

*Sandra Schäfer, Jochen Becker, Madeleine Bernstorff (Hg):
Kabul/ Teberan 1979ff, b_books, Berlin*

*Sandra Schäfer / Madeleine Bernstorff
The Ladies*

THE YEAR ZERO_ During the revolution in March 1979, a number of Iranian women endorsed the idea of finally celebrating International Women's Day publicly again in Tehran, forty years after it was banned by Reza Shah in 1938, who instead declared January 7 National Women's Day. (1) At the same time, representatives of the French group *Politics and Psychoanalysis* (2) and the U.S. American author Kate Millet travelled to Tehran to support and give an account of the political work of Iranian feminists. As one can learn from Millet's book, *Going to Iran* (3), even the search for a venue for the event on International Women's Day was already quite difficult because the emancipation movement met resistance from both the Islamists and the majority of the left. In the left's opinion, the women were creating a divide in the revolutionary and class struggle. They judged their concern as "trivial" and "bourgeois". The Islamists, in turn, accused the women of being degenerate, subject to "Westoxication" and hostile towards Islam (Moghadam 1990: 9). The responsible committee blocked the provision of the event venue. On the evening of March 7, 1979, Khomeini's decree on the compulsory headscarf was announced. The following morning 5,000 women gathered at the Tehran University to protest against the decree, climbing over the gates locked by the Islamists and marching through the city. For the first time the established order met resistance. The women of the French *Politics and Psychoanalysis* group documented the protests with a 16-mm camera and conducted interviews with the demonstrators. This led to the joint production of the 13-minute film *Mouvement de libération des femmes iraniennes – année zéro*.

The camera is in the midst of events and at times pans to the outside where passers-by curiously watch the protesters. Old and young, secular and a very few religious women are among the protesters. Banners can be seen. Then the French voice-over sets in and translates the discussions with the participants of the demonstration. "We women sacrificed ourselves for the revolution – just like the men. We fought for our freedom and the freedom of our people with or without headscarves. If Khomeini continues in this way, I shall give up my religion – even though I am a devout Muslim". Another woman angrily declares: "I have been wearing the chador for years. It makes me immobile, I can't work well (...) I fight for my daughters not having to wear it anymore". Numerous schoolgirls participate in the protests. One of them criticizes: "They should have said right from the beginning that men and women are not equal. We raise our voices for our rights, for the same rights as men. If we don't rebel now, the constitution will be drawn up and we will be denied all our rights. We are not only protesting against the compulsory headscarf but for many more rights that are even more important". The voices against the decree are varied and vehement.

Shortly after these protests, Khomeini made concessions and relativized his decree by calling it a "request". Yet on March 12, 1979, 20,000 women again took to the streets. They did not trust these concessions and made political demands such as the right to work, equal pay for equal work and freedom of the press, assembly and expression. The protests in front of the television station in which ten to fifteen thousand women participated were ignored by the public media. In the following months the subsidies for day nurseries were cut. Women who had previously worked in these nurseries lost their jobs. Looking after children was now a family matter and thus delegated to the women. In the name of Islamic law, women were banned from presiding as judges. The protests of female judges and junior lawyers were immediately supported by ad-hoc woman organizations and private individuals. The subordination of women under men was legitimated by clerics such as Ayatollah Motahari by the natural weakness of women (Bassiri 1991: 59). On June 6 a decree announced that women must wear headscarves in all state institutions and schools. The Revolutionary Guard enforced the decree. Compulsory veiling was introduced shortly thereafter in all other public institutions and buildings. Women by then grew accustomed to veiling, and it was not a big step to having the law enforced on the streets. The establishment of the Islamic state led to a fundamental moral and cultural transformation of society. For women from traditional families, the transformation of Iran into an Islamic state initially meant more personal liberties, while the liberties of those women who had been active before and during the revolution were drastically reduced. (4)

MORAL CINEMA_ Prior to 1979 clerics deemed cinema disreputable and Westernized. During the course of the revolutionary uprising 180 cinemas, regarded as symbols of the corrupt Shah regime, were burnt down, demolished or closed – more than 30 in Tehran alone. Merely 256 cinemas in the entire country were spared (Naficy 2002: 30). But the significance of cinema for re-education was soon recognized. During his famous speech at the Behesht-e Zahra cemetery in Tehran in February 1979 Khomeini stated: "We are not opposed to cinema, to radio or to television. The cinema is a modern invention that ought to be used for the sake of educating the people, but as you

know, it was used instead to corrupt our youth. It is the misuse of cinema that we are opposed to, a misuse caused by the treacherous policies of our rulers.” (Khomeini 1981: 258). At the beginning of the 1980s various institutions were founded whose mission it was to implement Islamic values in cinema, e.g., the *Foundation for the Disinherited*, the cinema department of the *Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance*, under which the institution *Farabi Cinema Foundation* was established in 1983 as its executive branch for cinema. It provided equipment and, under the motto “Supervision, Guidance and Support”, controlled the admission of scripts and completed films. Institutions such as the *Iranian Young Cinema Society*, founded in 1974 for training young filmmakers, or the *Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Youths (Kanun)*, newly established in the 1960s, continued their work after the revolution. All films produced or partly produced by the state must have *In the Name of God* in the opening credits as a sign that they have undergone censorship. Imported international films are also censored. (5) Films with “antirevolutionary” or “imperialistic” contents and films from the United States were banned, as was the screening of pre-revolutionary B-pictures called “Farsi films”. “Incorrect passages” were cut or covered with a magic marker (6). In order to inform the filmmakers of the current moral guidelines, a booklet with rules on correct filmmaking was published once a year by the responsible ministry. In its claim to virtuousness it resembles the “Hays Code” (7) introduced by film studios in the United States in the 1930s. It was believed that the female body radiated the threat of seduction, so that their provocative gait would divert the male audience’s attention away from the ideological contents. Women were to be filmed in a seated position, without changes in their facial expression and with no close-ups. Preferred female roles were the loving mother, the devoted wife or the caring nurse. Filmmakers such as Kiarostami, Naderi and Panahi circumvented the rules of censorship by making children or men their protagonists. The depiction of love on the screen was a great challenge for the filmmakers after 1979, since men and women were not allowed to touch each other. (8) The gaze was desexualized. Women had to be treated as siblings by men (Naficy 1999: 56f.). The female filmmaker Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, in her film *Banu-ye ordibehesht* (“May Lady”, 1998), doesn’t even have the lover of the female protagonist Forugh appear on the screen. He is only present in the film through his letters and his voice on the answering machine.

INTERNALIZATION OF CENSORSHIP_ Starting in the mid-eighties, film production was rationalized and local production strongly subsidized. Cinema was now a part of Islamic culture. With the film *Davandeh* (“The Runner”, 1986) by Amir Naderi, Iranian cinema achieved recognition at international festivals and now became a cultural article of export. The speaker of parliament at the time, Rafsanjani, spoke in favour of cinema (9) and Mohammad Khatami, the Minister of Cultural Affairs at the time, supported this liberalization: “I believe that cinema is not the mosque ... If we remove cinema from its natural place, we will no longer have cinema ... If we transform cinema to such an extent that when one enters a moviehouse one feels imposed upon or senses that leisure time has become homework time, then we have deformed society.” (cited in Naficy 2002:49) The moral codes were loosened a bit after Khomeini issued a decree in December 1987 which primarily addressed the representation of women. (10) In 1992 Khatami stepped down from office. The reason was the fierce hostility of conservatives towards the director Makhmalbaf and his film *Dast-forush* (“The Peddler”) which in gloomy tones speaks out against the corrupt and criminal structures of society from the perspective of the socially disadvantaged. Mohsen Makhmalbaf (11), a former supporter of the revolution, was accused of betraying it. In 1997 Khatami was surprisingly nominated as the presidential candidate of the reformers and elected president by a vast majority – among others, through the votes of many women and culture workers. Reassignments in the institutions relaxed the atmosphere for producing films. Khatami spurred privatization. For the film industry, this implied less state interventions in film production as well as in distribution and screening decisions.

TWENTY YEARS AFTER THE REVOLUTION_ The filmmaker Nahid Rezaie (12) experienced the revolution as a teenager. In her documentary film *Khab-e abrisham* (“Dream of Silk”, 2003) she returns to her former girls’ school to discuss with present-day pupils their ideas of the future. Only few express the hope of achieving what they really want. Several girls are hanging around depressed in a corner of the schoolyard because they didn’t pass the admission tests to university. (13) Others complain: “Nobody respects women and girls”. Standing amongst her school-friends, who are looking to the ground, embarrassed and laughing to themselves, one girl says she hates being a girl. When she’s sick she asks the doctor whether he could do something for her to make her a boy. She wanted to marry a classmate. Her parents forbid the relationship to her girlfriend and put her in Islamic woman’s clothes which she reluctantly wears since then.

As opposed to homosexuality, transsexuality is officially allowed in Iran and was legitimized by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, yet it remains a social taboo. (14) The reason for the legal approval of transsexuality is surely because it functions within the heterosexual-binary order.

CROSS-DRESSING_ The film *Adam barfi* (“The Snowman”) by Davoud Mir Bagheri was initially banned after its completion in 1994 and only released for screening after Khatami assumed office. Taboo themes such as cross-dressing, the depiction of unveiled women and the lifestyle of criminals were most likely the reason for the attacks of

Islamist hardliners (Naficy 2002: 56). The trashy, grotesque film using drastic language is set in a hotel in Istanbul where Iranians in transit live and is about Abbas (played by Ali Abdi) who wants to reach the United States via Istanbul with all means. (15) After he is beaten up by Turkish criminals he complains to the hotel owner: “Our history abroad is like that of the Afghans in Iran. We look upon the Afghans like the Turks look upon us”. A dubious Mr. Johnson is Abbas’ last chance: “No longer be a man”. Abbas agrees to disguise himself as a woman and marry this American citizen so he can get a green card. The people smugglers maliciously make fun of the naivety of the prospective emigrants and their idealized notions of the U.S.A. for which they would even sacrifice their masculinity, like Abbas. However, the budding love to pure and chaste Donya and the growing conviction that the freedom in the United States determined by competition may not be that great after all, allow Abbas to reinstate the heterosexual order: He becomes a man again. Only then can he show Donya his feelings. The happy end is marriage and the return to Iran. The “U.S.A sickness” was a temporary wrong track. The film is permanently at pains to uphold the nationalistic and gender order. Cross-dressing serves to connote emigration and loss of masculinity.

In the film *Dokhtar-e Tondar* (“A Girl Called Tondar”, 2000) by Hamaya Petracian, the moments of “unfeminine” behaviour set in the present – e.g., when Tondar knocks about the city of Tehran as a tomboy on her motorcycle – are brief. Soon the action film turns into a history film and makes way for a vague past. Dressing as a boy is shown by Petracian as a passing, adolescent act of defiance caused by the emotional inability of the female protagonist. As soon as she’s true to herself she gives up the “trouser role” to return to true love and thus to her female role. What remains as a moment of rebellion is the plea not to wait for the man knocking on the door to “pick the flowers”.

After her uncle had an accident on a construction site in Tehran, the Afghan girl Baran, in the film of the same name, *Baran* (2001) by Majid Majidi, has to disguise herself as a boy to replace the uncle as the supporter of the family. Since she has difficulties carrying the heavy bags of cement, she’s assigned work as an apprentice cook. As an alleged boy Baran now makes herself indispensable with her “feminine qualities”. She cleans up and cooks excellently. When her competitor Lateef catches her by chance combing her hair and notices that she’s a girl, his rivalry immediately turns into romantic love and care. Baran remains silent and beautiful to look at, otherwise she does not undergo any changes in her role.

Neither of the three films make use of the potential of cross-dressing, namely, to appropriate forms of conduct and spaces in which one could otherwise not move about freely. The reversal of gender roles either serves to polemicize against emigration, as in *Adam Barfi*, results from adolescent defiance, as in *Dokhtar-e Tondar*, or occurs out of economic necessity, like in *Baran*, but it may by no means appear as if individual dissatisfaction with the traditional gender roles is the main reason. The protagonists do not develop and their relationships to other characters remain rather one-dimensional.

WOMEN FILMMAKERS IN IRAN_ During a lecture held to students in Tehran in December 1999, the director Tahmineh Milani demanded a women’s cinema. She did not mean the introduction of quotas and equality measures in film production but narratives from the perspective of women and the subject of female experiences (Dönmez-Colin 2004: 103). Milani realized this concept herself in her emancipatory film trilogy focusing on the protagonist Fereshteh, played by the well-known actress Nikki Karimi.

The first feature film, *Do zan* (“Two Women”, 1997), is set in a period shortly after the revolution characterized by the activism of many political groups. Milani juxtaposes Roya, who is from a wealthy middle-class background, with the brighter and more emancipated Fereshteh, who grew up in a traditional family in Isfahan. The two dissimilar women get to know each other at the university and become friends. Fereshteh’s emancipated life in Tehran comes to a sudden end when a man goes after her with a knife and attacks her cousin with acid. Claiming that she besmirched the honour of the family, she is forced to return to Isfahan. A marriage arranged by her father leads her to a repressive married life. When Fereshteh and Roya meet again in Tehran many years later, Fereshteh appears broken, while Roya leads an independent and modern life. By means of drastic juxtapositions, Milani clearly conveys how traditions impede women in their development.

In her second film, *Nimeh-ye penhan* (“The Hidden Half”, 2001), Milani dismantles middle-class married life. “Not every woman can be as pure as you”, the still unknowing husband, a lawyer, says to his second wife when talking about a political prisoner. His wife then confronts him with her diary written in the years of the revolution, with her commitment to the left and her naive love affair with an older writer. By means of this “act of showing solidarity” with the political prisoner she destroys the idealized and reduced image her husband has of her and adds to the image of a caring wife and mother that of the political activist and passionate lover.

Milani is one of the few Iranian women filmmakers and directors who show the activism of leftist political groups and their persecution during the time of the revolution. She also addresses their in part hierarchical cadre structures. She was arrested after the first screenings – the revolutionary court accused Milani of threatening national security and collaborating with anti-revolutionary groups abroad – but was not inhibited by this. In 2003, after she was released (16), she shot the third part of the trilogy, *Vakoneh-e panjom* (“The Fifth Reaction”).

The feature film *Pandj-e asr* ("At Five in the Afternoon", 2003) by Samira Makhmalbaf and the documentary *Arezoo, die Wunschkandidatin* (2002) by Rakhshan Bani-Etemad also address the difficult framework conditions of the political commitment of women in gender-segregated societies such as Iran and Afghanistan based on the stories of female presidential candidates. Samira Makhmalbaf directed the secret escape of young Noqreh (Aghelah Rezaie) in Kabul's impressively set landscape of ruins with less metaphoric pathos than in her other films. Noqreh uses the *madrasah* as camouflage and as a passage to a freer world, a girl's school, where the principle and the schoolgirls set up a game to practice democracy. Three schoolgirls express the wish to become president, including Noqreh. The other girls giggle. A debate by the schoolgirls and young women ensues on the aim and object of political activity and whether a presidency is possible for an Afghan woman. The pupil speaking most vehemently in favour of the self-determination of women – "we shall not wear the burka forever, I have lost my father and brother to a men's regime" – is a young girl with glasses. She talks herself into a rage and starts crying; the script later has her die in a mine explosion. Noqreh follows her ideas and reads a speech by Karzai, learns how to speak, has photographs taken for her campaign and simultaneously tries not to anger her strict, religious father who sees blasphemy at work everywhere.

Rakhshan Bani-Etemad's documentary *Arezoo, die Wunschkandidatin*, the Arte version of her film *Ruzegar-e ma* ("Our Times"), accompanies Arezoo, one of 48 women who were nominated for the Iranian presidential elections. The most popular female filmmaker of the older generation comments on the political atmosphere in the spring of 2001 as follows: "The atmosphere was characterized by fear and hope, doubt and trust. Some did not want to vote at all, others intended to cast empty ballots. And others were convinced that further reforms were to come. We therefore had to vote. Apart from Khatami, who was up for elections the second time, more than 700 further candidates were registered, including 48 women. I was surprised to only find names I was not familiar with on the lists of female candidates. I was therefore curious to find out about them. Meanwhile, the candidature of all women was rejected by the Council of Guardians, the constitutional council. In the interviews I conducted with the female candidates I found out that women-specific problems had prompted them to this step". In her film, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad shows 25-year-old Arezoo who lives together with her daughter and blind mother. Arezoo races back and forth between two workplaces and desperately seeks an affordable dwelling, which she, as a divorced woman, is repeatedly denied for the most various reasons. A loan given by the film team contributes to her renting a small house, but then she is dismissed from her underpaid job at an insurance agency. At the end of the film one sees her standing stone-faced in front a picture of the Kabah in Mecca.

In June 2005, a few days before the presidential elections, these precarious living conditions brought hundreds of women in Tehran to protest against the discrimination against women under the Islamic regime (*New York Times*, 06/12/2005). This was the first public protest by women since March 8, 1979, when they demonstrated against compulsory veiling decreed by the new regime. These demonstrations were part of a campaign of advocates of women's rights mounted against the attempts of the regime to entice more women to cast their votes. In the past years, women had decisively influenced the election results and for the most part voted for presidential candidates promising to improve their situation. Disappointed by the lacking implementation of these promises and because of the rejection of 86 female presidential candidates they took to the streets.

The documentary film *Zananeh* ("The Ladies") that was produced in 2003 and is based on research conducted by the journalist Roya Karimi Majd. She had drawn the attention of the documentary filmmaker and TV actor Mahnaz Afzali to the public ladies' toilets in Tehran's Laleh Park. Here, differences in class and age, homelessness, prostitution, family conflicts, abuse and economic distress in the biographies of the protagonists encounter each other. The journalist and the director received the filming permission from the municipal park authority and were thus able to circumvent the state approval process which is associated with quite a bit of effort. They all find a place in the anteroom of the toilets: the older prostitute Rana who is accepted as the aunt of her clients, the epileptic Maryam who is addicted to drugs, crying Sepideh who fled the confinement of her home, the double standards of her mother and the pressure of her younger brother. The women talk about suicide and life in the streets. Despaired, Sepideh cites the poet and director Forugh Farrokhzad. (17) Ever since she read these "damned poems" she no longer believes in God.

PRIVATE SPACE BECOMES PUBLIC_ Kiarostami's film *Dab* ("Ten", 2002) walks another tightrope. His first film with a female leading part consists of ten improvisations (18) in front of two cameras installed on the dashboard of a car driven through the streets of Tehran by Mania, who has a number of discussions with different female passengers. One sees her for the first time following a 16-minute dispute with her little macho son, who says she is egoistic and accuses her of having lied to get her divorce. She retorts: "The rotten laws of this society give women no rights". On several levels, this film contravenes the code of the Islamic Republic – among other things, woman takes off her headscarf.

Jafar Panahi decided to shoot the film *Dayereh* ("The Circle", 2000) in the streets of Tehran because he did not want to depict women in private spaces (19). The presence of the gaze of the viewer makes private spaces public in cinema and thus subjects them to the rules of Islamic codes of dress and behaviour. In the film "The Hidden Half" by

Tahmineh Milani there is an oppressive gravity weighing on the female protagonists in interior spaces. This is also not relieved by the camera depicting, as a corrective, a self-portrait of Frida Kahlo with loose hair. Kiarostami decided to use the car as a location (20), thus proving to be clever: As an interior and exterior space it allows for intimate conversations, with conduct changing between private and public.

In *Dayereh*, three women rush through the inner-city of Tehran – they are on parole. They try to phone and hide from the police. Long *plan-séquences* shot with a hand-held camera underline the documentary effect. The camera, which is often pointed to the backs of the protagonists, intensifies their feeling of persecution and pressure. Locations include much used crossroads during rush hour, a large, modern coach station full of people and a multi-storey product warehouse with offices and sewing works. As if illegal, the protagonists fear police controls, because they are not allowed to travel or stay overnight without documents or a male companion. The simple and unattainable desire for a cigarette as a motif of individual freedom runs through the entire film.

After being completed in 2000, *Dayereh* could not be shown at the *Fadjr Film-festival* (21) as planned, because Panahi refused to comply with the state-imposed condition of cutting the last 18 minutes of the film. This last sequence deals with prostitution. *Dayereh* cannot be viewed in public cinemas until today. However, society's interest is large, as a screening at the Tehran university revealed, which was attended by hundred of students. The film is meanwhile being distributed on the quiet as DVD and VCD.

FAMILY LAW “IRANIAN STYLE”_ Frustrated by stereotypical, Western depictions of suppressed Muslim women (22) and inspired by the research of the anthropologist Ziba Mir-Hosseini (23), the British documentary filmmaker Kim Longinotto, together with Mir-Hosseini, decided to shoot a film in a family court in Tehran on how Iranian women deal with the Sharia (cf. Mir-Hosseini 2002). Laborious door-to-door calls at authorities, film production firms and women's organizations took place before being granted the filming permission. The topic of the film already contradicted the self-understanding of the Iranian regime, which is intent on conveying the image of intact marriage, while simultaneously fearing a further negative and sensationalist view of Iran. Decisive for the filming permission which was issued in October 1998 was the change of government in August 1997.

The filming location is a confined hall in a family courthouse in the Imam Khomeini Complex located in the centre of Tehran. Most petitions for divorce are made by women, although only reasons such as impotency, the use of force, drug addiction or insanity of the husband allow them to do so in the first place. (24) The discussions are held vehemently in the small courtroom, supported by the family members. The presence of the female film crew seems to have shifted the gender relations in the courtroom and quite apparently encouraged the women.

Maryam is before court because of the custody of her youngest daughter. During the trial pauses she explains to the film team in front of the running camera that she tore apart the “provision” of her husband. Back in the courtroom, Maryam calls the “ladies from the film” as witnesses. Even judge Deldar turns to the camera in a friendly, paternalistic tone: “When the final decision is made, we shall see if she's learnt her lesson”. One can read in the end titles that this disciplinary act apparently failed. Maryam has not been dissuaded from fighting for the custody of her four-year-old daughter even after the judicial refusal of her charge.

The film may not be screened officially in Iran. However, video copies circulate and a 45-minute television version broadcast on ARTE could be received. The film was an international success, but controversially debated by Iranian women living abroad. (25)

BERLIN_ In their video *Kopftuch als System/Machen Haare verrückt? (Headscarf as a System/Does Hair Drive People Crazy?)* (2004) the directors Shina Erlewein, Fatiyeh Naghibzadeh, Bettina Hohaus and Meral El span a broad range of issues from the women's demonstration in 1979 – using excerpts from the film *Mouvement de libération des femmes iraniennes – année zéro* – to the heatedly debated events at the Berlin Iran Conference organized by the Heinrich-Böll Foundation in April 2000. (26) Iranian women living in Berlin describe how compulsory veiling was introduced after the “so-called” revolution. They give an account of how the left did not take the women's issue seriously at the time and that it was not clear to them how men, too, can be controlled via the women – and thus the entire society. All women protesting against the compulsory headscarf were regarded as “bourgeois capitalistic dollies”. One of the protagonists comments on two photographs from her youth that both show her austere dressed, on one with and on the other without a headscarf: “That's how I dressed as a Marxist, the only difference is the headscarf”. She thus describes the fatal uniformization and splitting off of “what is feminine” in the classical left that in phenomenological terms is similar to the veiling of femininity in the Islamic dress code, which underscores the sex, while clothing of the left tends to be unisexual.

This is followed by pictures from the Berlin Iran Conference in April 2000 which was held after Khatami's election. One sees crowd barriers and at a distance protesters with banners reading: “Stop the stonings, Abolition of the death sentence, Down with the Islamic Republic”. A commotion starts, a woman demands “one minute silence for the people executed in Iran”. Shouts and whistles – she's dragged out of the hall by two guards in a military look – the camera is in the middle of the scuffle. One female activist came up with “the most provocative kind of performance”: She strips down to her underwear, puts on a headscarf and leaves the hall. A man strips naked and shows his torture

scars and a photo of his executed brother. In press reports at the time, from the daily papers *Tagespiegel* to *taz*, the protests were discredited as “fanatical” and “undemocratic”. (27) A book later published by the Heinrich-Böll Foundation distances itself from the protesters. The video *Kopfluch als System/Machen Haare verrückt?* deals with feminist positions and irreconcilable controversies that are carried out in a vehement way, especially in exile.

“No discussion is complete without considering the output of Iranian filmmakers in exile since the Revolution. [In one study I conducted, they had made over 300 fiction, non-fiction, animated and avant-garde films in two avant-garde films in two decades of displacement in nearly a dozen European and North American countries.] This made them by far the most prolific filmmaking group among the middle Eastern exiles in the West. Although these filmmakers are diverse politically and religiously, the majority of them are united in their opposition to the Islamist regime.” (Naficy, Hamid: *Islamizing film culture in Iran*, in: Tapper, Richard: *The new Iranian cinema*, 2002, London, p. 57)

1 At the time this decision marked the beginning of the so-called unveiling campaign within the frame of more far-reaching modernization programmes. Even women who opposed wearing the chador regarded this campaign not as an emancipation strategy but as a measure of political oppression. Three years earlier, Reza Shah banned all independent women’s associations. He only allowed charity work, sport clubs and alphabetization courses for women. After Reza Shah stepped down (1941) independent women’s organizations and publications were again established. Women played a decisive role in the support of the national movement and the national government (1951-1953). Reza Shah’s son toppled the Mossadegh government in a coup initiated by the CIA in 1953 and suppressed numerous women’s organizations and publications in the process.

2 The group *Politics and Psychoanalysis* was a French women’s group lead by the authoritarian psychoanalyst Antoinette Fouque, who today counts as the “most extreme advocate of a biologically determined difference-feminism” (Galster 1999: 597).

3 Cf. the contribution by Nicolas Siepen in this volume.

4 Cf. the contribution of Masserat Amir-Ebrahimi and badjens.com in this volume.

5 During the Khatami period there were several possibilities to privately produce, distribute and export films. In October 2005 the new president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad banned the screening of foreign films claiming that they insult Muslim culture by depicting alcohol, drugs, liberals, anarchists, secularists and feminists.

6 When I viewed the film *Gozarash* (“The Report”) by Kiarostami (1977), I was irritated and had to keep on looking at a dancing black spot that covered a portrait of the Shah on the wall of the Ministry of Housing, thus emphasizing it more than concealing it. [Note by S.S.]

7 According to the “Hays Code”, criminality was no longer to be shown, the sacredness of the institution of marriage was to be upheld and rooms with which sexuality is associated, e.g., bedrooms, were to be avoided.

8 In Persian literature authors could play with the ambiguity of divine and worldly love or with whether the lover is a man or woman (due to the lacking differentiation between the sexes in Persian grammar).

9 “It is true that a film must have a message, but this does not mean that we must deny its entertaining aspects. Society needs entertainment; lack of joy reduces one’s effectiveness and involvement” (Rafsanjani 1985, cited in Naficy 2002: 49).

10 Naficy comments on this development in a sarcastic way as the successful learning effect with filmmakers who have meanwhile internalized the rules.

11 Cf. the contribution of Dominik Kamalzadeh in this volume.

12 Nahid Rezaie started studying at the Film Academy in Tehran in 1983, from which she was suspended two years later for religious reasons. She continued her film studies in Paris. Back in Tehran she shot a short film and several documentary films. Over several years Nahid Rezaie was head of the private organization of *Independent Documentary Filmmakers* in Iran which was founded in 1997 on the initiative of several documentary filmmakers with the permission of the state. In 2004 she organized a week of Iranian documentary film in Tehran.

13 Even if 63 percent of the students are women today, the pressure is very high on school-girls because there are by far not enough university places. (cf. Amirpur 2003: 84).

14 Transsexuals are met with rejection and often accosted as homosexuals. According to Iranian law, homosexuals are sentenced to death. In July 2005 two youths were hanged because of homosexuality. But there are other private practices beyond the official order. The report *Iran's sex-change operations* by Frances Harrison, which was broadcast by the BBC on January 6, 2005, is dedicated to the theme of transsexuality.

15 Turkey, for which Iranians do not require a visa, is the most important transit country from where they try to reach Europe or the United States. The United States Embassy in Tehran has been closed since 1979.

16 Prominent filmmakers and politicians had supported Milani, who would have been sentenced to death. After Khatami informed the court of the existence of a screening permission issued by the Ministry of Culture and convinced them that the government should have made its objections clearer in the past, Milani was released on bail.

17 The poet and filmmaker Forugh Farrokhzad (1935-1967) rebelled against bourgeois conventions in her life and in her poems. She speaks openly of sexuality and her emotions in her poems, something which is still a male privilege in public. In 1958 she met the filmmaker and producer Ebrahim Golestan. In 1959 she studied film in London and after her return to Iran she worked at the Golestan Film Studios as a cutter, e.g., for the film *Yek atash* ("A Fire") about the burning oil fields in Khuzestan. In 1962 she shot *Khaneh siyah ast* ("The House is Black"), a film about the leprosy colony in Tabris. Cf. the obituary *Keine Irrtümer mehr* by Chris Marker in this volume.

18 "It was my idea, but the dialogues belong to the actors", Kiarostami says (cited in Geoff 2005: 44).

19 Conversation with the director in November 2002 in Tehran.

20 Already in the films *Va zendegi edameh darad* ("And Life Goes On...", 1992) and *Zir-e derakhtan-e zeytun* ("Through the Olive Trees", 1994), many scenes take place in a car. *Ta'm-e gilās* ("A Taste of Cherry", 1997) was almost entirely shot in an automobile.

21 The *Fajr Film Festival* is the largest international film festival in Iran.

22 Like, for example, in the book *Not without my Daughter* by Betty Mahmoody (1987) which was filmed.

23 In her book *Marriage on trial* (1993), the anthropologist Ziba-Mir Hosseini, who lives in London, examines Islamic family law in Iran and Morocco. In 1996 she met the documentary filmmaker Kim Longinotto, who together with Claire Hunt in 1990 had made the film *Hidden faces* with and about women in Egypt, in which an issue is the disappointment by the feminist Nawal El Saadawi.

24 In Iran, men file a divorce without giving a reason, except if there is an agreement between both partners prior to the marriage stipulating this.

25 Some criticized that the film only shows the lower middle class, thus painting a backward picture of Iran. Others found that the film presents the situation of women too positively and accused it of being propagandistic (cf. Mir-Hosseini 2002).

26 Parts of the Iranian opposition in exile felt passed over by the preparations for the conference. The organizers were criticized because the majority of guests were from the government.

27 Cf. *Der Tagesspiegel* from April 9/10, 2004, and *die tageszeitung* from April 10, 2004.

28 *Eine Konferenz und ihre Folgen. Iran nach den Wahlen* (2001) documents the various conference contributions from the religious and secular camps. An excerpt from the preface: "The conference which was accompanied by positive expectations by many sides was clouded over by the actions of an inconsiderate minority that in the name of 'revolutionary resistance' spared no effort to prevent the dialogue on an internal reform of Iran by various social movements. Tragically, these actions met the interests of the Islamic right in Iran – as the ensuing instrumentalization of the disturbances of the conference by the Iranian state television and the fundamentalist power faction demonstrated." After the conference around 30 people were arrested in Iran, and starting in fall of 2000 sixteen trials against participants were held. In January of 2001, ten defendants were sentenced to up to ten years in prison plus

five years of banishment.

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