shocked]* ha? You said thrown?

**The Other One** I wouldn’t say if I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes!- from up there;

 The highest Arch, as tall as forty men above each other!

**The One** *[aggressive]* you saw him thrown- but not the reason?

**The Other** *[still confused, still gazing at the corps, with shaking lips and enmity]*

**The Other One** It was why they say the higher you build, the more horrific the fall would be!

*[becoming furious]* and as hard as he worked, he worked for his own death!

This is why they say be humble and that you were created of soil!

And they say don’t aim too high and have no greed!

**The One** *[accusing]* if you saw, then you know who threw him off!

**The Other One** He’s a great man;

Nu’man, the son of Amr-Al Gheis who ordered the construction!

**The One** *[in denial]* you’re joking with me and this would put me in trouble!

**The Other** did you say nonsense or did I misunderstand you?

*[Unbelieving and impatient*] **Nu’man**-who is the head of this desert?

**The Other One** For me he was the head of the desert until he ordered the construction.

And since I saw that he had him thrown with my own eyes,

I asked are you sane?

**The One** *[broken]* happy are those who never built,

Or built so short,

So that when the fell, they didn’t die or break a bone!

Happy the dogmatic!

Who never considered themselves as superior to creation;

And didn’t fall like this either!

**The Other One** You who is mocking it!

No! if no one built, in the beginning the world would have been such deserted place!

**The Other** Yes- People’s names remain after what they build!

And what they build is their true self!

**The Other One** umm-yes; Khawarnaq is the identity of Cenmar,

 And death is that of Nu’mans’!

*[The corpse slowly stands.]*

**Cenmar** I’m Cenmar and I rise to tell how I fell.

As I was falling, I was closer to the sky than earth.

And in that moment of disbelief-hanging between earth and sky-

I fell to the emptiness of air

And the earth became my death

Yes between death and life, I counted the bricks

That I laid there with my own hand,

And each of them with horror for a hundred times

Asked why, why, why?

And my answer

Was only to hear the sound of my breaking bones!

With me, the reputation of Nu’man fell from there.

A great man, who demanded a Khawarnaq as great as his reputation.

And I built what destroyed me;

Khawarnaq which fitted the Khor[[265]](#footnote-265)

As high as forty men above each other!

Khawarnaq that became known worldwide;

Bad reputation!

From the time, he had been thrown from up there, so was my reputation destroyed.

**The One** Do you see what I see?

**The Other One** Is it due to his loneliness that Cenmar is walking around his own corpse?

**Cenmar** For what crime were you killed Cenmar?

**The Other** I heard so, This was my question as well!

**Cenmar** What a long way you came to die!

And how your patience was cut short;

And through the sound of the breaking of your bones!

Did you get your prize?

*[From the door of the Khawarnaq, Nu’man enters hurridly.]*

**Nu’man** Give me back my reputation

That fell along with him from the Khawarnaq!

No-wind! where are you taking my name in disgrace?

Become a Tornado and swing within yourself.

And cry over the worst which has been done;

But don’t go any further, don’t ruin my reputation in the world!

I wish the Khawarnaq was not this high;

I wish he hadn’t built it as high as my pride!

I wish it was as low as ground;

That when he fell from it, would make us both laugh

I would take his hand and he’ll stand

I would take the dust on his clothes

And again he would talk of Khawarnaq

-as tall as forty men on top of each other-

that would resemble the human pride;

and his dream! And before him, my own!

I wish I could clean my name,

That he built this and I had him killed!

**The One** Now should I laugh or cry?

This is Nu’man, the son of Amr-Al Gheis

And he’s talking nonsense!

**The Other** Nu’man talk more;

What you say is wind that flies!

What you’ve done is your deed!

**Cenmar**  In my dream I had built a Khawarnaq

That was as tall as forty men above each other;

And that I fly from its top;

And a man disguised-dressed in dark-

Strikes me from its top.

An Archer lets go of the cord;

And the arrow approaches me howling-

And I didn’t care.

And when I hit the ground in pain,

I got up from the dream; and there was Nu’man’s messenger on an Arabian horse;

Asking Are you the Persian Architect of Roman legacy,

That had the plan of a Khawarnaq?

I said it’s me and he said read this letter!

**The Other One** *[brings the letter out]* How would a messenger know what is in the letter?

Is it ordering life or death?

Construction or destruction?

When I took the letter it seems he had dreamt it!

**Nu’man** [*opens the letter*] I was the king of Sahara[[266]](#footnote-266) for years;

I used to count the rocks that are uncountable –

And now I have gold even more than the rocks!

I mean to become civilized

And for the kind I am, I want a palace.

Me-the king of Vahede[[267]](#footnote-267)-

As far as I could see, didn’t see anything but destruction from previous kings!

In this sabulous, where can you find a palace that wasn’t ruined by the sun;

Or being swept away by the wind?

I-who is known as the head of the desert-

Can weave a tent form the wool of camel;

But civilization no-can put my hands in clay!

*[folds the letter]* bring an architect from somewhere!

Who is this Persian Architect in Rome?

Summon him! Here is the gold, and the desert- Where’s your art?

Present your art here!

**Cenmar** *[opens the letter]* it was written: build a construction in the crossway of wind;

And on floating sand!

In the land flooded for years!

**Nu’man** This is the plan- [*sits and draws on the ground*]:

Make a wall all around the desert

And an arch monument that from beneath its ceiling, I could see the sky-

Just like I used to watch sky from my tent;

Day and night-yes- that pass on their own by sunset and sunrise!

If you do so

And if not, don’t call yourself an architect!

**The Other One** *[puts the letter away]* I said don’t be astonished and in disbelief! “This is the story: Persia’s winter is on the way

And the Persian king is headed towards our land of desert

Nu’man is struggling to keep up with the taste of the coming king.

*[Cenmar starts wandering.]*

**Cenmar** Why didn’t I then hear the sound of my bones being crushed?

Why didn’t I ask how could I build such palace

On floating sand?

**Nu’man** reads a letter: The king will stay for a full season.

I, Nu’man must meet his state, what is so great about Persia then?

They’re the world leaders and proud of it;

Thus looking down on us!

I’ve heard of their gorgeous palaces placed on monuments;

And the visibility of sky from its arch.

Let’s not have them to say that we feed on the desert and that our food is drenched in sand!

That we had never known pure water!

That we lay on rocks and our dreams are in dust!

That our vow is not for real yet floating like our sand!

Let them not say that there is no trust!

**Cenmar** I said, my father is Persian and my mother is from Roman Persia.

I’ve seen the Persian gardens which are the dream of every Roman!

And their seven floor palaces;

For the sake of seven heavens.

What can I build better than what they already have?

Bring the best architect from Persia.

And he’ll build you a better palace than theirs.

**Nu’man**: The Persian king has seen much of Persian palaces,

We need something new;

A roman house covered in Arabic gold; with a Persian Arch.

The desert demands it;

The sky and stars demand towers;

And when Sahara bores you, now a Khawarnaq;

Which from its top, you could see the world-

And in the seven heavens of earth, you could count the stars as you count rocks!

I said then forget the Persian and bring Roman;

One who knows both the architecture of Persia and Rome!

Yes, build a Khawarnaq, which is both Persian and Roman;

Shall build a palace for the glory of the kinds!

I hear his name; Cenmar, the Architect who’s of Persian and Roman blood;

Summon him to impress the King of Persia!

**Cenmar** Unless I build a palace on sand which floats like a ship!

 I can’t even save myself from drowning in the sea of sand!

 I said that architects build houses on stone ground;

Not on slippery ground,

Not on floating sand,

Not in swamp,

On the sea of sand, there are lizards;

And only camels can ride on waves of sand!

I said I should do something not accomplished by architecture!

On the sea of sand of Nu’man’s people

Where their tents are their ships;

And their sticks are shovels in sand.

Is it my dream to build a Persian Khawarnaq there?

**Nu’man** Tell me Cenmar, what are you thinking?

That you could humiliate me in the face of the Persian king?

Time is running and its springtime;

In a glance of time, the winter of Persia arrives and the guests shall arrive.

Tell me as I’m listening thoroughly!

**The One** We heard whatever he said.

**The Other One** I was the translator and I told and heard

**The Other** Yes whatever he said I heard as well.

Was there anyone in Sahara who didn’t hear at all?

**Cenmar** I told him I need thousands of workers and brick makers,

And furnaces for anneal!

And Carpenters and hatchers and squarers;

And those who coil the wood;

And create strings and framework;

And cranes and leverages and arbalests,

**Nu’man**  Oh! This much?

**Cenmar** I said thousands of shovels and wheel barrows

 and trowels and riddles!

And all carpenters, screeners and hodders!

And all designers and decorators!

**Nu’man** You know money doesn’t grow on trees! Don’t you Cenmar?

**Cenmar** This is the plan [on his knees draws on ground]:

From six angles, the Khawarnaq has a doorway to six landscapes;

One towards the river and carinals, one towards the Sahara and the caravans,

One towards the flowing wind in the cedar forest,

One towards the palm trees,

One towards the oasis,

And one towards the running of wild horses of the sand land.

**Nu’man** so in between- you take the Sahara from us. Is that right cenmar?

The Sahara that is so dear to us.

**Cenmar** You cannot have both sahara and Khowarnaq at the same time!

Yes Khawarnaq will take over the Sahara!

It’s going to be hugely latticed and enclosed by walls

With a few wind shades and canopies and funnels

With an arch monument and throne and a multiple entrance hall;

Khawarnaq as tall as forty men above each other!

**Nu’man** You aim too high Cenmar! Is this real or just a dream?

**Cenmar**: give me full forty cubits of cedar trees;

So that I could make forty poles for the Khawarnaq!

**Nu’man**: You’re asking for the impossible!

You’ll humiliate me and have me blamed among Arabs!

**Cenmar**: and forty more to hold the Arch!

And forty more to build it on to the ground!

And forty more to hold the back of the construction!

And forty more for the steps!

And forty more for the ground we build the Khawarnaq on!

**Nu’man**: hey what plan have you got in mind for my gold?

**Cenmar** Yes I need Carpenters and saws!

Not until you take action and strike the cedar tree, it shall not fall,

And not until it’s rolled and pulled, it shall not come on its own!

**Nu’man** You will displace my cedar forest?

**Cenmar** And I’ll transform it into the shape of a Khawarnaq!

Construction demands work and determination;

You can’t construct while not spoiling nature!

Brick is clay; nothing you find is going to be intact!

And nothing remains intact!

And not until you begin, you don’t build a Khawarnaq!

**Nu’man** and these workers shall not ask for gold?

**Cenmar**  It is you who wanted the Khawarnaq in the first place not me!

I was living my own life, my own dream!

It was you who summoned me to build your dream castle!

**The Other One**  As I heard, I whispered to myself he is going way too far!

Nu’man is a wise man but not when it comes to money!

**Nu’man** Gold is for the decoration of the columns and gifts for the guests!

**Cenmar** Do you have anything else?

**Nu’man** Nothing more than anything!

**Cenmar** I’ll take some of this to feed many!

**The One** This much rudeness towards Nu’man?

Anyone who hears of this will think he’s gone out of his mind!

**The Other One** Be frank!

This isn’t Persian nor Roman

As they both speak in shroud.

Such Frankness belonged only to Cenmar, and just him!

**Nu’man** As a matter of fact I’ve got nothing-haven’t you understood?

No power- like kings who force them

No predictions-like those of the Canaan prophets- to deceive them!

So carefully take what I said; Nothing!

And you know well that when I have none,

It means None!

**Cenmar** But I do. A smaller Khawarnaq for each of them!

**Nu’man** You’re not saying the truth here!

**Cenmar** Do I have any other choice but speaking the truth?

**Nu’man** *[furious]* Are you mocking me?

**The Other One**  This is the fury of a person who has been exposed!

**The Other** What has made this man lose his mind? I guess Cenmar was seating on a boat; while hitting it himself with an axe.

**Cenmar** You come all, you can gaze from at the Khawarnaq that Cenmar has had in mind;

Come, here is the brick. Look at it; I shall draw a plan on it that you could build your own home on that.

Any one who cuts a cedar tree for the Khawarnaq,

Shall receive its branches for the ceiling of his house as a prize,!

**Nu’man** *[engraged]* You’re giving away my cedar tree’s branches!

**Cenmar** Without the columns, the khawarnaq shall fall down!

**Nu’man** What have I got myself in to!

**Cenmar** You wanted to become like Persia and Rome;

With the world you assumed to be superior-

So first change yourself Nu’man!

Have no fear and think;

Under the Arch you build put columns!

The actual columns are those who build it!

**Nu’man** I shall remember this boldness of yours in ignoring me!

**Cenmar** Anyone who puts a hundred bricks on to the Khawarnaq;

Shall take ten for his house and ten for stable.

**Nu’man** *[enraged]* You give away my bricks!

**Cenmar** You mean those that you won’t own unless they make them?

**Nu’man** you’re catholic and so generous like the kings!

So listen-anyone who builds a door for the Khawarnaq,

Shall take a window for his own!

*[enraged]* I wish I never desired a Khawarnaq!

For all clay-men and carpenters,

Give dates and camel milk with bread;

And every ten days a roasted camel shall be given to you all.

*[enraged]* Cenmar you’re giving away my dates, camel milk, bread, and Camels meat!

**Cenmar** No you give it away so that they work with heart and soul for you!

**The One** I walked in as a brick worker!

**The Other** As the Carpenter!

**The One** I said what it is that we do;

While exhausted from camel riding!

**The Other** exhausted of sailing!

I as making coil of wood!

**The One** I was making brick in the furnace!

**The Other One** I was checking on the bricks being made.

**The One** I ate bread and drank milk of camel!

**The Other** Dates every day; and sometimes roasted camel!

**The One** I was making stands for the columns;

Stairs to reach ceiling!

**The Other** I was climbing the framework to make the dome!

**Nu’man** The making of this Khawarnaq turned more costly that I thought it would be.

I’ve never known how Arabs were so eager for easy money!

They were all hungry for it and I never knew?

Why should I pay for it;

As soon as I do so everyone becomes a beggar!

No-no-no as much as I spend is the price of my stupidity!

No-you’re wasting my savings Cenmar;

Do you have to feed them all?

**Cenma**r Have you seen an agile starving man?

To carry something heavy and feel no exhaustion?

No Nu’man-If you skip their food, they’ll skip on work!

You seven people who know can read and draw the plan

Just like the planets of still star, stand around me

So that I tell everyone what to do!

Nu’man You’re making a name for yourself over giving away my savings;

I feel sorrow and you’re happy!

**Cenmar** My happiness is for the wall that is rising

And columns standing on their own;

And the doors that are just as I wanted them to be.

And the ceiling of seven heavens, is Persian blue from outside

And a rainbow from inside!

And if this is what makes you sad-quit;

Forget the Khawarnaq- and I know my way back home!

**Nu’man** No the reputation of this khawarnaq has gone to faraway lands even before being finished!

And what I see in front of me, is keeping me sleepless at night.

And now my soul demands this sanctuary.

Where is my writer? Send a letter to Abyssinia and Menubias;

Ask for workers as many as possible.

All ready and dressed to work!

And We haven’t yet talked about your prize!

And you choose it to your roman taste and I shall not reject;

What prize do you seek for this service you do?

**Cenmar** From my Persian side

What should I say as I’ve been summoned by the king of Arabs?

My prize is, your contempt over my work!

**Nu’man** Don’t test me and don’t make me laugh! No prize? I don’t believe it!

Even the gods of Al-Hira do not do it without prize;

-All the sacrifices and gifts every now and then-

And with all that yet no one has seen them build a Khawarnaq!

How are you building one without prize?

**Cenmar** Look at the sands Sultan; I fear futility.

**Nu’man** No give up on the duty Cenmar!

I swear to the holy idols of the tribes

I shall give you a prize you couldn’t have dreamt of; If you for true show me what you have drawn on brick in this field!

I’m not bragging-No! I’m building this Khawarnaq for the king who shall return twice whatever you prize him with.

Why do you build it for?

**Cenmar** I told you I’m building only to accomplish something for myself.

**Nu’man** no, don’t let me owe you Cenmar;

Tell me about it and have no shame!

I swear to the holy idols, my best camel belongs to you!

My best horse with its straddle!

No this is not enough;

Seventy of my best goats with the bells!

Take it easy Nu’man, lets be generous, Yes-

I will even entitle you my youngest daughter, whose a famous beauty among Arabs!

Yes my daughter with her dowry!

**The Other One** If I had believed that I should have been stupid;

Every day he spoke and asked for a think.

You couldn’t say yes nor no-No!

I was the translator between the two, when they failed to talk;

And the eye witness- of how Cenmar made every brick one after the other.

*[Cenmar smashes two bricks-]*

**Nu’man** *[furious]* I used to walk a straight path in the desert

From here to there, effortless!

Why should I circle the Khawarnaq?

I used to walk with my eyes closed while the breeze touched my face;

Why should I now hit the wall, while having my eyes closed?

With all this, I wonder what a beautiful Khawarnaq it is!

It intermingles with what I’ve seen of Persian patterns;

And better than what I’ve heard of Roman palaces!

How could worthless clay turn to such valuable palace-except by the art?

**Cenmar** we defeated the flowing sands by the use of walls!

And we built a floor with the coil of cedar tree!

**Nu’man** *[yells]* Damn the wall; I want the flowing sands.

**Cenmar** We had a branch of Euphrates to cross the Khawarnaq!

**Nu’man** [yelling and suspicious] what should we do with the tides? And the outbreak of the river?

**Cenmar** We have built a dam around the Khawarnaq with cedar and palm cedars!

**Nu’man** Now the outbreak is inside me!

**Cenmar** It was an old world and we modernized it!

**Nu’man** I want the world just as it had been created!

**The One** I haven’t forgotten –No! the fear of you both!

The day we all ran from the rage of Nu’man!

 I threw myself into the Euphrates and so many ran to the desert!

The day that he showed up with an arch and arrow and pole and sword

On a horse yelling;

Just as if a thousand-year-old Genie had escaped from a cave!

[*Nu’man yelling on his horse-arch in hand-is riding with his head and face covered; all three ran away or fall down or hold on to their stick to stand*.]

**Cenmar** [*fearful*] Nu’man why have you covered your face and worn black?

I swear to god you look like the Archer I’ve seen in my dream!

**Nu’man** where should I point my arrow to so that it calms my rage?

**Cenmar** Point it towards the beasts and genies, who are hidden in the sand storm- and are disrupting our work!

 **Nu’man** You said problem? No; I swear to the great idols

That I made this problem for myself

Not the beasts or the genies!

**The Other One** Reveal your face! Are a friend or foe?

When you’re striking those who work for Nu’man!

**The Other** Oh god! Give Nu’man back to us from this Archer!

**The One** I swear to god this the horse of Nu’man that a monster is riding upon!

 **Nu’man**: Why should I gift you the best camel I own?

 Why should this palace be named after you and not me?

 Why should I gift you with seventy of the best goats of mine?

 The workers of the Khawarnaq are appreciating you and not me!

 Why did I give my best horse with its saddle;

 To ride on it around the Khawarnaq, and to feel proud of your work?

 Why did I give you my youngest daughter who’s known as an Arab beauty?

 To marry a foreigner and one whose superior to her father?

**The One** And that girl, god bless her, is truly a famous beauty among Arabs!

Poets sing odes in praise of her eyes; some bluntly some in vein!

The dream of her hair is the sanctuary for the travelers; both known and hidden!

**The Other** you didn’t mention the sailors in their ships-

When faced to the thunder and storm!

**The One** There is song in the desert in praise of her beauty,

**The Other** Her dance-like walk drives people crazy!

As if she has the essence of a legendry goddess!

**The Other One** You’re mad! Which one is more fair; the girl or the Khawarnaq?

*[Nu’man screaming and tearing his clothes runs around the scene-]*

**Nu’man** you made columns out of my cedars

You buried my rocks beneath the bricks you made!

You covered my sky over the ceiling!

The galaxy and the milky way!

You made my winds

Prisoners against the walls!

You just left a small site of the landscapes of the Euphrates and the cedar forest and the desert!

When I pass through my desert;

Why-Why should I open and close a door?

**Cenmar** It was you who wanted the palace

If I had rejected you, you would have punished me!

You think I haven’t heard the threats,

And your complaints of how you wanted a tent to cover all the desert

And to have the world under your ceiling;

And to build a construction so strong

That no wind could have torn it apart!

If I hadn’t built, it was you who would have had the sword and pride of an Arab!

You would have raged over me and attacked me through every means!

Instead of sophistication, be with us or not;

You can’t have the desert and the Khawarnaq at the same time!

*[The three men cover themselves with a dark veil.]*

**Nu’man** Last night I dreamt of my father Amr-Al Gheis!

He said where is the Sahara

Where we used to ride together?

I pointed towards it!

But the Sahara was not there by a glance of wind;

And the camels were only pictures on the walls of Khawarnaq!

He said where’s the cedar forest

Where fear of monsters arose?

I pointed towards it but at a glance it was gone;

And the huge cedars like monsters and beasts were the guardians of the Khawarnaq!

My father- Amr-Al Gheis disappeared in a glance;

And I thought he cursed me!

 **Cenmar**: Just order and I will stop Nu’man!

 Just say the word and it will be done;

 If you order, I’ll give up on the Khawarnaq!

 **Nu’man**: I can’t say no nor yes!

 I swear to god every night I dream of its destruction

 And every morning I get up by the dream of it

 How could you give up Cenmar?

 Could you return the cedar forest of mine?

 Or the soil for the clay, you took from the hills?

 Or return the Camels that were roasted and consumed?

**Cenmar**: Ah Nu’man! I swear to god this has got nothing to do with the creation of the Khawarnaq;

 It’s you who’s being re-created!

 All of us are being created!

 I’ve never known a great person,

 Who without accomplishment became great at all!

 Have the Khawarnaq’s legacy all to yourself, if that’s what’s bothering you!

How did the dried land of Sahara

-the superstitious way of genies and ghosts-

Become this dear to you, that you visit your dead father over it?

**Cenmar**: Nu’man, you’re insecure!

You don’t know if you want civilization or not?

You don’t know if you want your world as constructed or untouched?

You want the build Khawarnaq without construction;

For the desert to remain the same after you build a Khawarnaq on it?

You seek the impossible!

Or if I’m not mistaken, you’re reluctant to pay for it;

You want construction, if someone else pays for it?

Without change, effort, or price?

 How could civilization happen on its own?

Other people are building it;

If you can’t help that, then just pay for it!

**The Other** I remember, this was the cry I heard as well!

**The One** [*agitated*] Who was the one who didn’t hear then?

**The Other One** the work of Khawarnaq wasn’t going on,

When he was making it brick by brick,

When one day they ordered its construction,

And the day after they threatened him to destroy it!

**Cenmar** *[furious]* What are these excuses?

I didn’t ask for a woman!

And your best horse, goats, and best camel!

I did this construction for the sake of civilization and that’s it!

**Nu’man** What an ominous cry this is and comes from who?

You Persian commoner,

You promiscuous Roman,

You reject the prize of the Al-Hira King that is longed for by all?

**Cenmar** I haven’t been given any prize but suffering;

And I swear to god I fear the prize you’re promising me of!

It is already enough! I don’t want the time I have lost;

Nor the hopes I have lost!

I said I shall return Nu’man-if you don’t wish so;

I’ll take my art somewhere else.

**Nu’man** I’ll kill the horse that rides you away from me!

And I shall cut the throat of the camel that hides you away!

You’re going? -and they’ll ask me where is the Khawarnaq that its fame has touched the world?

Where is the Khawarnaq that combines the art of Persians and Rome?

And my father Amr-Al Gheis shall blame me from his grave;

Of how I didn’t appreciate such talented builder?

And I’ll be left in vein that I displeased Cenmar;

And I didn’t build the palace I promised the Persian king to be built?

**Cenmar** I hear no more of this Nu’man

You will not have the same idea tomorrow!

Give me back my horse;

The same black one I came with!

And if you want, just sell my own horse to me;

Or any other one!

**Nu’man** Strike him-quick!- and kill the horse!

*[Three men attack yelling at Cenmar and chain him.]*

**Nu’man** Tie his feet so tight!

But not in a way that he can’t climb!

And not the way he may fall off a ladder!-Did you tie him?

Now Cenmar you can climb the tower and frame work;

But you can’t ride on horse or camel!

So you haven’t got a choice. Do you understand?

Be aware that I wouldn’t hesitate to break your legs if you intend to escape!

**Cenmar** Ah! The cry for release has brought chains upon my feet!

Is this how you treat men in Al-Hira?

By chaining them for the prize of their talent?

**Part II**

**The One** The story of the builders was told by the Caravans;

 Who told it almost everywhere they went!

**The Other** The story of the builders, from shore to shore, became the song of the sailors;

Who sailed on Euphrates, from coast to coast!

**The Other One** *[They Sing]* All the sand in Sahara- *[The two sing together]*

 And all the sand flaoting in the wind,

 As if they said that the Khawarnaq[[268]](#footnote-268) is built;

 And as high and strong that even storm could not reach it!

**Cenmar**  I swear to god you torture me!

You won’t allow me to leave, nor will you let me finish the construction of

the Khawarnq;

You haven’t left a single hope for me!

I remember the night you secretly brought your family

To see the Khawarnaq-by torchlight-

And I was busy working.

And you who were raving in less than hour;

 Now you were so proud and bragging of it.

 And me-as I am always-concealed myself

 And shameful of its flaws

 That for a moment I saw her;

 Peaking at the Khawarnaq

 Or at me?

 God bless her-The most beautiful Arab-

 I should have gone a hundred times to visit her,

 And yet she has come;

 Was she amazed by the Khawarnaq, or the other way around?

 You had brought her for a moment to torment me

 To stop me and forget about leaving

 Or she has come by her own will;

 Maybe curious about the foreigner-whom she’s been promised to-

 And the glance that killed me was just a coincidence?

 I swear to god you torment me!

 Why should I work on the Khawarnaq every night?

 by the hope that she may visit again,

 I look at the hot sands, and they bring despair to my heart,

 The beauty of the moon hurts my feelings so bad,

 I see myself as a torn cloud in the sky,

 I swear to god you made me sleepless at night!

 The more I try the less it works.

 Could I have pictured the spell of your eyes on the wall? No-

 Where the king of Persia shall look!

 He will fall in love too-

 And to ask for her hand from you and taken from me?

 I said no-forget about this dream!

 I work on the Khawarnaq over and over;

 Until you give her as prize; or you set me free!

**Numan**  I’ve done such wrong- to have promised her in the first place!

The Persian of Rome has lost his mind and soul.

And from now on knows that Arab beauty as his wife;

And he glorifies her as the prize of the efforts on this work!

Still I have doubts to let her embrace him at all;

Or gift her to the Persian King that is more beneficial!

*[A buzz; three men in black wearing disguise and golden medallions, with draggers on their waists. They’re shielding Nu’man’s daughter with their arms.]*

**The One** We’re eunuchs; The guardians and confidents of Nu’man’s daughter,

That despite her young age, has the love of the greatest men.

And we’re here to question you on her behalf!

**Cenmar**  Its my pleasure; and I greet the beautiful jewel!

**The Other** She’s saying god bless you architect; how many stars are there?

And how many sands are here?

**Cenmar** My father used to quote from the clerics notes:

These sands are not countable

Nor you can read them nor count them!

And as god is my witness-I would never draw your name on sand;

That the wind could blow it away easily!

And the stars are the guardians of the veiled moon;

Whom I wished for, and her slightest attention!

**The Other One** She’s saying: god bless you architect, what does your name mean?

And she wants to know it for the sake of a dream!

**Cenmar** My father quoted from the book of names: The Phoenix of Sun!

My father knew a story of Phoenix,

That flew through the land to find the highest peak;

To go higher than that!

**The Girl** *[impatient]* says Ah! You spoke of my dream; and it touched my heart!

**Cenmar** And by hearing your voice, it touched mine too!

**The One** *[towards them]* We didn’t hear of this conversation!

**The Other** She says what is the golden prize of yours, for this work of art?

**Cenmar** I swear to god I’ve never known a better prize but sunrise and sunset;

When my heart is with the one whom I’ve been estranged with!

Gold? No! What can I gain with gold?

Youth? Love? Or a good name?

My prize is to look upon the Khawarnaq;

Which was just a dream in the past-

And today it’s filled with love, if you visit it again.

The building-just like my dreams-

Every hour has a distinct color under the sun;

And from this rainbow, something has caught my heart,

Saying that nothing compares to your eyes!

**The Other** She’s saying god bless you architect, this desert is all wind;

And we’re in the crossway of this windy land;

What do you say of the seasonal winds?

**Cenmar**  This is not where I belong for sure-no!

If you come to Rome or Persia, you shall be so welcomed!

And if you’re in love with your land, for you, I shall forget the rest of the world!

**The One** Another question-

**The Other** If you don’t mind!

**The Other One** She’s asking we’re of different faiths!

Is yours like that of your idols?

**Cenmar** In my life I only have one idol;

And you should know that I worship it truly!

**Nu’man** How wrong this was- my daughter

Why did I mention her in the first place to make him fall in love?

Already my Arab honor is at stake.

I wish I had her buried alive as a child!

Such beauty so delegate;

That if the old Arabic tradition was still around

I should have married her myself!

 *[A buzz, three men return to where they had come from-]*

**The One** Do you regret giving this prize?

**The Other** And then perhaps you would regret, the regretful prize!

**The Other One** I’ve heard of excuses on the oppressions in the world;

Excuses to make you feel better or to seduce the crowds!

**Nu’man** Cenmar you knew nothing of my passions!

And if you don’t, who else shall ever know?

You never knew that enemies march one by one- with rebuke- all asking for my daughter’s hand in marriage.

**Cenmar**  I knew although I never asked for it.

**Nu’man**  No Cenmar you couldn’t see; what they were buzzing about!

**Cenmar**  I saw though I was not looking;

I heard though I was not listening.

**Nu’man** These were the Arab builders;

Though they never built anything; except its thought.

[*Three men who were digging the ground throw something over their head and get up*-]

**The One** Nu’man has put us down and promoted Cenmar!

Was there no other architect in Al-Hira[[269]](#footnote-269),

That forced you to bring-a sinister- from far away lands?

**The Other** You praised and glorified a foreigner and put down the Arab!

**The Other One** You’ve chosen a Roman of Persian blood;

Arab means nothing to you!

**Nu’man** What are you saying; I’ve chosen an architect who knows how to work;

I didn’t choose him for being Persian or Roman!

**The One** What has he accomplished that Arabs didn’t?

To put one brick upon the other is something that anyone is capable of!

**The Other** Doesn’t it bring shame on you to declare the incapability of the Arabs,

by building such a tower?

**The Other One** Is it not shameful for you that Khawarnaq was built by a foreigner and one of your own people?

**The One** Is it no shame for you that your best camel, best horse and the goats were gifted to a foreigner?

**The Other** And worst of all- oh! Your daughter who is the most beautiful among Arabs?

**The Other One** No other king has ever been this wise to his people;

And appointed a foreigner on his people!

**Nu’man**  I denied them all Cenmar, and send them all away!

Not for your sake,

Not as if they weren’t speaking the truth;

Not that their art was worthless.

And they all used it against me!

**The One** When did you consider us? Did you hear from us that we weren’t capable of building Khawarnaq?

**The Other** Why shouldn’t the King of Persian look down at you?

As you yourself look down at us as you tribal men.

**The Other One** Everyone knows that the King of Persia –whom you praise for glory-

Never asked for a palace.

It was you who wanted to impress the Persian king with the palace!

**Nu’man** Yes-Even from now they’re coming in crowds to see the Khawarnaq.

Caravans change their root to stop by here.

And maidens say yes to suitors who promise the sight of the Khawarnaq!

From now on, the marketers are selling milk and bread to visitors.

Lending their tents at different costs:

The expensive are ones woven from camel wool and cheaper ones from goat’s wool!

From now on poets are writing poems based on each and every brick.

Come and look upon the pictures on the wall:

Fish floating in sea;

Or maybe it’s the sea floating in the fish!

And a bird flying the sky;

And the sky itself is a flying as a bird over us!

I swear to god that king of Persia comes;

To see a king like himself, not to see him inferior!

**The One** Nu’man you are aiming high;

All in the good of a Roman?

And not in the laboring Arabs?

**Nu’man**  No I see them and I see them as decent!-and you see for yourself;

That the useless have become bold?

The ones who use to measure the tents by sake of looking,

Are now using mathematics to measure.

They shall put compass and bob to work;

And placing few mortars within a wall!

Building a palace which would last for a thousand of years!

The tradition of the kings of Babylon and Assyria has been revived!

Builders from different tribes;

And of different faiths,

Have all sworn together to build this.

Where are you Cenmar?-How much time do we have to winter?

Will you bet that you finish it on time?

**The One** Khawarnaq was rightfully ours!

**The Other** Your best horse, camel, seventy of your best goats;

Was rightfully ours;

And your daughter-the youngest-whose beauty is famed among Arabs!

**Nu’man** It was rightfully yours for certain?

Don’t say more, those Koch and slums that you make,

That each one is a disgrace!

Take a look at the Khawarnaq once;

Which one of you did ever build a wall taller than yourself?

Which one of you built a cumulus to resist against wind?

Which one of you built a ceiling that didn’t fall off?

With your slums you can’t welcome anybody;

And your unfinished structures are nothing but old and clumsy!

Yes, You are Arabs and Proud-

What do you need a house for?

And why do you need a bed to lay in instead of the rocks and sands?

Yes you ride upon your horse of honor, which is stuck in sand!

And now that one has made an effort in moving forward;

You wish to stop him.

What is this excuse?

His fault is being a foreigner?
That he’s not of our tribe?

That he rides upon his knowledge and not our horse of pride?

**The One** Who has heard of an Arab King,

Whom for the sake of a Roman-Who is not even the greatest-

Quarrels with his own tribe?

**The Other** And he knows, that this is rejecting us!

**The Other One** And he knows that unwanted knowledge is a criticism of ignorance!

**The One** He, with this Khawarnaq is announcing our ignorance;

Showing off what we haven’t accomplished!

**Nu’man** I understand you-yes

Everyone knows how to put a brick upon the other;

What you hadn’t in mind was that with the brick, they actually build!

He had the plan for a Khawarnaq;

Until the time he came up with this plan, we had none!

**The One** Nu’man! You speak Persian with the king of Persia

But we have heard of the Persian tales!

You think we know nothing of the Names Rostam[[270]](#footnote-270), Zal[[271]](#footnote-271), and Esfandiar[[272]](#footnote-272)?

**The Other** Their glory has terrified you;

And you saw us incapable of such a thing!

**The One** You responded with Roman glory to their glory!

Made us beg the Romans!

**The Other One** Arabs have always lived in tents then what do we have to do with the Persian domes?

which are scattered in Rome as well?

**The Other** And their wind catchers of lattice checkers!

And the Minarets of fire they built from house to house!

**The One** Appease us!

**Nu’man**  I swear to the greatest idols that he shall not remain but you!

You shall live by this Khawarnaq and not him!

So don’t bother him so that he leaves early!

**The One** Yes, he shall go; and build another one of these for another king!

**The Other** And maybe even a better one!

**The Other One** and we shall remain here for you with this dishonor!

**Nu’man** What? Better than this khawarnaq you said?

Or its lookalike?- For another king?

You said better than this?

**The One** The one who built such thing, what shouldn’t be able to build better?

If there would be gold and another king!

**The Other** Then they would say this tower is inferior;

To the one built for the Persian king!

**Nu’man** Nu’man! Open your eyes to what you ignored!

The one who built such thing, why shouldn’t be able to build better?

I used to say the best world has ever seen is here!

Didn’t I want the best?-Where is Cenmar?

If you labor for real,

Then be his apprentice.

Learn as much as you can from him!

Yes-pay attention to his work;

From building the wall,

To the images he draws upon the wall!

I shall chase away his apprentices;

And if you’re real builders

Work and labor for him to become his apprentice!

So that in future, when we diminish him;

Leave nothing unaccomplished and finish the khawarnaq!

Yes learn from him as much as possible!

So that when he’s gone

And the Persian king is astonished by the wonders of this palace;

And summons the architect,

You wouldn’t be in vein!

*[Three man walk away-letter falls from Cenmar’s hand.]*

**Cenmar**  One day a traveler came and brought a letter;

From my old mother who awaits my return;

“Your father is ill and is asking about your whereabouts;

and I put him to rest, sayings it’s a matter of short time!

He’s suffering and I give him comfort and hope.

My mother asked when you knew how to build a Khawarnaq why didn’t you build it for the Romans?

Why didn’t you bestow your art to those who admire it?

I said there is no need to write a response, I can go back myself?

**The One** Cenmar you’re going for real?

**Cenmar** I asked who am I? where do I belong to?

Persia, or Rome, or this Sahara-where I fell in love!

**The Other** This was what you wrote and sent?

**Cenmar**  I wrote on sand; and the wind shredded it away.

**The Other One** So you didn’t write nor send ?

**Cenmar**  What should I write mother? What response?

Burned under the sun, on hot sands,

Tormented by impatience;

Sometimes, I want to give up on Rome and Persia-

But then I think what if they don’t go for it!

*[Three men throw sand and dust on their heads and walk with poles as beggars.]*

**The One** You may not know us, foreigner;

We’re from the tribe!

**The Other** Cenmar! I’ve heard that you gave work to many;

The poor are so much in favor with you

And many praise you.

**The One** But what you build is not for the poor?

No-Its for powerful men!

Not even for Nu’man but for the great king of Persia!

**The Other** We’re not anywhere close to that.

**Cenmar**  The king of Persia shall not be here more than one single winter,

But the khawarnaq shall be here for a thousand winters!

No, what I build is not for the king of Persia;

The king himself is the motivation for building

And Nu’man is the means towards that end!

**The Other One** [rushing towards the other two] what nonsense you speak-

There has never been a palace built for the poor!

And what palace has been built with no money:

If you possess money then you could have a Khawarnaq as well;

And why won’t’ you make money by working on the Khawarnaq?

**The One** I would prefer to beg among the tribes rather than working on the Khawarnaq!

**The Other** We are just human beings and that’s the way we are!

**Cenmar**  Khawarnaq shall perhaps teach you ambition and hard work;

Since the rest could easily be found in the world!

**The One** Life is too short! So there is no point in having greed over anything!

It’s better to keep yourself content with what you already owe!

**Cenmar**  Who would assume this much effort for not doing anything at all?

Whatever I heard here was just an excuse for not working!

You are so faulty if you seek somewhere aimless!

If you wish to work, you could have a place among us;

Otherwise go after you own doings!

**The Other** You’re promoting the rich!

**Cenmar**  I work and that’s how I find meaning in life!

And I’ll be aimless if I don’t do so.

If you aim to work then do so otherwise stop talking!

**The One** I’m wondering over this nonsense!

**The Other** This nonsense is making me laugh!

**The Other** One We’re happy with what we’ve got!

**Cenmar** No-You’re sloths who are reluctant to work!

 Happy to brag and to beg!

I’m the one whom the kings beg for;

For I do!

**The One** Do you hear that? He’s far more proud than us!

We were right that the kings envy us;

And due to whatever we lack, yet we got our freedom!

**The Other** No country to be invaded,

No treasure or harem[[273]](#footnote-273) to be invaded for !

**The Other One** [*towards the two*] This was all I had to say; let’s go-

What have you got to do with Khawarnaq;

of which you don’t desire except a shade?

Why do you care which shade to rest under;

The shade of the palms is way better than the Khawarnaq which blocks the wind!

*[They go away. Nu’man is hurriedly looking for someone with a torch-]*

**Nu’man**  Where are you Cenmar?

I’ve heard that you’re sick that a scorpion bit you?

What are these unknown images on the wall?

Beautiful! Marvelous! When did you draw them that I didn’t notice?

Where did you get these?

If I’m not wrong, it must be Rudabeh[[274]](#footnote-274) on the height of a fort

Whom Zal[[275]](#footnote-275) is longing for!

And what a resemblance between her and my daughter!

Each of them is such a jewel;

And is it right that for a better prize,

You shall build better than this?

**Cenmar**  In my dream, she was dreaming of me;

I rubbed my eyes and said is it her or my dream?

*[The girl appears]*

**The Girl** In my dream, he was dreaming of me;

I wanted to conceal myself but there was no veil!

The others concealed me,

And the words I had forgotten came back to me.

**Cenmar**  We talked in each other’s dream.

She spoke and only in dream;

Her voice was a song she has never sung!

**The Girl** I wish I weren’t the Arab beauty!

I wish no one could see my beauty;

As they see in a dream!

They sing songs about me;

Those who do not know how hurt I am inside,

I’m a prisoner in my tent and sand land!

I wish I could walk singing;

In the everlasting Sahara and the roaring river!

I wish my taut soul, had a face of its own;

To reveal how tortured it is.

*[worried for a moment]* What are you saying girl;

that due to old traditions, you’re crippled in this Sahara?

*[with lower voice]* In this Sahara whoever I see is inferior than myself;

I’m a stranger in my own tribe-

*[puts her hand on her heart.]*

What have we added to this world? Nothing.

Days came and passed; and we’re on this sand land.

Now a stranger has come and transformed the sand land;

A stranger superior to us!

We’re transformed;

We’re no longer nomadic!

We have a Khawarnaq!

This is what I see from my tent;

Khawarnaq covers the horizon!

So that from its top, you would see the horizon vaster;

everlasting Sahara and the roaring river-

where they sing your song.

**The One** So you said that you dreamed. So you dream too!

But you didn’t say dream of what?

**The Other** Wow! Did you sleep at all to have a dream?

**The Other One** *[secretly]* Don’t tell anyone that you dream of Nu’man’s daughter!

*[All three laugh themselves to sleep and the girl disappears.]*

**Cenmar** What should I write mother?

I’m filled with your love!

I swear to the idols of this land-whom I’m a stranger to-

The love, which had fled Persia and Rome,

Is hidden here, in her eyes!

How could someone in chains come?

See the hidden light, with a peak, and the thousand stars guarding!

I’m close by, yet far from her;

Under the same sky; filled with dark clouds!

Is her eye conscious and seeking itself in the sky?

Look: Coffin angels’ aka Big Dipper[[276]](#footnote-276)

Are headed to the Ursa Minor[[277]](#footnote-277).

And still I am Cenmar.

**Nu’man**  I shall take away the chains if you wish to go!

Until when should I shield you against the pointing arrows?

You’re stigmatized by all!

**Cenmar**  Don’t let me go unless you send me towards her chamber!

My old mother in Rome shall get her prize in waiting in silence.

By your grace, maybe a camel may stop at her door,

Whose passenger shall not be only me!

**Nu’man** Have you got no sense? I’m surrounded by my people!

Did you not see how they circled around me?

Didn’t you hear when the Arab Sheikhs[[278]](#footnote-278),

Summoned me to their tent to the council of the sheikhs!

And discouraged me from building the Khawarnaq!

Yes, words of kindness and yet threat!

*[Three men throw white flour on their heads to turn to Sheikhs.]*

**The One** Have you thought about the Heaven of Shaddad[[279]](#footnote-279) Nu’man,

And the hanging gardens of Babylon[[280]](#footnote-280).

Weren’t they all destroyed?

**Nu’man** I didn’t fail to give an answer, No;

And I faced its consequences with no fear!

I said! Yes-my fathers! Sheikhs!

Mankind cannot stop thinking nor building.

Khawarnaq is our effort, which has been constructed!

Isn’t it better to be known for our effort rather than indulgence?

**The Other**  Make no effort in binding with this world!

This old house has a way in and out-

And the opportunity is only the time in between!

**Nu’man** Why should we think of destruction beforehand?

For the sake of death, we shouldn’t live;

And since there is going to be destruction we shouldn’t build?

**The Other One** Visit the cemetery three times in a day;

To see the fortune of human beings!

Three times a day and maybe more;

To give up on laughter and start moaning!

**Nu’man** When it’s my time that’s it!

When I’m still alive why should I mourn for my death?

When there are other things to do!

**The One** You’re proud of your power and what is Khawarnaq except for pride?

There are many who aim high and fear pride at the same time!

**Nu’man** You’re proud of your humility as well;

Which does no good to anyone!

**The Other** You said other people’s good?

There are so many with dreams yet no means;

And head full of thoughts yet empty-handed!

**Nu’man** Where are their plans and measures and art?

I cannot fund each claimant-who wishes to rob me- every time;

And make myself a fool in the face of the earth!

And if there are few-whom I don’t know of-that are capable and yet empty-handed;

Then should I aimlessly await on that?

**The One** Khawarnaq is a big disgrace in this Sahara!

**The Other** We had no heights and now we do!

**The One** Our idols are not happy!

**The Other** Fear the rage of the great idols!

**Nu’man** I said whatever I do is for the Arabs!

Isn’t better for Arabs to be known for civilization rather than destruction?

**The One** How much difference is there between your Khawarnaq and our cottages!

Not more than the effort in between!

Come and look at the building, which mirrors the sunlight;

And is of a different color of its rainbow in each hour!

**The Other** Nu’man! Forget the colors!

**Nu’man** I swear to the moon and light

That greater idols make tribes greater!

The greater sees far away horizons while the minor, only its shadow!

Have no fear of being great!

It is with the Khawarnaq that we stand out in the world;

Not with the wind blowing tents!

You said that Nu’man becomes greater with the Khawarnaq? Yes-

And I swear to god it is you who becomes great with Nu’man!

I swear to the great idols that if we play the role of the minor

We shall remain the minor!

And if we bend over;

We see nothing but the dust beneath our steps!

**The One** But isn’t he a stranger in your home and so dear to you?

**The Other** Yes-What is this gossip?

About him and the Arab beauty

Whom despite her young age is the fairest among all Arab brides!

**The Other** What if he takes over her with pride!

**The Other One** She who if remains shall be the happiness of our tribe!

**The One** *[furious]* He is a stranger on both sides; Persian and Roman!

**Nu’man**  I’ve heard this story before.

He’s not here for being Roman or Persian;

He’s simply here for being Cenmar!

**The Other One** It seems as if you’re saying that Arab is so dear to Nu’man;

Yet he welcomes the company of a foreigner!

**Nu’man**  Yes-that’s it!

Do Romans all build Khawarnaq in the way Cenmar does? No!

Do Persians all work and labor like Cenmar? No!

They are in power and claim their share of it;

I may say even life is not fair!

But when did you hear from me that Cenmar is flawless?

He has so many flaws. Yes;

He’s mean to himself and that’s his flaw!

He doesn’t sleep at night and instead draws plans on the ground;

And during the day he dreams!

He fears the quick passing of time!

I’ve never known either a roman or Persian this impatient;

As if he’s lost,

Or has someone missing!

**Cenmar**  yes I knew-I knew though I didn’t hear.

I dreamt of it though I didn’t see it with my own eyes!

There was riot all over the Sahara;

That why-why-why?

Since there was no Khawarnaq, there was no protest, no claim, no gossip;

And now everyone is a claimant!

Now that something was being done,

There was so much against it!

*[The three, wearing skirts covered in some dust, become the happy followers]*

**The Other One** Hey you, start working. How much time do you spend eating?

**The One** Why should we finish the Khawarnaq on time-no!

The longer it takes, the more I’m going to be paid!

**The Other One** If you’re expecting much, then do something as well!

**The One** I’ll do something; to ridicule you!

I’ll eat twice as a gobbler, and work less;

This is what I call benefit!

Why should I count the stars in the sky

When Nu’man’s coins shine right in front of my eyes?

**The Other** *[drops the shovel]* I like that! Work and earn more!

I aim at nothing but to get paid!

**The One** I struggle to never have to struggle!

Let the others labor!

**Cenmar** Hey you people creeping in the corner,

-Buzzing with each other-

I fear that you’re enjoying yourselves way too much!

You that pretend to work while you do anything but the work-

If I pay you as I pay the others

This would be unjust to those who actually work!

Have you put a single brick in at all?

And have you actually climbed a ladder once?

You want bribe instead of income?

You’re fired as you’ve taken the place of a few workers!

**The One** He meant me and you!

**The Other** No foreigner has treated an Arab like this!

**The One** Why shouldn’t we cut his tongue?

Why shouldn’t we stab him?

**The Other** Why has Nu’man appointed a foreigner over us?

**The One** Fire? How dare you!

I swear I shall let the whole tribe know of his abuse!

**The Other** Lets go. I swear to my pride and honor that I see no good for him!

And it’s not long until his life is taken by one more enraged than I am now.

**The One** And the whole tribe shall know death comes to all including the villains.

*[They get far away. Nu’man hurries away from them-]*

**Nu’man**  Don’t decline my question and give me an answer Cenmar!

**Cenmar**  I did answer.

**Nu’man** You didn’t. Everyone’s asking and I have to answer;

But still I haven’t got my own?

Give me a suitable answer!

**Cenmar**  So ask a question which could be answered!

**Nu’man** *[yells]* Is this the very best?

**Cenmar** At the moment this is the best, with what we possess;

From knowledge and idea and architecture and people and energy and art.

We don’t have a great catapult-which fits great constructions- and a conveyor and stone!

From what we owned, we built something, which never existed before.

The king of Persia shall not scold you!

And in the pictures on the walls;

-Somewhere near the battle of Rostam[[281]](#footnote-281) and the beast-

Shall see the making of the Khawarnaq.

And the ones who came to see Khawarnaq!

And among those, one;

And her eyes!

**Nu’man** You make me feel encouraged!

**Cenmar** Something must have given me confidence as well;

You never knew me and never wanted me!

You were just thinking of yourself.

You were worrying for yourself and you didn’t care about me-

That I was not in my own land and not my own place!

I could have been shot by any archer of your tribe;

And there was no one from my people to avenge my death!

**Nu’man**  You speak of things you never did before!

**The One** Cenmar was far too late!

**The Other** Nu’man meant to listen too late!

**The Other One** Did he want to listen at all?

**The Other** Nu’man didn’t know for real?

**Nu’man** What is it that I don’t know of-tell me Cenmar!

**Cenmar**  Nu’man you never knew how I’ve been receiving threats from your tribe!

When they would hear of this, they used to come from the furthest areas of the Sahara!

*[Three men throw dust upon themselves with reversed clothes and bags, turn to three travelling advocates of the tribes-]*

**The One** You are doing us harm with this Khawarnaq Cenmar!

Your rising Nu’man’s throne with the Khawarnaq;

Yet making us more inferior!

We were camel riders,

And so was Nu’man,

Until the Khawarnaq is built;

Where he could stand with pride and look down at us;

And to consider us less than what we are!

**The Other** No Cenmar, this is not how it should be!

You fed many people who worked on Khawarnaq;

But what happens after its completion?

You’ll leave those you fed in the desert?

What is to become of them?

Before this, it was easier to starve,

Until they got to know what it feels like to be fed.

**The Other One** It’s not your fault Cenmar, It’s the Khawarnaq;

That everyone has to reach its level.

We deserve the desert; just like sand and rocks!

How could we reach ourselves to the Khawarnaq?

We’re of different worlds;

Next to each other but not quite the same.

**Nu’man** This is too much for me;

I can’t tolerate such behavior towards my guest!

They did this all and you never told me about it?

**Cenmar** No it was you who never checked on me!

**The One** Cenmar! You build Khawarnaq better than our temples and monasteries!

Don’t you fear earthquake, or flow of accidents?

The rage of the idols

For having built a construction taller than their temples?

Our gods-of any tribe or name- reside in dark corners and cavities.

They’re placed on dust;

Yet you raise the Khawarnaq high up the clouds!

**The Other** This is not how it should be; to build something immortal!

We are mortals.

One day we come and one day we go-and the Khawarnaq remains!

Why should the Khawarnaq remain and look upon us with pride over our death?

Why should I be gone and not the Khawarnaq?

**The Other One** This is not the way it should be Cenmar,

To reveal what could have been built before which we didn’t.

You’re mirroring our clumsiness.

In this mirror, we’re proclaimed;

Who have never advanced in thousands of years!

**Cenmar**  This is the destiny of the one who built a palace upon floating sands!

A construction on a swamp;

Who imagined the mirage as the sea!

**Nu’man** We built something, which wasn’t acceptable by the era.

**Cenmar** It wasn’t acceptable for you either Nu’man;

You weren’t as great as what you desired!

**Nu’man** I wanted the very best!

**Cenmar** You’re inferior Nu’man; You’re insular!

You’ve only learnt rage from kings and no forgiveness!

You didn’t deserve it yet you asked for the best!

You made me fall though it was me who raised you;

I gave you strength, yet you broke my bones.

**Nu’man**  Don’t talk of it and don’t remind me of it-and still with all this;

Yes I did it all by my own will!

And I ridicule your blaming!

Why should I go crazy?

Why should I run away and disappear?

If Cenmar had lived, he would have been mean to me and for the sake of a better prize-he would have made a better Khawarnaq for others!

**The One** Alas!

Such a pity that there would be no better Khawarnaqs in the world!

**The Other** It’s not a privilege to destroy, Nu’man!

The privilege is to build and construct!

**The Other One** Anyone could destroy another;

But who is the one capable of building Khawarnaq?

**Nu’man**  Complain as much as you want-but

In return, it all remained;

My best horse, best camel,

Seventy of my best goats,

And that girl of mine, whose the most beautiful among Arabs!

**Cenmar**  Why didn’t you let me go? Even heart broken and penniless?

Wasn’t I summoned by you and as your guest under your protection?

Even if I hadn’t built the Khawarnaq;

And even if you hadn’t promised me that gorgeous beauty;

Is this the way of Arabs to kill innocent guests so?

**Nu’man** Khawarnaq was finished and we were at its top; all above Sahara!

**The One** Khawarnaq! You can be seen from all over Sahara;

Why can’t I take my eyes from you?

I was riding my own camel!

**The Other** As I saw Khawarnaq-like a giant ship in the soil-

I was ready to sail!

**The Other One** I saw them-up there;

There was no need for a translator

As they were both speaking the language of the king of Persia!

**Nu’man** I asked him can you build again as fine as this one?

I told him is there anything greater than this in any one’s thoughts;

Even for Cenmar himself? Tell me can you build better than this?

**Cenmar** I told him yes I can build better than this;

If I knew then that she would be my prize.

That famous beauty;

Through whose eyes, my inspiration lies

I would have built a much greater palace for her love!

A palace, which would revive by each passing day!

A palace, in a hundred colors like peacock’s feather;

A Palace with seven domes and seven floors, just like heaven itself!

**Nu’man** I asked him so do you have better than this in your mind?

So you can build better and superior than this?

**Cenmar** I told him yes, In my mind I have many Khawarnaqs;

Which are more like a desire such as that gorgeous beauty.

Yes, if there would be gold and instruments and a supporter!

**Nu’man** I asked even better than this?

**Cenmar** I told him there are no boundaries in idea and dream.

And that is the perfection of my dream.

Yes Nu’man-even better than this;

If I live long enough!

I’m running out of patience and so anxious;

Is it not the time to have my prize which I am being promised of?

**Nu’man** And I gave him his prize!

*[Everyone screams all together and cover their ears.]*

**Cenmar** It’s been a long way and there was the chance for me know how bad I died.

You people who were never content with me;

Did the sound of my breaking bones bring you contentment?

**The One** *[yells]* Why shouldn’t the good be regretful?

**The Other** *[yells]* Why shouldn’t regret those you think?

**Cenmar** If I was to live again,

And if I knew that I shall die from falling from my own construction;

Still I’d do it again!

And if with every brick I hear the sound of my breaking bones;

Still I would build a Khawarnaq as tall as I can!

As high as the human soul!

**Nu’man**: No Cenmar! We’re not your sorrow!

I swear to god it was your honesty that destroyed you

Why didn’t you lie to me?

Why didn’t you say that there could be no better Khawarnaq built?

Why didn’t you give up on building?

Why didn’t you say you would only build for me, the Arab king?

And for no other ruler?

**Cenmar** Do you remember Nu’man?

A storyteller came from Persia

Brought new tales; full of legends!

That entertained the Khawarnaq workers each night;

It was the tale of a king that wed a new girl every night,

And killed her the next day.

There was such fear among women;

The minister’s daughter-Shahrzad[[282]](#footnote-282)-whom also in fear thought of something,

And when it came to her and her night,

She demanded the king to ask for a tale!

So by the fantasy of the story she used to make-and each dawn-would leave unfinished,

She had her execution postponed, night-by-night;

And until one thousand nights that with One thousand and One nights stories[[283]](#footnote-283),

She saved thousands of lives!

And you Nu’man, son of Amr-Al Gheis used to hear these and say:

Persians exaggerate way too much! How could a king return love with enmity;

And have the lover of the night killed the next day?

You had my bones broken and shed my blood;

That was your guest for years and months!

You gave me such horrible death;

For that I served you!

And I swear to god you wouldn’t have killed me if Khawarnaq were not finished;

Just like the tales of Shahrzad, that for their sake, the king kept her alive.

**Nu’man** Do not blame me, people of Sahara!

Do you possess anything but wind and blame?

Didn’t you know you were the ones provoking me to throw him off?

The pictures on the wall, don’t blame me!

I wish I was a painting myself;

That could be wiped off and painted again!

**Cenmar** I wish you the very same fate!

I wished you would be punished for the sake of your prize!

I wished as I was floating between the two worlds;

Leaving sky and embracing the ground!

**Nu’man** Don’t let my daughter know of this that she shall torment herself!

Don’t let her know that she shall go wild!

As she’s known herself to be his for so long!

**Cenmar** I told you to look the paintings of the Khawarnaq;

-Where I had pictured my dreams-

There is a dead man under the feet of an elephant!

In my dream I saw a king with your name, of your decadents.

Pays for your crime!

Then the Khawarnaq is still there when the elephant rider,

The king of Persia throws him under the elephant’s feet for the prize of his victory!

I wish this dream would never come true;

I wish this would be only a dream and not a curse!

Bury me under what didn’t kill me!

Bury me in the Khawarnaq!

*[The men in black take the corpse slowly into the Khawarnaq-]*

**The Other One** Rome shall not know of his death;

And Persia shall not avenge his death!

**The Other** His mother shall receive an anonymous letter!

**The One** His father shall scream in Persian!

*[Sound of Drums-]*

**Nu’man** My daughter! Wear black and mourn!

That if this dream comes true

Then a king of my tribe and of my own name,

One of my descendants shall pay for my crime!

Why am I shaking?

How could I tremble under the heat of the sun?

Where is my son, Manzar[[284]](#footnote-284)?

And what was this dream that I woke from with fear? Where are you Manzar?

Forget about naming your son after me!

And you shall ask your sons the same

Not to name any of their son as Nu’man!

And I swear to the greater idols

I shall curse you if you don’t do so!

Since in my dream I saw the birth of a female elephant

Which later had a male offspring,

That the Persian king shall ride to Al-Hira,

To kill a son of my descendants who bares my name and my crime!-

What’s this sound?

*[the sound of drums and horns. The three men return in a hurry with flags and helmets and shields]*

**The Other One** Nu’man the winter of Persia has come and here comes the king;

Get dressed!

**The One** Ceremonies and customs!

**The Other** See how the river is in turmoil!

See their flags that shine in hundreds of colors!

**The One** Do you hear the sound of their drums, musical instruments and bells?

**Nu’man** It’s way too late to go crazy now!

Come now, the Khawarnaq is finished!

Don’t mention the name of Cenmar and forget about him.

Don’t talk of the buried corpse in the centre of Khawarnaq!

What’s this? I can hear the sound of the elephant’s footsteps already!

Rest in peace Cenmar;

Why should I mourn from now for a descendant of mine?

Let’s greet them!

I have no doubt that the king of Persia shall give me a prize for this Khawarnaq that you built!

*[Silence. The sound of the instruments stopped at its peak.]*

**The Wailing**

Translated by Niousha Mesdaghi

**Translator’s Note**

Translating *The Wailing* has been quite a challenge compared with many other of Beyzai’s plays. I have come to the conclusion that this play was intended for audiences within Iran and that is why Beyzai has picked the most complex historic and religious background for the characters and has addressed issues, customs, and cultural religious matters which are only specifically known to typical Iranians. This creates a good deal of difficulty when attempting to make the text accessible to a foreign audience. To begin with, the titles of characters are difficult to translate in a way that conveys their full meaning. For instance, Hajj Nilforoushan consists of two words: the first is an Arabic word regarding the ceremony of Haj where Muslims are obliged to travel to the holy Mecca at different intervals during their lives. Any youth who had been on such a holy religious trip to Mecca would be entitled to use the name Hajj. Salesmen in the Bazaars of Iran were mostly religious and commonly rich enough for such a trip so, most people involved in the Bazaars held such a title during the past century in Iran. These facts are commonly known to any Iranian, even the younger generation, as the traditional state of Bazaars still exits in almost all Iranian cities making such facts quite evident for Iranians. On the other hand, for foreign actors and audiences, in order to present these characters authentically, it is necessary to provide them with a brief history of the Bazaar and the status of the Bazaar’s salesmen in society. Focusing on the titles, again it is known to Iranians that, before the establishment of constitutionalism and also the reign of Reza Shah who modernized Iran, there was no such thing as a birth certificate. So, people were known only by family names if they belonged to the aristocracy or very influential families of each region. At the time of the constitutionalism, many people in the cities were known only by their occupation such as the person who made tents or the person who made watches or the clergy. In *The Wailing,* Beyzai has appointed a number of characters as Bazaar salesmen since the businessmen at that time had played a crucial role in the formation and outcome of the movement. The other point to be considered is that the educated sector of the Iranian society made up the only intellectual sector of the then society. Back then such people were known to be able to speak and write in a couple of foreign languages whether French or Russian. They were more knowledgeable regarding culture, customs and reforms in the western countries and were familiar with new ideologies, schools, and etc. During constitutionalism, they formed the backbone for intellectualism and anti-dictatorship while other sectors focused on other aspects of the movement such as finding a house of justice. It should be noted that the attitude of the intellectuals was evident in their looks and clothing, etc. which made them very different from the people of the Bazaar who were more religious, less educated and far more conservative. One typical item of Iranian men’s apparel was a hat and also a mustache which represented their pride and honour. The intellectuals, on the other hand, had the tendency to dress up like the Europeans and they would follow the fashion and trends of the west such as wearing glasses, a tie, and western fashion. This gives hints as to the type of costumes that could be used represent characters from a specific class of society. The issue of apparel and costume is quite important because they say a lot about the character. This issue is not as evident in a play like *The Murder of Cenmar* because the play is set in ancient Persia, however, because it deals with the revolution of 1979 it’s not essential to use historical costumes since it is more about what the plot represents to the audience rather than historical accuracy. So, as mentioned in the second chapter, in the new productions of *The Murder of Cenmar*, there was less focus on ancient atmosphere and national anthems etc.

Back to *The Wailing*, it should be mentioned that the female characters are named with less complexity, as their names and the meaning of those names represent a personality rather than a cultural or social status. This means that future productions could easily rename those characters to make them more accessible to foreign audiences as long as the given title fits with their primary role or trait for example, ‘devilish’ or ‘passionate’. The protagonist and the antagonist both have religious names; Zeynab is a holy figure and Obbeyallah is a nefarious figure among Shia Muslims. Different productions of the play could name the heroine and her enemy by different religious historical names belonging to different cultures as long as the titles represent two heroic enemies of opposite sexes. It should be noted that, before the establishment of constitutionalism, women were mostly banned from being active in the society and were mostly confined indoors. In the play, female characters rarely leave the scene of the brothel except once when Zeynab joins the fighting in the main square of Tehran. In that era, women were obliged to cover their whole body and face by wearing whole through garment (Chador) and a mask. So, in the last scenes of the play when Zeynab asks Jamil for outdoor clothes, she is apparently asking for Hijab or Chador as well as a mask which was what women were supposed to wear when they occasionally appeared in public.

Since there are numerous characters involved in most of the scenes of the play, a round stage is the only option to accommodate this many characters on the stage at once. It is recommended that many of the actors sit with the audience to give more visibility for the characters with lines to speak.

**Characters:**

Female characters:

Munis (friend),

Manzar,

Mastoureh (graceful),

Fitna (evil),

Hagar,

Masoumeh (chaste),

Jamil,

Golbaji (lady of flowers),

Zeynab

Male characters:

Father,

Obeydallah,

Almas (aka Jewel),

Sahib-Jam Secretory,

Tent maker

Haj-Nilforoush,

Haj-Saati (Watch maker),

Mir Naddaf,

Mir Shalchi,

Mir Baghi Khandagh abadi,

Mir Mottahar Delvari,

Apothecary,

Darbandi,

Kheimedar,

Teacher Assistant,

Honor,

Cossack Soldier,

Head of Cossacks,

Head of Soldiers,

Son of attorney Shahroudi, Rich boy

Mullah,

Customers.

Corps

Followers, Soldiers, Mojahedin (fighters)

**Stage**

Circular stage

*[9 women, crying, run to the stage; scratching their faces and beating themselves and wailing; here the women are divided into groups on the stage but it is not clear if any groups represent different ideas or traits but a suggestion is that they could be divided based on being either devilish or not throughout the play as they maintain a both anti-hero anti villain character-as in part of the play they’re either jealous or unkind to the heroine but finally glorify the heroine and mourn for her unjust faith]*

**Women** No! No! No!

**First Group** Oh Sister! What a pain; the army of suppressors; the gang of outlaws!

**Second Group** Oh! Oh Sister!

**First Group** Army of evil, thirsty for blood;

The oppressed crowd, deplorable!

**Second Group** Why you? Why you? Why you sister?

**First Group** bless you for your tears and the injustice you had to bear;

Your loneliness breaks our hearts.

**Munis** *[crying]* what home? What order?

There is much disaster and we are on our own.

**Women** Oh Sister

**Munis** *[crying]* your illness broke your heart;

Your hatred made you sick;

Disaster upon disaster!

**Women** Oh your loneliness! Bless you

**Munis** *[crying]* inflation one year, starvation the next year

They don’t have any justice!

The liars, the deceitful-

Their deceit has become a known example to all!

**Women** Oh your sorrow! Your youth!

**Fitna** *[jumps in]* There is no use in crying, will it bring Zeynab back? Cry for thyself as you have survived; that you are living; that you bore sons! That you give birth; all these evils! All these wrong deeds! You gave birth to these murderers. You cowards; crying till when? Can cry beat starvation? What good is in crying? Does it provide food? Or does it beat the plague? Shout against the armed and bribers! Shout against tax collectors and the military! Against the dictator and constitutionalists!

**Women** Oh Zeynab! Bless you for your pains; for your broken heart.

Your loneliness; Oh Zeynab.

**Hajjar** *[all of a sudden]* How pretty she was; the day she entered this house. The first time she looked like a diva. I remember her face that shined like daylight.

**Gohar** I remember. I remember! It was a day of riot; the day that she came to the house; with two men; her father, and her fiancée.

*[An elderly man, a young man, and Zeynab enter and search the stage; The women laugh. Jamil stands; the old doorman, Almas, runs to the door.]*

**Jamil** Knock at the door! Almas! Knock at the door! A stranger! This sound is not familiar!

**Golbaji** Girls cover yourselves. Again a person of higher rank! morning time is better than noon or night. The bribers are always there. Get busy with your own things. Almas first look through the peephole first.

**Almas** I am looking through the peephole and I see a veiled woman and two tanned men. They look like strangers. What should we do; I wouldn’t trade my job with the reign of the world. Come on in; welcome.

*[The women become silent; Golbaji confronts the three newcomers]*

**Father** I thought I’d better leave her with you. What better place is there for an orphan than the orphanage? Please take her in and guide her well. She is young and strong and healthy. Zeynab go and greet the ladies. Who knows maybe you can make your own living by their help once you become one of them. Her fiancée Obeydallah has found a job in the Cossack army, if you allow her, she may pay him a visit every once in a while. My girl! Go and serve them, as you there may be no better position for a woman in this world. Lets go Obeydallah.

**Golbaji** A spare room Almas! Jamil we need a bed; consider feeding her.

**Jamil** Another portion of food. As you wish Golbaji.

**Golbaji** Don’t call me that in front of a newcomer! I’m the boss; my own name was Shahgol and those who knew me from the past know about my background. [facing Zeynab] take off your veil. Turn around. You smell like shit!

**Zeynab** It’s the smell of the aviary. I don’t mean to be rude but the had me hidden among the baskets; from the sight of the soldiers and the guards of the city gates.

**Golbaji** So you had a hard trip. Did you see anything particular?

**Zeynab** At some point there was drum and whipping and axe and stub in the execution square.

**Gohar** You are frightened!

**Zeynab** It was my first trip ever.

**Golbaji** Take off your veil. What chore can you do?

**Zeynab** Washing the dishes.

**Golbaji** Serve the dishes to the ladies.

**Zeynab** *[she does so]* Washing the clothes.

**Masoumeh** She has been washing the clothes for long!

**Zeynab** Cooking.

**Manzar** She [*indicating* *Zeynab*] didn’t know much about cooking; or it wasn’t my taste of food.

**Zeynab** Sewing.

**Munis** My socks, She patched up my socks! Sewing ; maybe a little bit!

**Zeynab** Cleaning.

**Gohar** She lied. She never cleaned well. Once I saw her crying while cleaning.

**Mastoureh** She was homesick!

**Manzar** She was awaiting someone!

**Hagar** She would bore everyone!

**Zeynab** I can rinse cloth!

**Golbaji** Serve them all. Let everyone have sweets; It’s for a holy occasion!

**Zeynab** I can rinse cloth!

**Manzar** You said that once!

**Zeynab** I can Bake.

**Manzar** The rural pastries. How do they eat this stuff? But it tasted good anyway!

**Munis** How homesick you are.

**Zeynab** It’s been so long. The birds have migrated. It was the beginning of the month and now it’s the end of it

**Munis** Are you waiting for any particular reason?

**Zeynab** For them to come for me.

**Golbaji** Keep going!

**Zeynab** To cut the woods; to cut the grass; weeding.

**Jamil** God bless you! You are good at many things!

**Golbaji** Serve tea to all.

**Jamil** She is crying.

**Zeynab** To water proof the ceiling; to weave the mat; and to sew.

**Golbaji** Forget it. You were born to be a lady! Serve tea!

**Jamil** She is crying.

**Mastoureh** She is gazing at the moon. She is homesick. She is feeling down. Lets talk to her.

**Munis** She will get used to it in a little while; just the way I did! I have forgotten where I came from. I just remembered; My name was Munis but I became Samanbar here.

**Mastoureh** They used to call me Mastoureh and now I’m Farrokhlegha.

**Gohar** I used to be called Gohar; now they call me Gol Andam.

**Hagar** I was called Hagar; Mahlagha is not that bad.

**Fitna** Maybe there was something wrong with Fitna that’s why they changed it to Delbar.

**Masoumeh** She is so classy; from Manzar to Mahtaj !

**Manzar** What about you yourself? You were Masoumeh and you became Zoleykha !

**Zeynab** *[holds back her tears and raises her chin]* to prepare the coal for the brazier and to make fire.

**Hagar** Brazier for winter! What a cold winter it was last year; three layers of snow!

**Zeynab** Snow Plow. Carpet cleaning. Serving tea

**Jamil** To prepare the tea and Hookah!

**Golbaji** Stop it!

**Zeynab** So why wont’ they come for me?

**Masoumeh** Its been twenty days?

**Zeynab** One month! Washing and cleaning the carpets…

**Golbaji** Don’t play the fool!

**Zeynab** I know they were ought to make some money and then we were supposed to go back to our village.

**Golbaji** And you think you’ll get married afterwards?

**Zeynab** His name is Obbeydallah. He is a capable guy. He is so white but tanned under the sun. But I care the most about his eyes. His eyes are mean and naughty. I care about his smile. What I care about is that they were supposed to make some money to go back. What I meant was getting married.

**Manzar** Stop playing the fool!

**Golbaji** Who said that they would come for you? I never heard them say so.

**Manzar** They won’t come back! Did you hear that? You knew this from the start.

**Zeynab** Nonsense!

**Fitna** Do you know where you are?

**Zeynab** Don’t bring me more sorrow.

**Mastoureh** You mean you don’t know? All these people who come and go;

**Golbaji** You mean to tell me you didn’t understand?

**Zeynab** Lady please don’t torture me; tell me what you want.

**Golbaji** The garden and the pool and the seats around it; some men come and go.

**Zeynab** Lady how should I know what city life is like? I thought it’s the way it is.

**Golbaji** And all these men?-

**Zeynab** I didn’t see any of them. I swear to god I saw nobody.

**Golbaji** You are naive and virtuous; no wonder why you didn’t see them but you heard them right?-

**Zeynab** I wasn’t curious; I swear to god I don’t listen to them.

**Jamil** Its not a lie Golbaji; She avoids men like crazy.

**Golbaji** Shut up! No one told you who we were?

**Zeynab** I just know you are kind to me; you acted like a mother to me.

**Golbaji** Maybe far too much kindness! You were supposed to get used to this-

**Zeynab** Lady I have such a bad feeling. I’m freighted! What are you saying?

**Golbaji** You must begin working. Do you understand?

**Zeynab** I shall serve you every day. I won’t eat that much. I won’t cause any trouble. They shall come for me any day; they were supposed to get some money-

**Golbaji** They did get the money; I gave them; the money in exchange for you!’

**Gohar** Madam please stop it; She’ll faint.

**Golbaji** I don’t give a damn! She must know once and for all. They were right here, standing; and this is what they told me:

‘**Father** We are rural people and we don’t know much; one day they attack our town and steal everything, and kidnap and rape each girl they find; and the last time they said the revolutionaries! We thought that she is young and an orphan; young and fresh, it’s time for her to blossom. They would kidnap her any time and what can we do about it? We thought she’d be safer here with you. She may work under your supervision and make her own money. What’s wrong if we get our share of it? Obeydallah agrees as well

**Obbeydallah** The government has announced that they need soldiers but they shall provide the horse and pistol. The horse and the pistol and working for them shall give me a job.

*[Zeynab screams]*

**Golbaji** Did you get that? They brought you in, got money in return and left. I gave them all I had, the Russian and imperial coins. They got the money they wanted and you must make that money for me. You are sweet and the costumers shall like you; at least until you are new! This is your job. Just like all the other girls here! This is a brothel house; did you get it?

*[Zeynab is struck and wanders around like a ghost. Whisper of mourning.]*

**Women** Oh Zeynab!

How lonely you were!

**Mastoureh** [*crying*] I still remember she went to her room, she fell sick and feverish; She was sick for ten whole days and it was when the first men approached her.

*[Gohar begs Golbaji]*

**Gohar** No Baji; not now! She is feverish; sweating and shivering. Not today! Give her some time-Stop that hypocrite.

**Golbaji** This hypocrite told me he’d pay well. Actually pay more than any one has paid for it. He just paid and he wants it right away; for a virgin! It’s a whole lot of money hope that she is still intact.

**Hajjar** *[ begs golbaji]* No Golbaji; it’s not fair! What if she dies?

**Golbaji** You are right; so we should rush to make some money out of her.

**Masoumeh** *[begs Golbaji]* Baji this is not fair; She is dying of fever! She is mazing nonsense! What if she dies of fear of this bully?

**Golbaji** Don’t underestimate this bully; he is paying ten times more; ten times! How can I run this house without money?

**Munis** *[begs Golbaji]* Baji Baji-

**Golbaji** What the hell is wrong with you? I’m thinking what to do if the girl is not intact! Then there would be no money; that’s catastrophe!

*[Almas enters with the bag of money]*

**Almas** Madam, Here is the sack of money!

*[Golbaji takes the bag and cries out of happiness; lamenting]*

**Women** Oh Zeynab Oh

How lonely you are; you are kept captive Zeynab!

Imprisoned by the oppressors,

How young you are Zeynab!

**Manzar** [*cries*] Oh madam, Oh Baji; What did we do to Zeynab? She was so defenseless. She was fighting for her life. She was dying of fever.

**Golbaji** *[crying]* Oh Zeynab, forgive me. I am a poor slut. You were forgiving. You were not of our kind. Forgive your servant. From up there, from heavon, have mercy upon me. You were here and saw with your own eyes what we went through in the past few years; the revolutionaries, the dictators, Cossacks! The foreigners and our own people! Not even a moment of happiness! You saw it yourself; I was just a woman; what else could I have done?

**Women** How lonely you were Zeynab.

The gang of oppressors,

Are thirsty for blood; the out laws!

Why you? Why Zeynab?

**Gohar** *[jumps all of a sudden]* Curse the day that the word, constitutionalism came to this house. The first day I heard a journalist say: constitutionalism!

**Masoumeh** I remember, I told him that literacy is all yours! You are literate; I told him god bless you what does this word mean- Constitutionalism- What if its trouble? He laughed at me. Quite soon everything shall be changed; and the people shall be entitled to their rights.

**Munis** *[cries and beats herself]* And what happened to the people? What right was bestowed to them?

**Masoumeh** I told him god bless you, what is this word? Right? What if its trouble? He laughed at me. I don’t know where he is. Its been long since he came to visit me.

**Women** *[in the background]* Your sorrow Zeynab; your loneliness breaks our hearts Zeynab!

**Manzar** What do I keep remembering that day? The day you entered the house with the sack. The garden was filled with frightened costumers-curse on this money that we make- everyone was ready to run, when you came pale and out of breath….

*[Jamil gets up in fear]*

**Jamil** There is a word in the streets; the house of Justice, the house of council, and today I heard a strange word; the Law!

**Golbaji** Stop talking. These are dangerous words. Why is the food sack empty?

**Jamil** Start baking in the house Golbaji. All the shops are closed or robbed. I guess there should be fighting in the streets soon.

*[Anxious costumers enter]*

**Apothecary** Come in, no one shall suspect us here. The city cafes are dangerous. There is no hangout without an inspector. There is a spy almost everywhere?

**Mir Nadaf** How can I walk into such a place? Me and the brothel house? No way.

**Apothecary** Mir Nadaf please give up on your honor. We are talking about the society here; We must act!

**Mir Nadaf** So I shall walk into this house for the sake of the people; for the sake of the people I shall bed each women of this house; but people should hide this fact from my spouse; since then there shall be disaster.

**Hagar** You boy, serve some hookah for the gentlemen!

**Hajj Saati** (Watch maker) Gentlemen I thought that for how much longer should we deal with the strikes? To keep our shops closed or wait for them to be closed by the government? I am saying this for your own sake, people can not resist the government. The spies and the reporters are almost everywhere. And by the way I don’t know what you are hesitant about?

**Apothecary** It’s such a wonder! Can’t you see the stubbornness of the government and the military forces? Have you forgotten the death of the clergy? And the closure of the media, and the communities and the arrests? The martial law? When no one was allowed to commute during night time even if they had a dying patient? What did the people ask for except a House of Justice so that any soldier or commander couldn’t rob them. What did they get in return? Exile of the activists! So therefore, the merchants went on strike.

**Mir Nadaf** Me and taking refuge in a foreign embassy? No way.

**Gohar** Boy! What happened to the fresh tea to be served to the attendants?

**Watch Maker** Why should we take refuge in foreign embassy and thus humiliate the history of our old nation in face of the Europeans? I guess the foreigners have something to do this in humiliating the people.

**Apothecary** It’s not about the foreigners! It is all the fault of the government who made us needy of the help of foreigners. We paid a great price for constitutionalism and we won’t give up on it easily.

**Golbaji** Girls do not pay attention to what they say! What does it have to with us whether a ruler is just or unjust? Or that a king has allowed constitutionalism and the other one has banned it. Think of yourselves. Make the costumers pay as much as possible! In such days nothing can replace money and gold coins. Take the money but keep it somewhere safe; so many are ready to kill for that much money; don’t care about what they say. Gentlemen! Whose turn is it?

**Watch Maker** I have no idea! I’m dubious! Maybe people are not ready for constitutionalism. Maybe this freedom shall bring outlaws; god forbid, blasphemy and trait! Now my wife would want freedom in our home. Our kids shall no longer obey me. They say things that leave you speechless. What has become of us? They talk back with no respect! This is not the freedom I wanted. Your revolution has messed up my own home. The other day I saw the black slave and the servant together with my family. I almost died. My wife has begun to read books, I never knew she could read at all. No, don’t expect me to strike. Maybe I would only fund the activists. That’s it. Bye.

*[He leaves.]*

**Apothecary** Everyone promotes freedom, but deep in their hearts, they are dictators themselves.

What do you say Mir Nadaf? What is your point of view?

**Mir Nadaf** At this situation, it is better for my shop to be closed! All the roads are blocked and there is no guarantee that goods shall arrive. At the moment we can store stuff.

**Apothecary** What do you mean?

**Mir Nadaf** Don’t you see they are spying on us?

**Sahib-Jam Secretory** Men! Take it easy, I am a clerk, I have no opinion on anything. The pay me for being like this and how well do they pay me? The money coming from customers’ bribe is the main source of income.

**Hagar** Boy! Bring some tobacco! Who wanted a pipe? We have sweets as well.

**Mir Nadaf** I thought you wrote something.

**Sahib-Jam Secretory** Actually I’m lost. I even went a couple of times to the refuge of the strikers.

**Apothecary** It is such a great movement; and the clergy were of great support; and they took care of what must have been done in half of century.

**Mir Nadaf** I fear the day that people begin fighting the government with artillery and the forces they appoint outlaws to attack the protesters to support the government.

**Sahib-Jam Secretory** It is better that someone makes a record of the events happening now. Now that there is not much for us to do, we’d better jot down everything that happens.

*[The sound of shooting; drums and trumpet. The girls scream in horror]*

**Tent Maker** *[runs around the stage]* What is going on out there? The crowds are running; fighting! Screaming and yelling!

*[Some rush outside and others rush inside]*

**Munis** I was looking from the roof yesterday; Some were escaping. The Cossack forces were after them. It was doomsday. I thought to myself what is going on?

**College Student** They say Shah is not with constitutionalism. It seems to be right otherwise why would have been this much foul? Shah has sworn to the holy Quran to support the constitutionalism and the law, but he is gathering an army and forces and tanks and Cossack soldiers against the constitutionalism.

**Munis** and **Manzar** I was looking from the balcony today, this day on the other hand, the Cossack soldiers were escaping and the crowds were chasing them. There were so many killings and dead. I didn’t understand what was going on!

**Haj Nilforoush (Merchant**) We, the merchants, are the victims. The aristocrats shall gain power due to the ignorance of the people and once they do so they shall be the parliament members. The republic shall appoint them and so would the judiciary. As long as people are ignorant, there is no way to get rid of them.

**Munis and Manzar and Mastoureh** I saw from the window today. The Cossack army had returned with backup foreign army. They came with tanks and artillery. People were escaping in fear.

**Fitna** *[runs after a man while screaming]* Stop this! What kind of men are you? Till when are you going to steal from people? Do some good deed. Until when are you going to make your living out of prostitution? We make our living from sin and you take it from us? Where are taking my money?

*[She falls down and weeps]*

**Tent Maker** Some news came that they have fed the people of Varamin made them drunk to shout out load that they wanted no constitutionalism.

**Mir Shalchi (Merchant)** They have closed all the shops and appointed soldiers in the Bazaar. They took away the corpses by carts. I have heard lots of gossip in this regard like throwing the dead into the wells.

**Mir Baghi** There is no such thing! The announcements said that there would be no offense and everyone could commerce or pray.

**Apothecary**  So what are you doing here? You have also escaped with us to this place. You brag too much but yet you are so frightened.

**Golbaji** No more talking! This is a brothel not the council of freedom. You can only talk outside! You must not put the women in danger.

**Munis and Manzar and Mastoureh and Hagar** I looked through the peephole today. The shops were closed. The streets were silent. No one made a sound. As if they were all dead.

**Almas** Gentlemen why won’t you leave?

**College Student** Where can we go in the midst of this turmoil? The activists have taken refuge in foreign embassies and we have done so in the brothel. It seems to be the right choice and place for us. Look wow! A fairy among the pretty ones!

*[Zeynab enters]*

**Darbandi** Bless your house Golbaji. I am convinced that you are aristocracy. What a beauty. Where is she from?

**Jamil**  Silence. She has just recovered from fever.

**Golbaji** Her name is Flirticia. Does anyone desire her?

**Zeynab**  I am Zeynab.

**Munis and Mastoureh and Manzar and Hagar and Gohar** Today I walked into the street. I saw veiled women fully dressed. There was a whisper that they were carrying arms underneath their clothes.

**Darbandi** Why are you veiled Flirticia?

**Jamil** She has not gone outside for ten days!

**Darbandi**  Let me see. Can’t you laugh a bit? Haven’t you learnt to smile?

**Golbaji** Be nice to costumers Flirticia.

**Zeynab**  My name is Zeynab.

**Munis and Manzar and Mastoureh and Hagar and Gohar and Fitna** I went among the crowds today. There was riot in every single corner.

**College Student** What country is this? That the head of the army is a Russian and the head of the customs is of Belgium. And the intellectuals have left the country whether migrated or taken to exile.

**Golbaji** The customers were so pleased flirticia. What did you do for them? They were so content. You whore! What were you like?

**Zeynab** I am not a whore.

I am pure.

**Golbaji** You bitch, do want me to count them all? The migrant from Ishk Abad? The horse keeper? The musician? The revolutionary? The clerk? The guy with green eyes? A couple of soldiers?

**Zeynab** Even an army of your invaders can not taint my purity.

**Darbandi** Give me her price!

**Golbaji** Say it yourself!

**Darbandi** You are the one who sells; say it!

**Golbaji** You are the one paying; how much?

**Darbandi** Stop bargaining!

**Golbaji** She is better than them all. Do you desire her? For your budget any girl is far too expensive. I know how much you make.

**Darbandi** Her tears are for real;

**Zeynab** I am pure!

**Darbandi** What is it that makes you pure?

**Zeynab** My heart that is tormented!

**Golbaji** You Whore! No one wants her? She is so sweet!

**Apothecary** They say the guards and soldiers are still out there.

**Mir Nadaf** So?

**Apothecary** I must tell you now that we were forced to come here and thy forced to stay until the evening why not having some fun?

**Mir Nadaf** Me and such sins? No way. Thank god I have a gorgeous virtuous wife whose love has made my house a heaven; but god forgive me, I can take it no longer; even if we are destined to be together in heaven; I wish for hell instead! Where are you Golbaji? Put me in the queue. How much should I pay? This is the money I am paying for my place in hell.

**Zeynab** Oh god! Kill me now.

**Golbaji** Silence! What happened now? Did you die? You see god is on our side! Come on sir, it is your turn. Just be gentle to her; She is novice!

*[Lamenting]*

**Women** Oh Zeynab!

Your imprisonment; your loneliness!

**Fitna** *[grumbling]* What do you think you are? A bunch of rhetoric! You are silent in face of strong and yet a hero in front of the weak! Are you anything but a lie?

**Women** Oh Sister-

How lonely you were!

**Mastoureh** *[all of a sudden]* She was not as sacred as you say. She was never our friend. Don’t you remember how she accused us of stealing? The day she was wandering like a Moran-with a light in the middle of the day-don’t you remember how she accused us?

**Golbaji** Are you looking for a thing?

**Zeynab** A thing? Yes madam. Everyday something is lost. I don’t know how. I have no control over it. I keep an eye on it; but still everyday something gets lost.

**Golbaji** In this house? The costumers told me you cry! Is that right? They say you make them ashamed! Answer me! Is it right?

**Zeynab** No madam *[she holds back tears]* I do not cry, it is way worst than that. I do not remember crying these days or any sign of shame from the costumers.

**Golbaji** They say they are being punished. That you talk to yourself. So is it prayer or curse?

**Zeynab** Who should I talk to? No one shall hear me. Those who must, do not any longer.

**Gohar** Are you looking for something?

**Zeynab** I’m looking for my faith. I used to have a holy book in my bag, now it is lost. There was a mirror that no longer reflects my face. I had a hand woven cloth given to me by my mother with the picture of sun, moon and Gabrielle. The wind blew it away and it was thrown on water and the water took it away. Every day I lose something.

**Manzar** We have no thieves here.

**Zeynab** The clothes I came with; veil and the coat and the mask! I lose something everyday.

**Masoumeh** We have no thieves here.

**Hagar** Stop this for god’s sake!

**Zeynab** one thing a day; the wooden comb I had, and the necklace-

**Mastoureh** They were all kept in your bag?

**Zeynab** And even the bag itself; that was with me since childhood! I am confused. I cannot find it.

**Munis** We have no thieves here.

**Zeynab** I wanted to do a chore today; my god I have forgotten everything. I wasn’t like this before. I tried to sew and injured my figure; I tried to lit some fire and I burnt my hand; I cooked and burned the dish; and couldn’t wash the clothes. I tried to get some water but it fell from my hand. What has happened to me?

*[Whisper of mourning, she leaves while searching]*

**Manzar** *[crying]* She won’t get used to it. Why should she do so? Once she said: no one hears my voice. The one who must no longer does. God! Why didn’t you hear me in time?

**Golbaji** Silence *[Towards Masoumeh]* What is wrong with her?

**Hagar** Her Journalist lover has not came.

**Golbaji** *[towards Masoumeh]* What does this passion mean? You slut stop mourning. It does not matter if he did not come. Ten others shall come.

**Clergy** Goodbye Baji, God bless this orphanage!

**Golbaji** Are you leaving from the back door or not?

**Clergy** The front door! No! No one should learn that I have been here. You know these people-

**Golbaji** Yes, your honor

Rush out and pretend to pray. There are so many like you!

**Flowerman** Goodbye Baji; I will pay later so put it on my bill. I know my way out.

**Golbaji** He leaves from front door; to let everyone know. People like him make this house infamous. He brags about it everywhere. The more they know the better for him; He thinks he is a real man! Where is the girl?

**Jamil** Here she comes.

*[Zeynab enters]*

**Golbaji** Then welcome, I am glad to have finally met you!

**Zeynab** Has there been a problem?

**Golbaji** What problem? You are the lady of choice so far!

**Zeynab** I am here all the time.

**Golbaji** Not enough! You hide yourself and turn away the costumers. The costumers don’t see you at all. I don’t see you. You never come out. You must work more for a while. I paid so much for you. I brought a Doctor when you were sick. You must repay the money I spent on you.

**Zeynab** When I do so am I free to go?

**Golbaji** What about your expenses in between? Three meals a day.

**Munis** She barely even ate one meal a day.

**Golbaji** You are like my own daughter. Where do you want to go? You think the outside world is better than here? You want to go and become a maid; or to beg for money? People shall abuse you and take advantage of you for free. No you deserve better than this. Here you have support; you have friends to look after you; you eat well, and a place to sleep at night.

*[College student, College teacher, and the tent maker circle each other on the stage.]*

**College Student** I have seen much of west developments; just like the steam or electric carriage but none of them astonished me except the cable that lightens the streets of Russia. The photograph industry was astonishing on its own as if men and women were walking around for real.

**College Teacher** The foreign nations have sought their advances from our history- if you want to advance like them you got to develop your industry

*[They leave as the Pharmacist and Sahib-Jam Secretory approach]*

**Apothecary** It’s all about politics and nothing else! They make Molotov cocktail themselves and then they blame, imprison and attack people for it! Some news came that they captured Heidar Khan over night for making a Molotov cocktail. There is no security in this danger zone. Oh Mir Naddaf what has been done to you? What is this injury you have?

*[Injured Mir Nadaf arrives in pain]*

**Mir Nadaf** It’s a long story! It seems that someone told my family about my visits to the brothel house. My house turned to hell and my wife attacked me making me my head bruised and bloody-*[throws himself on a bench]* Oh constitutionalism what tortures I bare for it!

**Sahib-Jam Secretory** I don’t see a bright future for Iranians. First its murder and loot and then chaos and turmoil. Lucky those who passed away or left the country. I see the chaos and bloody riots right in front of us. It won’t be long before the tensions increase and destroy all.

*[From the other side College Student and College Teacher and the Tent maker enter]*

**College Student** What is all the fear about? Journalists and newspapers haven’t changed their ways in these tough days and their writing whatever they must. They write stuff that is astonishing. They shoot with their pens! There is no time to waste; government must open the house of Justice soon; otherwise the media would publish the rest of it.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**Apothecary** What a strange time it is. All the government cares about is to destroy the parliament; and wouldn’t let them work for the people and the country. It seems that the court has appointed some gangsters and outlaws to disrupt the house of council. These days any hypocrite could make money out of their deeds.

**College Student** *[rushes in]* they have not kept their word. There are gaurds, soldiers, and hacks everywhere. Yesterday the parliament members said for how long shall this torture continue? Every time we leave our homes, our families beg us to stay. For how long should we be in chains?

Why do you leave your homes? Dress like women and stay in doors and mourn; no one expects you anything. Leave the street fight to real men!

**Hajj Saati (Merchant)** Are you talking about me? I am to lose in either way. I am a woman and the proponent of the government and the outlaws! And I haven’t been to the communities to fight for reform and development? I am glad that I haven’t betrayed my country. I shall be the servant of my country whether the constitution wins or the government!

**Sahib-Jam Secretory** I am the poorest here as I do not know who is the just here! Neither the constitution nor the dictatorship would do me any good. It requires knowledge to understand these and I am not that knowledgeable. *[Sound of artillery]* Oh god! I wish I were born elsewhere in the world!

*[After an absence from the house, Zeynab enters]*

**Zeynab** I am not the most miserable of all. I must keep in mind that there are those who starve worst than me. I love you all now; all of you. Even this occupation of mine; I love this job which I despise.

*[She covers her face]*

**Golbaji** Dear girl, you saw for yourself. I have told you not to leave.

**Zeynab** I told myself maybe I could find him. Maybe he had forgotten my whereabouts, and that I could show him.

**Mastoureh** Who are you talking about?

**Zeynab** Obbeydallah whom I was engaged to. I thought maybe he is waiting for me. Every time I hear the doorbell, I think it should be him.

**Golbaji** This is your home Zeynab.

**Zeynab** Don’t call me that, I am ashamed of being called Zeynab.

**Jamil** Ladies, the customers are waiting.

**Golbaji** The customers?

**Jamil** They are many in fact. There is loot everywhere. Every time they close the bazaar, they all gather here.

*[In the circular stage, the College student and College teacher look for an empty place to seat]*

**College Student** Now you can see why I come here. It is not for the sake of gossip; and not for the garden and water fountain; it is for the sake of my lonely heart. I live in a room so where else is better for me to stay? I go to the lecture house, I go to the opposition gatherings, but after that I have no where else to go. No newspaper, no theatre like the ones in france, no café, no boulevard-

**College Teacher** You are familiar with all of them?

**College Student** Almost!

**College Teacher** One of them sings and reads poetry. How is it?

**College Student** So you have been here before?

**College Teacher** I was falling in love. Don’t look at me like that. Once I saw a veiled woman in the street; the wind blow away her scarf. That was enough for me. I followed her and I got to this house. Real love only happens in a better time.

**College Student** You talked of love, let me tell you, there is a girl here whom sometime I dream about. Don’t mock me. I feel dishonored over this but I cannot think of anyone but her.

**Mastoureh** *[with mockery]* thank god a hundred times.

**Sahib-Jam Secretory** Yes, thank god that they didn’t invade the house, thank god that they didn’t kill or drown the children, and didn’t castrate women! What else can be done? The people of Iran are so distressed; maybe our children shall live in comfort and peace.

*[Women all sitting on the stage; the tent maker has hung a box around his neck, which opens towards them. In the box, there are some puppets]*

**Tent Maker** Here are three puppets-see ladies- one is dictatorship; one is religion; and the other constitution! The one fallen to the ground is the people.

*[Women take notice and the puppet of people bows]*

**Zeynab** Where are the women?

**Tent Maker** The women are watching.

*[Laughter of all. Tent maker moves the puppet of dictator]*

**Tent Maker** Who was this with all these formalities?

**Women** Dictator!

**Tent Maker** He says you are the servant of the king. He is the leader and you are the slave and you must bow to him!

*[Dictator puppet hits the people puppet in the head; the puppet falls to the ground-the women sigh for the puppet. Tent maker moves the Religion puppet; the puppet picks the people puppet form the ground]*

**Tent Maker** Who was this in strange looks?

**Women** Religion!

**Tent Maker** This puppet says you are not the slave of the king. They were wrong. You are not the king’s slave but my slave! Why do you bow in front of the king- but you must bow for me!

*[Religion puppet hits the people puppet in the head and it falls to the ground. Women become emotional. Tent maker moves the constitution puppet; the puppet helps the people puppet from the ground]*

**Tent Maker** Who was this with that look?

**Women** Constitution!

**Tent Maker** This puppet says why is there sorrow in each breath you take! As you can break free from all the chains!

-The puppet says you are no one’s slave but yours! You have logic and honor; and oppression and wealth must not bring you down!

No force on you;

No lust in your strength;

Since you are fine on your own!

**Zeynab** What lessons are taught by these puppets and yet we never listen. The puppets were lifeless and yet they could live [by the opinion they shared], we are alive but it is as if we are not [because we had no voice, opinion, etc]

*[A young newcomer enters the stage in a delusional manner at the presence of women and other men]*

**Gohar** Oh look at this gentleman in these posh clothes. We had not had that much of these rich kids recently. He is hesitant to stay or leave.

**Hagar** Some people pay in cash while other trade stuff. What is your deal like?

**Manzar** Hey boy. You are standing there astonished. If you are looking for my chamber, it is that way.

**Gohar** People like him tip twice!

**Manzar** Why are nervous boy? It is not a big deal. It is always difficult the first time. If you have enough money, rent me for the whole day.

**Rich boy** I am not interested; I didn’t come with my own will but I had to! You got the wrong person. I am the proponent of freedom and constitutionalism; but my dear father who is a parliament member is against it. I didn’t know any other way to harm him other than this.

**Mir Nadaf** Oh the son of a parliament member; what a pleasure! You must have seen me at the parliament once as much as it has became a sanctuary for those in need. *[he brings out some documents]* What I need is an approval for importing some goods from Russia.

**Rich boy** yes yes, *[my father]* does such things! How much shall you pay to get approval from him? Russian coins or Qajar ones? They are bargaining over constitutionalism just the same-

*[He leaves looking so sad and down]*

**Mir Baghi** *[not understanding what happened]* where did he go?

**Mir Nadaf** *[In wonder]* No, these goods shall not be released from costums.

**Rich boy** *[returns weeping]* Why? Why him? Who always debated on freedom?

**Zeynab** Ridicule these men; one of these days, they shall have freedom for sale in the Bazaar. Serve this gentleman with tobacco.

**College Teacher** *[moves towards the boy]* If you want to make up to the misdeeds of your father there is a way. Join the underground community and get armed!

**Watch Maker** *[towards other business men]* Who are these guys?

**Mir Shalchi** He is the Teacher at Daro al Fonoun college and the other one is the student of the college. They are well educated students not just commoners. They say we want freedom and a republic and how long should we be under the rule of Lords and rulers. They are writing the constitution.

**Watch Maker** Nonesense! If divine law was wrong, then it would not have been in holy books of god. These constitutionalists just walk around with their French hats, canes and glasses and say that we are this and that, and the law should be based on such facts, if these guys face any of the soldiers and arms, they shall run away like crazy.

**Zeynab** Gentlemen, I guess the ban of commute has ended so you are free to leave and if you are leaving do not forget to pay for the tea and fresheners.

*[Zeynab serves the men tea for the last time and Manzar collects money from them]*

**Secretory**  *[begging]* I have no family money and no great salary; how can I pay the ladies out of my income?

*[Almas enters asking for money, some of the male characters leave the stage now assuming that the ban of commute is lifted while women engage in chatter and the rest of the men stay indoors having tea and Shisha.]*

**Mastoureh** hey Tent seller; why are you stunned?

**Tent Maker** *[in shock]* I am your slave, do you care to ask how I am?

**Mastoureh** You look but you never see me.

 *[the Tent Maker leaves anxiously.]*

**Gohar** *[approaches Mastoureh]* You ignored him so bad that he [tent seller] left with a broken heart.

**Mastoureh** I promise you he shall come back, I did not do anything to drove him away.

**Golbaji** Once Mastoureh was all alone, she walked around the house from one room to the other.

**Gohar** I remember that, I turned on the light and she asked me how did you end up here?

**Zeynab** It was as if *[Gohar and the rest of the women]* we were waiting for years for some one to ask this question.

**Gohar** My mother was here as far as I remember. I was born in this house. My deceased mother used to ban me from going outside. I used to see everything from the window or the rooftop. When my poor mother passed away, the madam told the customers to pay more; saying that she deserves it; pay for this orphan. They used to call this place as orphanage.

**Munis** The walls of this room are like my story. Whoever came has written something and left. You know how men are! Sometimes I say a line of poetry and the customers, who know how, write it on the wall. Once one of them wanted to teach me how to write; but he left. I look at the walls; I can not read my own poetry.

**Zeynab** Have you ever thought about leaving this place?

**Masoumeh** I got scared. What if they tell Golbaji on us? Oh my god; I never thought about leaving.

**Zeynab** What do you scared of Masoumeh? Me?

**Masoumeh** of being tricked; of being hurt unexpectedly! Once someone came asking for my hand in marriage. He prepared for marriage ritual. I said to my self, god is great. Then I figured out that he wanted to take me away to make a madam of a brothel himself.

**Manzar** Why was I entangled by my step mom? Why did she ruin my relationsip with my husband?

**Mastoureh** Why did I run away with a gypsy? Why was I deceived that he was the man of my dreams?

**Hagar** I chose this way myself-yes-myself *[crying]* one day I shall repent and I will return to my parents home.

**Fitna** Why talk of poverty when no one believes that? Why should I say that my dream was full meal? Why should I say that my stepfather threw me out of the house; when he heard that the neighbours spotted me while bathing in summer!

*[Jamil enters the stage, where women are talking among themselves and waiting probably for some news from outside, the entrance of Jamil and Almas and their news are at their presence]*

**Jamil** *[enters while screaming]* The cannons are approaching!

**Almas** *[horrified]* I saw it with my own eyes!

**College Student** *[rushes in to the stage]* The have ordered not to allow any food or water to those on strike in the mosque. The poor gentlemen are left for a couple of days with out food or water. We must do something!

**Jamil** *[shouting]* people are running from the cannon and the cannon is approaching fast.

**Darbandi** *[fearfully rushes in]* There are fortification in schools and mosques and the bazaar and the shops are all closed down. They have stolen people’s coats and arms, have slaughtered three innocent people and have got indulged in crime and viciousness.

**Secretory** *[walks in on the stage]* god forbids what shall become of this; it is the dooms day.

**College Student** *[enters quickly]* Have you heard the news?

**College Teacher** All I know is that so many people are shivering. Many heads of journals and newspapers are in danger thus so many are pretending to condemn the constitutionalism.

**College Student** The Russian commanders have gathered soldiers from many of the towns nearby the capital and they are invading like conquerors.

**College Teacher** Lets go! What is this world becoming; claiming the lives of the youth

*[They both leave. Apothecary enters hurriedly.]*

**Almas** Listen! There is some noise. It seems they have bombarding the parliament.

**Apothecary** As far as I know three waggons of injured were taken from the city. The members of the council of Azarbaijan have shot the soldiers for bombarding the parliament and killing the members.

**Mir Nadaf** *[rushes on the stage]* They have even attacked the deceased! The Cossack soldiers have dug the tomb of Seyyed Abdolhamid, the first martyr of constitutionalism and the dragged out his remains. What is happening?

**Mir Shalchi** *[runs on the stage out of breath]* People outside have sworn and dressed for martyrdom.

**Golbaji** Do not panic girls. Almas bring some news

**Almas** They are nearby. What ever it is, it is close. The bang bang of the guns and the sound of the cannons.

**Golbaji** Close the doors!

**Almas** What do you mean with doors madam? Who cares about doors these days as long as they climb walls!

**Haj Nilforoush**  *[enters in horror*] The ravage has begun; they are invading everywhere.

**Secratory** I don’t think we can modernize this country. I wish we had all died in times of peace and never had to experience theses days.

**Almas** Madam the customers are running away!

**Golbaji** Do not leave us. Do not leave these poor women in the hands of the invading army.

*[The customers flee]*

*[Women are crying]*

**Golbaji** Alright, everyone sing a song. Come on- sing a song.

*[Girls weep in horror]*

*[Golbaji walks around them and sings]*

*[The Cossack soldiers invade inside. Women scream and back off. Two Cossack soldiers get hold of Almas and put him down on his chest and hold a gun to his head in a matter of a second]*

**Cossack** **Soldier** What a place! What a house of delight; it is a true brothel.

**Golbaji** No matter what we do yet we are a bunch of lonely women and in need of your generosity!

**Cossack Soldier** A bunch of lonely women? It can not get any better- *[towards the other Cossack soldiers]* Weren’t you longing for this? What are you waiting for?

**Golbaji** *[horrifiedly bends down and holds up the Quran]* Is there a Muslim among you to defend us? Not even one Muslim who pays respect to the Quran?

**Cossack Soldier** *[threatening]* you whore don’t speak of faith; don’t mention the name of god!

**Golbaji** As god in my witness, you are the oppressors and we are the victims!

**Honour** No one moves! Move aside for the commander; we are Muslim fighters!

*[He goes forward and takes the book and kisses it with respect, but all of a sudden he slashes the face of Golbaji so bad that she faints-]*

**Cossack Soldier** Destroy their house;

*[Women run to each corner, and cling on to whatever they can, trying to defend themselves. Zeynab runs towards Golbaji]*

**Cossack Soldier** **and Honour** Destroy it! Do not hesitate- Destroy the house!

**Zeynab** No*-[throws herself to the ground]* you would have to burry us with the house!

**Golbaji** Stop talking girl; you want to get us all killed!

**Masoumeh** What are you saying Zeynab? Your prayers and curse has brought them here! You were the one longing for the destruction of this house!

**Zeynab** *[towards the soldiers]* We make our living in this house. You have to kill us first before destroying this place

**Cossack Soldier** You think we won’t kill you? First embrace them and then burry them alive. Destroy the house!

*[ The soldiers attack, the horrified women flee to every corner of the house-]*

*[Head of Cossacks and the Women are on stage. Zeynab is sitting on the chair and Jamil is holding a mirror for her]*

**Head of Cossacks** The girl should always wear this necklace. I have stolen it from an aristocrat lady; just for you! It was a mansion that we had spotted before and we broke into it. They brought Quran and cross; I paid no attention-just for your sake!

**Jamil** *[fearful]* She is totally shocked and can’t say a word!

**Golbaji** *[worried]*commander you are know for yourself what a woman desires!

**Head of Cossacks** I have heard that she [Zeynab] has confronted the soldiers. I liked her courage! Without meeting her I chose her to be min! You dragged me here! If they had destroyed or killed you all, I would have never met you!

You deserve much better than this. I shall take you to Russia myself; you shall impress them all!

**Golbaji** I am your servant sir, but what about the other customers?

**Head of Cossacks** You are under my wing. No one shall dare to approach you. As long as you are with me fear no one; no one but me! How about it? Huh?

**Hagar** Never remove or give away this necklace!

**Golbaji** It shall offend the commander. No Sir, be confident that she will not remove the necklace at any circumstance!

**Women** *[they bend down on their knees]* No Sir, be confident! She shall not remove the necklace!

**Head of Cossacks** The last time I shot my lover in the face!

**Golbaji** Do you see how much it is worth Zeynab?

*[Zeynab stands in the centre of the stage, stunned and dazed, the other girls frustrated and grouchy circle and walk angrily around her]*

**Fitna** So tell us about it; how does it feel to be the lover of the head of an army? To take the oppressor to your chamber! Did you please him?

**Golbaji** Stop being jealous. Didn’t you wish to be her?

**Mastoureh** Stay out of it Madam! Or should I say she is the madam now? Now she has become the mistress of foreigners. Your life depends on her.

**Hagar** all our lives are dependent on her!

**Golbaji** you immoral- why are you trying to plot against her?

**Manzar** *[towards Zeynab]* how did if feel like? Did you feel like the bride of Tsar and the Sultan at the same time?

**Gohar** Shame on you! You don’t know what it is like to take an armed soldier to your bed in fear and horror!

*[all of a sudden signs of grief and fury appear on Zeynab’s face and she starts crying without a sound]*

**Fitna** Hush! What did she [Zeynab] Say?

**Munis** *[astonished]* I think she said: Obbeydallah why won’t’ you take me away from this place?

**Golbaji** You wicked! Of course they shall come for you. They’ll take you to Russia and the customers would need a passport to meet you from then on.

*[Jamil runs to the stage holding on to a brazier]*

Jamil Silence! A foreign spy is here;

*[Everyone scatters except Zeynab. Jamil circles Zeynab with the brazier. Almas bends to the Cossack soldier who enters the stage]*

**Almas** Yes sir; She is wearing the necklace; and she is here as well; and she dreams of her commander day and night!

**Cossack Soldier** *[smiles with consent]* Thank god!

*[Soldier leaves]*

*[Zeynab is on the stage on her own and Obbeydallah enters the stage fully armed]*

**Obbeydallah** Hello ladies. Come on over; come to me as I long for you. I am here for one of ladies of the house; Zeynab! Shall you go and get her? Tell her its Obbeydallah! She knows me. Why are you looking at me like this? I told you she knows me. She loves me like crazy. Ask her for yourself!

**Zeynab** *[as if she is in a dream]* Obbeydallah

**Obbeydallah** What? Are you into me now?

**Zeynab** I was here the day that all three of you came to this house. You have changed!

**Obbeydallah** Changed for good! Go and fetch her and bring her to me! *[calling out loud]* Zeynab!

**Zeynab** Stop shouting; you’ll disturb all the house.

**Obbeydallah** Is she with someone?

**Zeynab** With someone like you!

**Obbeydallah** Why are you shivering? Are you impressed to see a man like me? Go tell Zeynab that Obbeydallah has become a great man. She’ll be fascinated to see me. Women fear Cossack soldiers and some of them die for them! You are a pretty one too.

**Zeynab** She was waiting for you to come for her.

**Obbeydallah** I am here to make love to the whore and leave asap! A soldier has much to do. Obbeydallah has become an important person. Sometimes I behead people, sometimes I hung! We killed numerous revolutionaries so much that you could fill a ditch out of their dead bodies. I have much more memories to share.

**Zeynab** Share it then!

**Obbeydallah** with you?

**Zeynab** Zeynab is busy; she has one customer or maybe two- she is booked all day!

So tell me what about the father?

**Obbeydallah** who?

**Zeynab** The one who said was her father that came with you.

**Obbeydallah** He was after getting himself a mule. He bought a mule and went back to his village. Some time ago that we robbed their village I spotted the mule but not the man.

**Zeynab** and the village?

**Obbeydallah** You know about it?

**Zeynab** Zeynab has mentioned it.

**Obbeydallah** We destroyed everything; we stole till their very last grain, we had no mercy to them even to a small infant!- I’m feeling sick. Forget about Zeynab; you are a fair lady yourself. Let me make love to you.

**Zeynab** You have to pay and I am very expensive. You have to pay me way more than what you own!

**Obbeydallah** I shall buy you for free!

**Zeynab** They *[Obbeydallah and father]* sold me for free.

**Obbeydallah** Come here you are such a dish!

**Zeynab** Do not touch me; you have a commander right? I am his mistress. This necklace was gifted to me by him. Don’t you fear that he would shot you in the face?

Who do you fear of? Head of Cossack army? Secretory? Or a few revolutionaries who are my customers? *[shouting]* Get lost. Get lost!

*[Obbeydallah runs away. Zeynab falls down to her knees and weeps. College Student arrives on the stage]*

**College Student** Today they closed the parliament once and for all. Until today there was something left of constitutionalism but today it is gone for good. I have heard that the western parliaments are in mourning over the fate of the Iranian parliament. There is no parliament, no constitutionalism. It is all over.

**Zeynab** Constitutionalism shall do me no good. What is the parliament and what can it do for me? I don’t understand what you say.

**College Student** Constitutionalism means that you fear nothing but the judiciary and the law would be your respect and your protection. Don’t you understand that dictatorship is oppression?

**Zeynab** If this is oppression then all men are dictators. I want to drink wine just as men do so.

**College Student** my passion does not need wine, lets play the role of lovers and pretend to be in love.

**Zeynab** If you had loved me!

**College Student** If I had loved you!

**Zeynab** Do not lie, I know that you love me.

**College Student** Your eyes are as dark as night; and your hair steals the heart of men! When you comb it do you hear their plea?

Your eyes are like the embrace of lovers.

Your body is garden where I see both heaven and guilt.

Heaven would be nothing without you.

Your breast are like two lost lamb in the land of mischief.

*[Golbaji enters]*

**Golbaji** Have you lost your mind ? Have you forgotten the commander? He is the one paying for you?

**Zeynab** from the money he steals from the people.

**Golbaji** *[yells]* and now with that money you intend to fall in love?

*[sound of bombardment]*

**Zeynab** We shall give birth to children in fear;

We shall have children who never smile!

I shall embrace this love affair; if this would be a revolt against dictatorship!

*[Golbaji screams out so loud]*

**Zeynab** Why should I turn him away? When I long for it so bad!

You came so late but come to me;

Maybe our love shall breed constitutionalism!

Yesterday I had a strange dream. I saw that I was among an army all alone and they were all drunk. I was afraid. I called Obbeydallah! And then all of them turned towards me as if they were all titled Obbeydallah. And I woke up.

I asked him how many people have you beheaded; how many houses did you destroy; how many people did you left to mourn?

He laughed and shouted that he wished that constitutionalism were a women, and we would drag her down and make love to her! And then they all laughed.

*[Obbeydallah appears on the stage though only as part of the dream Zeynab had about her encounter with him while the other residents of the house take part on the stage as observers to this conversation among the two as part of the memory of Zeynab’s dream]*

**Obbeydallah** It is me Obbeydallah! Some fair lady has come and wants to talk to me!

**Zeynab** I said I came on her behalf, who had loved you in the past. She has a message for you.

**Obbeydallah** I should expect many messages as there are so many of them out there!

**Zeynab** I told you this is a message from her who had been in love with you. This message shall talk on its own.

**Obbeydallah** the revolver? I was seeking such revolver; this is a good one!

**Zeynab** You should know when it shoots!

**Obbeydallah** *[covers his face with hands*] Ouch!

**Zeynab** Then I woke up! I was sweating! When I could sleep again, I saw an army of chevaliers-

**Munis** And what happened then?

**Zeynab** They were furious; they all looked the same and they approached me!

**Masoumeh** That was why you screamed?

**Zeynab** They didn’t mean to kill me; they slaughtered me! I saw it with my own eyes; my body tearing apart!

**Masoumeh** You had this dream three nights ago-

**Zeynab** But I can still feel the pain.

*[The young boy enters the house holding on to a wooden box]*

**Boy** Hello ladies, I am collecting funds for the revolution from money to gold.

**Zeynab** *[without looking at the boy]* Wait! *[she reaches to her necklace]*

**Jamil** *[horrified]* What are you doing Zeynab? Don’t do it. That hypocrite shall shoot you in the face!

*[Zeynab takes the necklace off and throws it in to the box. Everyone gazes in fear]*

**Boy** *[astonished]* Do you believe in constitutionalism?

**Zeynab** *[out of breath]* I hate hypocrisy and fear!

**Gohar** *[starts walking*] I didn’t want this from the beginning. I told you Madam that this is nothing for me! I will get rid of these earings; *[throws it in to the box]*

**Manzar** *[walks]* I had to give it *[jewel]* up one day; goodbye I loved you all *[throws jewels into the box]*

**Masoumeh** I had kept this *[jewel]* for such day.

**Golbaji** *[takes off her bracelet]* god! have mercy on us! *[Throws it into the box]*

*[The boy leaves]*

*[College Student enters]*

**College Student** I have heard that the outlaws and the soldiers have attacked the house. Soon the revolutionaries shall come for rescue.

**Zeynab** Now I understand what constitution is.

**College Student** You are bitter today. Wait for tomorrow. Tomorrow the victory shall brighten everything.

**Zeynab** Madam allowed me to go for walk tomorrow; since I am so bitter and homesick. You must be ashamed to walk around with me otherwise I would have loved to go for a walk with you.

**College Student** Tomorrow I am headed to the Ottoman land. I have got myself a ticket and a passport. Why are you dazed? I have come for the very last time.

I have been thinking about it for so long. It is done now only if I can make it through Anzali and the thieves on the road. Now let’s pretend to say farewell just like lovers!

Farewell Zeynab. I shall take your memory to all around the world with me. World shall be filled with memories of you and all the places where I shall call you name.

**Zeynab** I haven’t seen the world. I saw very little of the world. I remember the village that no longer exists; this house and that big square that is called Toopkhoneh .

**College Student** When you go to Naserieh go visit Dar ol fonon where I have been a pupil; but don’t go to Toopkhone. The have placed the cannons there and the man behind it shall bombard any minute. Those cannons have saved the dictatorship so far.

**Zeynab** Tomorrow I shall go for a walk. It is good to hang out sometimes.

**College Student** I will go to Caucasus; Antioch; and maybe France. I shall tour them all to see if all people are in fear just as us? I shall return the day that the terror has ended.

**Zeynab** When the terror is over where shall I go? Tell me some of what you used to say; lets pretend like lovers do.

**College Student** Who loves you Zeynab better than I do?

Once I shall cry out loud that why this world kept us apart?

**Zeynab** That’s nice; you are leaving, and I am the last person to know. Why did you make me fall in love with you, if you had to go? I had prepared my chamber for you!

**College Student** I shall go but my heart remains with you. If I have to go another day why not now?

**Zeynab** It is good that you have an answer for everything.

**College Student** There is no other way. It is mandatory to migrate. It is far too dangerous to stay. I shall go Zeynab; and I am taking away only the memory of your eyes with myself.

*[College Student leaves, women are left on stage with Almas and Jamil]*

**Zeynab** Jamil bring me my clothes.

**Jamil** Outdoor clothes?

**Zeynab** Yes outdoor clothes. Why should I wait for tomorrow. I will go today; right now. I must go out Jamil. These days it is so dangerous outside that any one who leaves might never return. So farewell Jamil!

*[Zeynab leaves]*

**Women** What did she mean? Why did she say this and not that?

**Golbaji** It is chaos everywhere. It seems like the doomsday. Is everyone present? Where is Zeynab?

**Jamil** She went to the streets.

**Golbaji** *[horrified]* Street?

**Jamil** You allowed her to go.

**Gobaji** But not now; the streets are so dangerous with all the Cossack soldiers and the outlaws. She left with out any word?

**Gohar** She said she couldn’t bare to say goodbye. She was afraid that she couldn’t go.

**Golbaji** Oh my god! What was she up to?

**Manzar** Now that I think about it she had something underneath her clothes.

**Golbaji** and what was that?

**Jamil** *[fearfully rushes towards Golbaji*] Madam the revolver is gone. Someone messed up your closet. The revolver is gone!

**Golbaji** Oh my god! Run to the streets; find her; bring her back; she is way too fragile and she cannot take it.

**Munis** Why did she take the revolver then?

**Golbaji** Enemies are armed; she is not strong enough to shoot. Go girls, go!

*[Zeynab is on stage, at this point the character is playing her part in the death scene on the streets of Tehran but the other women of the house are there present following the details of her involvement and death. At this point, the story of the play flashes back to the very beginning when they know that Zeynab is dead and they are mourning while delivering her story. However, the character of Zeynab is involved from the beginning right to the end. At this point she is playing her role in the death scene and the women along with Almas and Jamil are there in the brothel enacting the story of the death just as it is played in the ritual of Ta’ziyeh.]*

**Zeynab** How quickly I got to the cannons square. It is filled with armed men and drunken outlaws; thousands of soldiers, so many corps hanged on the gallows.

*[crying of the girls as Zeynab approaches the cavalier]*

**Zeynab** I am lookin for a man; his name is Obbeydallah

**Drunken man** We are all Obbeydallah.

**Zeynab** He is from my village.

**Zeynab** I see you all but he is the head of you. He is the head of the cannon shooters and the bombarding.

*[back to the brothel]*

**Munis** Oh Zeynab! Why did you have to die like this?

**Golbaji** You stupid! Don’t presume the fighters as dead! They shall return high and mighty!

*[mourning of the girls]*

*[Jamil is crying when Darbandi and other men rush inside the house]*

**Darbandi** Oh gentlemen! There is uproar in Toopkhane. A women has shot a revolver.

**Mir Baghi** *[runs inside]* A women has shot the head of the cannon shooters in the mouth!

**Mir Shalchi** *[rushes in]* They have captivated a women in Toopkhane and torturing her.

**Watch Maker** *[runs inside]* Men have slaughtered a women in Toopkhane.

**Jamil** Who would witness for this day in the afterlife?

*[mourning of the girls]*

**Women** Oh Zeynab! How lonely you were!

**Golbaji** They murdered her but she is not dead. Who said she is not living as much as we do?

**Almas** The cannons are headed this way! Madam!

*[Girls run around in fear, the men escape in horror]*

**Fitna** Come on Almas, Come on Madam; we still time!

**Golbaji** You can leave, I am waiting for someone.

**Fitna** Waiting? You know she is not coming back.

**Almas** Cannons are coming this way!

**Golbaji** Silence! She shall come.

**Gohar** Oh Madam, look; this is her dress that was dragged out.

**Masoumeh** Oh Madam, look; this is Zeynab’s foot.

**Golbaji** Oh my god! This is Zeynab for real.

*[mourning; Zeynab approaches slowly, her hands and arms are cut from the shoulder and she is holding them to her face, in the palm of her hand there is an eye]*

*[Zeynab stands among the women circling her]*

**Zeynab** You women of sorrow and wailing!

 You envious sisters!

 You victims of rape!

 Wail for long; and never smile!

 What did you raise as your offspring?

 Wail for these murderous offspring of yours!

 Wail for these murderous lovers!

 There shall be a day of destruction!

 A day that purity is infected!

 The day you cant’ tell between truth and lie!

 The day you can’t stop crying;

 The day that righteous shall be killed a thousand times;

 The day that righteous shall be in flames;

 That day-is today!

*[End of wailing; darkness on stage]*

1. SourehCinema. http://www.sourehcinema.com/People/People.aspx?Id=138201100208/ retrieved December 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Shahla, Mirbakhtyar. *Iranian Cinema And The Islamic Revolution*. (McFarland & Company Incorporated, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hamid, Dabashi. *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*. (Verso. New York: 2001) p.15 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Martin, Scorsese. http://www.film-foundation.org/world-cinema. retrieved 6 December 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Shahla, Mirbakhtyar. *Iranian Cinema And The Islamic Revolution*. (McFarland & Company Incorporated, 2006). p.22 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Kristin, Thompson and David, Bordwell. *Film History: An Introduction*. Third Edition. McGraw-Hill press. New York: 2010. p. 608. ISBN 978-0-07-339613-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ali Hasouri, *Siavashan* . (Tehran: Cheshmeh Publications, 2005). pp.27,28. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Arash Fanaian. *Gofteman-e Iran*. (Tehran, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Conversation with Bahram Beyzai, Zavon Ghokassian, 1992, translations by Najmeh Khalili. *Conversation*, p. 287 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Shahnameh* is a book of a collection of verses which narrate many of the ancient Persian tales as well as phases of ancient history of Iran. The original book was in middle Persian but it was re-written and comprehended by Ferdowsi in 1000. This book is a narrative of many tales and real characters of ancient Persia. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Stanford. Hamid and Christina Moghadam Program of Iranian Studies. http://iranian-studies.stanford.edu/ [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Farzad Hassani, http://talkhzibast.persianblog.ir/post/472/ [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran*, Tauris, 1997 p.51 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Many critics so far have considered Bahram Beyzai’s *Four Boxes* as the most political piece of dramatic work he has ever written. It was banned by both Pahlavi regime and the Islamic republic and was never staged in Iran but in Oslo and Kuala lumpur. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Farah, Lalani. “A Thousand Years of Firdawsi’s Shahnama is Celeberated.” *The Ismaili*, (2014) http://www.theismaili.org [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Modern China [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ahmad, Ashraf. International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society. **15**: 237–256. doi:10.1023/A:1012921001777*.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Shapur A Shahbazi, 1991. *Ferdowsi: A Critical Biography,30-49*  (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Zabiholah, Saffa, *Mythology in History of Iran*. (Tehran: Amirkabir Press, 1954). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Mary, Boyce. "Middle Persian Literature" *Handbuch Der Orientalistik* I. Abt., IV. Band 2. p. 60. http://archive.org/stream/MiddlePersianLiterature1968 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Shafiq shamel, *Goethe and Hafiz* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013) pp. 85-100. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ancient name of modern China [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Warner, Arthur and Edmond Warner, (translators) The Shahnama of Firdausi, 9 vols. (London: Keegan Paul, 1905-1925) [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Bosworth, C.E. 1975. “Iran Under Buyids”. *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 4: From the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs* 4:250-305. Cambridge: Cambridge University. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Mohamadreza Sharifi, *The Culture of Farsi Language ,112*. (Tehran: Nashr Now Publications, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The tenth day of Muharram, the month when the killing of descendants of Prophet Mohammad took place. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Grand daughter of prophet Mohammad who witnessed the Murders of her siblings and family but survived the tragedy of Ashura. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ali Hasouri, *Siavashan ,* (Tehran: Cheshmeh Publications, 2005). Pp.27-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Alizadeh, Farideh; Hashim, Mohd Nasir. "When the attraction of Ta'ziyeh is diminished, the community should inevitably find a suitable replacement for it". 2016. *Taylor & Francis, Cogent Arts & Humanities*.  [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. (Azarpay 1975, 19-29) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Tekia generally refers to a temporary stage set up by wooden piles and poles to form a stand and stage in a round form where the audience could also participate in the play when needed. Centuries later in 1870s Tekia became the name of the very first established house of theatres in the capital of Iran, Tehran such as Tekia-e-Dowlat where royal family and statesman would be entertained while attending the religious ritual. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Brooklyn Museum, 2009, 1997. https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/161186 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. S. G. W. Benjamin, *Persia and the Persians*, (London, 1886).  pp. 382-88 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Ashraf, Ahmad. “Iranian Identity III. Medieval Islamic Period”. *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2012. http://www.iranicaonline.org [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Radio Free Europe, “The Performance of a Ta'zieh During Ashura In Iran”. (2013). http://www.rferl.org [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Nelly, Caron. “The Ta’Zieh, the Secret Theatre of Iran.” *The World of Music*. 17:3-10. https://www.jstor.org [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Khalifa aka Caliphate in Arabic means successor and refers to the person who becomes the leader after the current person in power. Khalifa is most significant when following the death of Prophet Mohammad, one person was chosen to succeed him in leading the Islamic nation. It was an ancient Arab tradition that when the leader would die, a group of influential people of that tribe would gather to choose one person as the leader. Sunni Muslims strongly believe in this tradition thus they praise the successors of Mohammad despite Shia Muslims who glorified the descendants of Mohammad believing that his children should have succeeded him. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Peter.J Chelkowski, *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran. (*New York: University Press, 1979). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ashraf, Ahmad. “Iranian Identity III. Medieval Islamic Period”. *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2012. http://www.iranicaonline.org [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Hussain, Jassim M. (1982). The occultation of the Twelfth Imam. London, England: Muhammadi Trust. ISBN 978-0-907794-01-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Peter.J Chelkowski, *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran. (*New York: University Press, 1979). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Pejman Rahimi, ‘Narration of Nodbeh of Constitution by Bahram Beyzai.’ *Socialists*. (2011) [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Pejman Rahimi, ‘Narration of Nodbeh of Constitution by Bahram Beyzai.’ *Socialists*. (2011) [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Lee Marshal. *The Guardian* “People Watching”. July 2003. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2003/jul/14/theatre.artsfeatures [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Peter.J Chelkowski, *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran. (*New York: University Press, 1979). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Pejman Rahimi, ‘Narration of Nodbeh of Constitution by Bahram Beyzai.’ *Socialists*. (2011) [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Sotodeh. “Khornaq, Behzad, Senemar, and Beyzai’s Masterpiece.” (2009) http://setodeh.wordpress.com. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Massoud, Mehrabi, “The History of Iranian Cinema.” (2006) www.massoudmehrabi.com [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ahmad Kasravi. *Tārikh-e Mashruteh-ye Iran* (History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution), (2003), in Persian, Tehran, Negah Publications, p. 951. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Gilan is the name of northern province of modern Iran. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Azarbaijan is the name of a province in north west of Iran. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Ahmad Kasravi. *Tārikh-e Mashruteh-ye Iran* (History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution) in Persian, (Tehran: Negah Publications, 2003) pp. 951. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolutiion, 1906-1911*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Bakhtiari tribe are an Iranian tribe whom are historically argued to be descendants of ancient kings of Persia, as they were local feudal in south western provinces of Iran 1800-1900s, they played a significant role in the contemporary politics of Iran especially due to the fact that so many of Iran’s oil resources were located in their territories. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Michael P. Zirinsky; "Imperial Power and Dictatorship: Britain and the Rise of Reza Shah, 1921–1926", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24 (1992), 639–663, Cambridge University Press [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p.437 [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ervan Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, p.122 [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Behrooz writing in Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran, Edited by Mark j. Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, Syracuse University Press, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Golsorkh was the surname of Khosrow Golsorkhi a leftist intellectual who was tried and sentenced to death based on vague accusations. His trial is known as an unfair one among Iranians as few parts of it were aired on national television becoming a symbol of Shah’s dictatorship and censorship in 1974. The trial was fully aired on public television after the revolution of 1979. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Tarikhirani 2011. Shargh Newspaper. www.tarikhirani.ir [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Vartan Salakhanian was an Armenian-Iranian Marxist activist who was imprisoned after the coup of 1953 and died under inquisition in Evin prison, Tehran. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Shamlou.org [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Shahrough, Akhavi, 2008. "The Thought and Role of Ayatollah Hossein'ali Montazeri in the Politics of Post-1979 Iran". Iranian Studies 41 (5): 645–666. Doi:10.1080/00210860802518301*.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. BBC. “Ayatollah Montazeri’s Account from Imprisonment to Isolation.” 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. BBC Persian. 2010. Interview with Susan Taslimi. Accessed April 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Bozorgmehr, Mehdi., Sabagh, Georges (1988). *High Status Immigrants: A Statistical Profile of Iranians in the United States*, Iranian Studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. BBC Persian. Interview with Susan Taslimi. 5 September 2010. http://www.bbc.com/persian/tv/2010/09/100906\_hardtalk\_susan\_taslimi [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Terri Ginsberg and Chris Lippard. *Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema*. 2010. Plymouth UK: The Scarecrow Press. Pp.65-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Translated to English as The Murder of Cenmar, “Majles” in Persian means gathering and “Ghorbani” refer to the killing or sacrifice and in this play it is referred to the murder of the architect, the person who was supposed to make the dream of civilization real. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Mehdi Yavarmanesh. Association of Critics of Iranian Theatre. 2016. http://fitf.theater.ir/fa/59087 [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Francois de Blois*. Haft Peykar*. 2002. Vol. XI, Fasc. 5, pp. 522-524 [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Mehdi Yazdani Khorram. 2012. Etemad Newspaper. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Tebyan. 2011. The structure of the tale of Seven Beauties. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Hussein Mohammadzadeh Sadigh. 2012. Nizami Ganjavi in the studies of Hussein Mohammadzadeh Sadigh. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Final chapter of *Haft Peykar* or *Seven Beauties* develops on the death of Sassanid king, Bahram and in numerous chapters including 18th, 17th, 16th, there is notion about the interest of the king in hunting zebras and other animals and his pride in it. The word Zebra in Persian (Gur) is similar to the equivalent of grave (Gur) and Nizami had used this word to make a metaphor for Bahram who chased zebras for a lifetime to end up in a grave at the end. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Encyclopædia Iranica. 2002*. Encyclopædia Iranica Online*. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. https://gsavisualarts.wikispaces.com/file/view/Nizami+text.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. François de Blois. Haft Peykar // Encyclopædia Iranica. (2002) V. XI. — pp. 522–524. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. C. E. WILSON, B.A. *The Haft PAIKAR* (The Seven Beauties). Translataed from Persian VOL XII and VOL XIII. London: Probsthain & Co. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Mesopotamia is the name of a region in between the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris in modern Iraq which at the time of this play has been part of Persian empire under the rule of Sassanid Dynasty. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Iran Chamber Society. “Sassanid Empire”. http://www.iranchamber.com/history/sassanids/sassanids.php. Accessed June 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Al-Hira is an ancient city in Mesopotamia close to modern city of Najaf in modern Iraq. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Bahram V was the Sassanid king who following the assassination of his father gained his crown by the help Nu’man, the ruler of Al-Hira. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Setodeh (2009) [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Anendraj Dictionary, Borhan. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. A famous Persian tragic romance by Nizami about the famous love story of a Sassanid king Khosrow II to the princess of Armenia Shirin who finally became his queen. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. *Shirin and Farhad* is a variant of the *Khosrow and Shirin* about another lover of Shirin who dies courting her. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran*, Tauris, 1997 p.51 [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Shaul, Bakhash (1984).Reign of the Ayatollahs. Basic Books. P.76 [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Shaul, Bakhash (1984).Reign of the Ayatollahs. Basic Books. p. 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Baqer, Moin (2000).Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah. Thomas Dunne Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Shaul, Bakhash (1984).Reign of the Ayatollahs. Basic Books. p. 111 [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Abulhassan Bani-Sadr is the first elected Iranian president after the revolution of 1979. His views and policies especially those in favor of the political activists later clashed with the fundamental sectors of the government and Ayatollah Khomeini to the point that the parliament impeached him in 1981. He currently lives in exile in Paris, France. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Shaul, Bakhash (1984).Reign of the Ayatollahs. Basic Books. p. 221-222. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Lajevardi was the incumbent warden and torturer in Evin prison in Tehran in early 1980’s. He was later assassinated at the ten-year anniversary of mass executions of political prisoners. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Ervand, Abrahamian. (1992-10-01). *The Iranian Mojahedin*. ISBN 9780300052671. pp.120-137. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Bahram Beyzai. 2002. P. 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Dabashi, Theology of Discontent (1993), pp. 419, 443 [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Behrooz writing in *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, Edited by Mark j. Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, Syracuse University Press, 2004, p.103 [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. “Islamic Revolution of 1979.” Iran Chamber Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Khawarnaq is a Persian word referring to a palace with great arch like ceiling [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. # Baqer, Moin. “Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri” *The Gaurdian*. 2009

 [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Sheikh Fazlollah Nouri was a prominent Shia clergy who participated in the Iranian constitutional revolution but later became a critic and enemy against western secularism and modern advancements. He allied with the then Qajar ruler to fight constitution and the parliament and therefore was later executed for treason. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Martin, Vanessa. “NURI, FAZL-ALLAH”. *Encyclopædia Iranica*. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Said Amir, Arjomand. "Shi'ite Jurisprudence and Constitution Making in the Islamic Republic of Iran". In Marty, Martin E.; Appleby, R. Scott. *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance*. 1993. University of Chicago Press. p. 104. ISBN 978-0-226-50884-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Ervand Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup in Iran," in *Science & Society*, 65 (2) (2001) [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Bagher, Agheli. Calender of Iranian history from constitutionalism to the Islamic revolution. Second edition. (2008) Tehran: Namak press. pp. 120-22 [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Shirin, Ebadi*. Iran Awakening: A memoir of Revolution and Hope*. 2006. Random House Press, New York. P.5 [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Bahram, Beyzai. 2001. p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Ervand, Abrahamian. *History of Modern Iran*. 2008. Columbia University Press, p. 181 [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Bahram, Beyzai. 2002. P. 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Sandra, Machey. *The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation*, New York: Dutton, c. 1996 p. 298 [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Moin *Khomeini*, (2000), p.219 [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Ayatollah Shariatmadari was a prominent Shia clergy who advocated separation of religion and the state and criticized the policies of Islamic republic. He died under house arrest in 1986. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Ayatollah Montazeri is a prominent Shia theologian and human rights and democracy advocate who was the founder of the Guardianship of Islamist jurists, which is the basis of the government in Islamic republic of Iran. Montazeri was the successor to leadership of Islamic republic but due to advocates against the government was put under house arrest until his death in 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Sadegh Ghotbzadeh was a revolutionary student and close aid of Ayatollah Khomeini who served as foreign minister in the early years of the revolution. He was later isolated from the Islamic republic politics and was executed based on the accusations of plot to assassinate Khomeini. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Bahram, Beyzai 2002. Translated into Persian p. 40 [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Bahram, Beyzai 2002. Translated into Persian p. 40 [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Nizami Ganjavi, *Seven Beauties*, Chapter 9 in Persian [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Nizami Ganjavi. 12th century. *Haft Peykar* or *Seven Beauties*. Chapter 10. In Persian. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Beyzai 2002, pp. 28-29 [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Ruhollah, Khomeini. Sayings of the Ayatollah Khomeini : political, philosophical, social, and religious (1980). [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. p.47, Wright. Source: Speech at Feyziyeh Theological School, 24 August 1979; reproduced in Rubin, Barry and Judith Colp Rubin, *Anti-American Terrorism and the Middle East: A Documentary Reader*, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.34 [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Bahram, Beyzai (2002), Translated from Persian. p.15 [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Schirazi, *Constitution of Iran*, (1997), pp. 93–94 [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Arvand Abrahamian. *Iran Between Two Revolutions.* 1982. P. 487. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Siahkal incident was a guerrilla attack operated by the leftist group in 1971 against the Pahlavi regime which attacked a police station in north of Iran to free a couple of leftist guerrillas. The incident was harshly responded by the government and they ended up executing most of its participants and further oppression was put on the political party but could not terminate the guerrilla operations in years afterwards. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Massoud, Fathi. “Siahkal: A loss that turned into a Legacy.” BBC Persian. 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Nikki R. Keddie, Yann Richard. *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*. (2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Bahram, Beyzai. 2002, p.31 [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Khomeini, Ruhollah; Algar, Hamid. Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist. (2002) UK:Alhoda. ISBN 964-335-499-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Bahram, Beyzai. 2002, p. 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Bahram, Beyzai (2002), p. 36 [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Bahram, Beyzai (2002), p. 37 [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Bahram, Beyzai (2002), p. 35 [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Bahram Beyzai (2002), p. 38 [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Stephen C. Poulson. Social Movements in Twentieth Century Iran; Culture, Ideology, and Mobilizing Frameworks. 2006. Plymouth United Kingdom: Lexington Books. P.56 [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Taqiyah is an act of representing ideas and words that are not your true intention under circumstantial situations when a Muslim is forced to lie for a significant reason or under fear of prosecution. John, L.Esposito. Oxford Dictionary of Islam. Ed. (Oxford University Press, 2003) [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Deborah, Kennedy. Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution. (Bucknell University Press, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Bahram, Beyzai. 2002. P.16 [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Bahram, Beyzai. 2002. P. 30 [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*. 1993 [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Ebadi, Shirin, *Iran Awakening* by Shirin Ebadi with Azadeh Moaveni, Random House New York, 2006, p. 185, 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Al-Hira is an ancient city and land located in southern Iraq. For centuries, it was part of the Persian empire and the rule of Sassanid dynasty 3rd century BC-7th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Bahram Beyzai. 2002. P. 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Sheikh Fazlollah Noori was a prominent Shia clergy who was an activist in constitutional revolution in the turn of the century but then fought against it and as a result was executed. He had emphasized on necessity of religious politics and the impose of Islamic rules in the country and today he is being considered as a hero and martyr among Iranian Islamic conservatives. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Ahmad, Ashraf. International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society. **15**: 237–256. doi:10.1023/A:1012921001777*.* Retrieved 7 January 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Bahram, Beyzai. (2002). P.30. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Cyrus, Kadivar. "We are awake. 2,500-year celebrations revisited". *The Iranian*. 25 January 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. James A.F , Watson, James A.F. (March 2015). "Stop, look, and listen: orientalism, modernity, and the Shah's quest for the West's imagination" . The UBC journal of Political Studies. Vancouver: Department of Political Science at the University of British Columbia. 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Val Moghadam, “Socialism or Anti-imperialism? The Left and Revolution in Iran” *New Left Review* (1987). [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Bahram, Beyzai (2002), p. 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Ervand, Abrahamian. *Tortured Confessions.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.) [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Bahram, Beyzai .2002. p. 38 [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. N. Mohajer, 'The Mass Killings in Iran' Aresh 57 (August 1996): 7, quoted in Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions*, (1999), p. 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Ervand, Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions*, (1999), p. 225-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. https://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/021/1990/en/5c32759d-ee5e-11dd-9381-bdd29f83d3a8/mde130211990en.html [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Bahram, Beyzai (2002), p. 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Mohammad, Khakpour. “Khavaran Cemetry; the concealed burial of the executes.” BBC PERSIAN (2005)

"A 'Killing Field' In Iran Revisited, 20 Years Later". Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 29 August 2008*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Shirin, Ebadi. *Iran Awakening*. (2006) New York: Random. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Bahram Beyzai (2002), p. 40 [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. "Audio file revives calls for inquiry into massacre of Iran political prisoners".  *The Guardian*. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions*, (1999), p. 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. “The Massacre of the Political prisoners of Iran”, 1988. 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Bahram, Beyzai. 2002. p. 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Bahram Beyzai. 2002. P.29 [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Farzaneh, Milani. *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*. (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992). [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Bahram Beyzai. 2002. P. 30 [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Bahram, Beyzai. 2002, p. 37 [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Bahram, Beyzai. 2002. p. 20 [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Bahram, Beyzai. (2002), p. 38 [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Shabih khani refers to a type of Ta’ziyeh, which is a type of condolence theatre dealing with mourning for prominent Shia figures. It has been practiced in Iran for centuries and it is notable that both men and women practiced in this theatre and ritual. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Ladies confinement in houses, palaces, etc. where no males except for the household members were allowed. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Bahram, Beyzai. *Four Boxes*. 1980. Rouzbahan Publishing Press: Tehran. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Bahram, Beyzai. *Four Boxes*. 1980. In Persian. Tehran: Rouzbahan Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Isna. “Report on the performance of Four Boxes in Malaysia.” [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Technique of performance where actors read from paper while seated on the stage. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Elnaz, Amirkhani. Interview with Shiva Javadpour. http://theaterfestival.ir [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Khodadad, Rezaei. http://rezaei42.ir [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Khodadad, Rezaei. http://rezaei42.ir [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. http://theater.ir/fa/59089 Interview in Persian. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. #  RadiofreeeuropeRadioLiberty. “Tehran Jails Son Of Top Revolutionary Cleric Over Execution Tape.” November 28, 2016.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Interview with Ahmad Hamidian. FarsNews agency. 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Mehdi, Yavarmanesh. Fajr International theatre Festival [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Bahram, Beyzai. (2002), p. 26 [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Mehdi, Yavarmanesh. Fajr International theatre Festival [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Mehdi Yavarmanesh. Institution of Critics of Iranian Theatre. 2016. http://fitf.theater.ir/fa/59087 [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Mehdi, Yavarmanesh. Fajr International theatre Festival [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Hassan, Parsaei. Honaronline. http://www.honaronline.ir/ [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Mehdi, Yavarmanesh. http://fitf.theater.ir/fa/5908 Fajr International theatre Festival. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Interview with Shiva Javadpour by Elnaz Amirkhani 2015 Theatre Festival in Persian. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Khodadad, Rezaei [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Theatre Festival, Interview with Shiva Javadpour [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. Elnaz, Amirkhani. Theatre Festival. 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Ottoman empire or present day Turkey. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Beyzai, Bahram, *Nodbeh*, (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2010) p.40. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. Pejman Rahimi, ‘Narration of Nodbeh of Constitution by Bahram Beyzai.’ *Socialists*. (2011) [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Taziyeh and Shabih Khani are two forms of traditional dramatic performance in Iran which date back to 963 and the conversion of Persians to Islam, and it was well-advanced by 1501, when the Shia Muslim rulers of Safavid (1501-1736) used theatre in propagating the Shia faith in the region.

Shabih Khani refers to some dramatic performances and the reading of the scripts based on some tale mostly regarding a tragedy. This ritual is older than Taizyeh and has roots to ancient times in Persia where through a performance mythological figures and stories were narrated especially those from Shahnameh or the Book of Kings. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*, (New York: I.B. Tauris 2000) pp.69-70 [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*, (New York: I.B. Tauris 2000) pp. 189 [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Ashura is the 10th day of Muharram of the Islamic calendar and is mainly known as the day of the killing of Shia leaders by Sunni rulers. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Emam Hussein is the grandson of Prophet Mohammad and according to Shia Muslims, he and his father Emam Ali are the successors of his Prophet Mohammad. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Mahnaz, Afkhami. The Women's Organization of Iran: Evolutionary Politics and Revolutionary Change in Women in Iran from 1800 to the Islamic Republic By Lois Beck and Guity Nashat. 2004. University of Illinois Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Guity, Nashat*. Women and revolution in Iran.* 1983. Westview Press*.* [ISBN](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Standard_Book_Number) 0-86531-931-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. The 10th day of Muharram month when the killings of Shia leaders took place. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Ayati, Ibrahim. A Probe Into The History of Ashura. 2014. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. p. 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Everett, Rosenfeld. "Muharram Protests in Iran, 1978"*. Time. Time Inc.*28 June2011. Retrieved 7 May 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Everett, Rosenfeld. "Muharram Protests in Iran, 1978"*. Time. Time Inc.*28 June2011. Retrieved 7 May 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Baqer, Moin. *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*. Victoria House, Bloomsbury Square, London WC1B 4DZ, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 1999. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Bibi Assaad Bakhtiari was one of the few female leaders of the Bakhtiari tribe, and was an influential local governor before the modernization of Iran by Reza Shah Pahlavi. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Seddighe Dolatabadi (1882-1961) was a Persian feminist activist and journalist. She was a prominent figure in the Persian women’s movement. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Milani, Farzaneh (1992). Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers. Syracuse University Press. p. 12. ISBN 1-931847-26-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Mahnaz, Afkhami. The Women's Organization of Iran: Evolutionary Politics and Revolutionary Change in Women in Iran from 1800 to the Islamic Republic By Lois Beck and Guity Nashat. 2004. University of Illinois Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Meaning in Persian. Translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Beyzai, Bahram, *Nodbeh*, (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2010) pp. 14-15 [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, Muhammad b. Muhammad al-. *Al-Irshad*, Ed. Mu'assisat Al al-Bayt. , Qom: 1413 AH. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Abrahamian, Ervand, *Tortured Confessions* by Ervand Abrahamian, University of California Press, 1999 p.24 [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Beyzai, Bahram, *Nodbeh*, (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2010) p.23. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Dar ul-funun is the first official modern university of Iran established in 1851 during the reign of Qajar dynasty. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Beyzai, Bahram, *Nodbeh*, (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2010) p. 27 [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Al-Khwarizmi, Muwaffaq b. Ahmad, *Maqtal al-Husayn*, Edit Muhammad Samawi, Qom: Anwar al-Huda, 1418 AH. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/03/kaveh-golestan-\_n\_4697141.html [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. http://payvand.com/blog/blog/2010/12/10/photos-tehrans-brothel-district-shahr-e-no-1975-77-by-kaveh-golestan/ [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Gholam Reza, Afkhami. The Life and Times of the Shah. 2009. University of California Press. p. 398. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Toopkhaneh square is a major city square and a historical site in central Tehran built during Qajar era. Major political demonstrations at specific points of history including the constitutionalism, coup of 1953 and the 1979 revolution would take place in Toopkhaneh square. The square is now titled as Imam Khomeini square. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Beyzai, Bahram, *Nodbeh*, (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2010) p.43. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. Beyzai, Bahram, *Nodbeh*, (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2010) p. 29 [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Shahr-e No is an old district of Tehran which was destroyed following the attack and burnt after the revolution of 1979. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Hooman, Majd. "Persian Cats." *The Ayatollah Begs to Differ*. 2008. [*Doubleday*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doubleday_%28publisher%29). [ISBN](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Standard_Book_Number) [978-0-385-52334-9](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special%3ABookSources/978-0-385-52334-9).p 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Ebrahim Nabavi, ‘Shahr-e No was burned and the prostitutes were killed.’ , *Radio Zamaneh*, (2008) http://www.zamaaneh.com/revolution/2009/01/post\_218.html [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. Huffingtonpost. “Tehran’s Red Light District-A Side of Iranian Society We Don’t Often See” 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/03/kaveh-golestan-\_n\_4697141.html [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Sepideh Zarrinpanah, ‘Shahr-e No; Another Narration of the Prostitutes’ BBC (2013), <www.bbc.co.uk/persian> [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Sepideh Zarrinpanah, ‘Shahr-e No; Another Narration of the Prostitutes’ BBC (2013), <www.bbc.co.uk/persian> [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Beyzai, Bahram, *Nodbeh*, (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2010) p. 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Forough, Farrokhzad. “A Poem for you”. Translation in English. http://www.forughfarrokhzad.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Beyzai, Bahram, *Nodbeh*, (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2010) [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. Hajj is an annual religious pilgrimage in which the Muslims visit the Mecca each year. In local Persian language and literature the person who has gone to this journey is titled Hajji. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. Sandra, Machery, *The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the soul of a Nation*, (New York: Dutton 1996) pp. 150-5 [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Ervand, Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, (Princeton University Press 1982), p.84 [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Beyzai, Bahram, *Nodbeh*, (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2010) p. 26 [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Varamin is a district and city in south of Tehran. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. Beyzai, Bahram, *Nodbeh*, (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2010) p. 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. Beyzai, Bahram, *Nodbeh*, (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2010) p. 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Beyzai, Bahram, *Nodbeh*, (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2010) p. 38 [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Beyzai, Bahram, *Nodbeh*, (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2010) p.66 [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Al-Khwarizmi, Muwaffaq b. Ahmad, *Maqtal al-Husayn*, Edit Muhammad Samawi, Qom: Anwar al-Huda, 1418 AH. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. Karbala is located in modern Iraq and is considered as holy by Shia Muslims since it was where the killings and the martyrdom took place. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. The name of Obbeydallah is identical to the name of one of the commanders who organized the attack and the killings of the Emam Hussein and his family. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. Michael M. J. Fischer, *Iran, From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003) p.128 [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. Sepideh Zarrinpanah, ‘Shahr-e No; Another Narration of the Prostitutes’ BBC (2013), <www.bbc.co.uk/persian> [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, Edited by Mark J. Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, Syracuse University Press, 2004, p.xiv [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. Ahmad Kasravi, *History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution: Tarikh-e Mashrute-ye Iran*, Volume I, translated into English by Evan Siegel, (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publications, 2006) p.347 [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Emam is the title of holy figures in Shia Islam, mainly twelve who were the descendants of the prophet Mohammad. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Pejman Rahimi, ‘Narration of Nodbeh of Constitution by Bahram Beyzai.’ *Socialists*. (2011) [Accessed March 2014] [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. Pejman Rahimi, ‘Narration of Nodbeh of Constitution by Bahram Beyzai.’ *Socialists*. (2011) [Accessed March 2014] [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. BBC PERSIAN. January 23, 2015. http://www.bbc.com/persian/arts/2015/01/150123\_l45\_kf\_beyzayi\_stanford\_ardaviraf. Accessed 5 June 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Bahram, Beyzai. Tarabnameh. Iranian Studies Stanford. 2016. https://iranian-studies.stanford.edu/events/tarabnameh-part-2 [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhJwA9esxJA [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. William, Shakespeare. As You Like It, Act II, Scene VII [All the world’s a stage]. https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/you-it-act-ii-scene-vii-all-worlds-stage [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Ancient important city located in southern modern Syria. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. Sahara aka desert [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. Vahede aka singular, the one and only [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. An actual ancient palace built by a Persian architect in 500-600 BC by the order of Arab ruler of Al-Hira. The world derives from Persian roots meaning a construction with glorious ceiling aka Palace. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. Al-Hira is an ancient city and land located in southern Iraq. For centuries, it was part of the Persian empire and the rule of Sassanid dynasty 3rd century BC-7th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Rostam is an epic hero in Persian Literature mainly driven from Shahnameh poetry book. Rostam was the son of Zal and the mightiest character among Persian warriors. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Zal is a legendry hero from the epic book of Shahnameh. Zal is the father of Rostam and is name Zal for having white hair. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Esfandiar is heroic character in Persian epic poetry and a prince of Persia who was also an antagonist to the character of Rostam. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. Harem is an Arabic word meaning the forbidden aka forbidden place where usually refers to a place where the family of a king used to reside. During many reigns Harems became a great sanctuary where the female members of the royal family lived along side the women who were only for the king himself and thus forbidden for others. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. Rudabeh is a female character of Shahnameh and a princess from neighbouring country of Kabul who fell in love and married Zal and gave birth to Rostam. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Zal is a legendry warrior in the Shahnameh. He was given the name Zal which in Persian means victim of albinism for he had white hair from birth. He is the father of famous character of Rostam. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. The Big Dipper is the combination of seven stars which form the bright side of the Ursa Major. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. Ursa Minor aka Little Dipper is a constellation. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. Sheikh is an Arabic word used for honourable title, which was used for heads of Arab tribes in the past. Now it is being used for royal titles among Arabs and due to the influence of Arabic culture and language, this word and title has been used by other nationalities including Persia especially during the Islamic era. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. Due to Islamic tales, Shaddad was an Arab king whom meant to challenge god and heaven so he built a great city trying to make a heaven for himself. The heaven of Shaddad has became a known expression in Arabic and Persian language and literature. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. Babylon is the name of an ancient city in Mesopotamia and the Hanging garden of Babylon is one the Seven Wonders of the World and is an ancient garden, which was built by the ruler of Babylon for his wife, a princess from Iran. According to history she came from a green mountainous region and the gardens built on a terrace like platform reminded her of her native land. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. Rostam is the name of an epic character in the book of Shahnameh by Ferdowsi and he’s pictured as the mightiest of Persia’s heroes. According to the legend, he’s a native of Zabol in south eastern Iran and he undergoes many challenges in the face of Persia’s rise that has similarities to those of Hercules. His character is known to be fictional yet it is similar to an actual Persian prince and warrior Surena in the Battle of Carrhae with the romans. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. Shahrzad is a Persian queen in legends of Persia and the storyteller in the famous book of tales of One Thousand and One Nights. She was chosen to marry a Persian king whom due to insanity kills the bride the next morning and she not only seeks her rescue but has to save other young brides to be so she comes up with stories every night and leaves them unfinished before dawn so that it would save her another day. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. One Thousand and One Nights is an ancient collection of tales mostly driven from old tales of Middle East and Persia and it was brought to English Literature in 1706 and was written in middle Persian aka Pahlavi literature (224–654 CE). [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Manzar is the name of Nu’mans’ son and ascender to his throne. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)