Regards

Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth
Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines
Institut d'études scéniques audiovisuelles
et cinématographiques

Regards
30 | 2023
Soundtracks of Our Lives: Music-Making and Musicians in MENA Cinema

Iranian Music, Silence, and the Representation of the Traditional Masculine Figure of the Pahlavan: A Case Study of "Dash Akol" (1971)

Kamyar SALAVATI

Edition électronique
URL : https://journals.usj.edu.lb/regards/article/view/869
DOI : https://doi.org/10.70898/regards.v0i30.869
ISSN : 2791-285X

Editeur
Editions de l'USJ, Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth

Référence électronique
SALAVATI , K. (2023). Iranian Music, Silence, and the Representation of the Traditional Masculine Figure of the Pahlavan: A Case Study of "Dash Akol"; (1971) . *Regards*, (30), 33-55. https://doi.org/10.70898/regards.v0i30.869

DOSSIER THÉMATIQUE :
Soundtracks of Our Lives: Music-Making and Musicians in Cinema of the MENA Region

IRANIAN MUSIC, SILENCE, AND THE REPRESENTATION OF THE TRADITIONAL MASCULINE FIGURE OF THE PAHLAVAN: A CASE STUDY OF *DASH AKOL* (1971)

Kamyar Salavati *University of Exeter*

Abstract | The Persian term *pahlavan* represents an archetypal character of a strong man who is generous, uncorrupted, and humble in the face of weakness. This paper will focus on sonic aspects of the *pahlavan* by zooming in on one of Masoud Kimiai's films, *Dash Akol* (1971), which is based on a story of the same name by Sadegh Hedayat. First, I will concentrate on how the movie links heroic masculinity to the Persian classical music mode *Chahargah* and the instrument *tombak-e zurkhaneh*, and contrasts it with the tragic and romantic associations of *Dashti*, another Persian classical mode, representing another, more vulnerable facet of the protagonist's character to highlight his inner tension. Secondly, I will explore the role of silence and non-verbal communication in the plot, dialogue, and characters. I will demonstrate how the silence of Dash Akol's character regarding his love for young Marjan echoes a history of masculine ethics of silence, also intertwined with Iranian mysticism and lyricism.

Keywords | Masoud Kimiai, *Dash Akol*, Sadegh Hedayat, masculinity, Iranian Cinema, Iranian classical music, silence.

Résumé | Le terme persan *pahlavan* représente le caractère archétypal d'un homme fort, généreux, non corrompu et humble face à la faiblesse. Cet article se concentrera sur les aspects sonores du *pahlavan* en zoomant sur l'un des films de Masoud Kimiai, *Dash Akol* (1971), basé sur une histoire du même nom de Sadegh Hedayat. Tout d'abord, je me concentrerai sur la façon dont le film relie la masculinité héroïque au mode de musique classique persan *Chahargah* et à l'instrument *tombak-e zurkhaneh*, et le contraste avec les associations tragique et romantique du *Dashti*, un autre mode classique persan, représentant une autre facette, plus vulnérable. du protagoniste pour mettre en valeur sa tension intérieure. Deuxièmement, j'explorerai le rôle du silence et de la communication non verbale dans l'intrigue, les dialogues et les personnages. Je démontrerai comment le silence du personnage de Dash Akol concernant son amour pour le jeune Marjan fait écho à une histoire d'éthique masculine du silence, également mêlée au mysticisme et au lyrisme iraniens.

Mots clés | Masoud Kimiai, *Dash Akol*, Sadegh Hedayat, masculinité, cinéma iranien, musique classique iranienne, silence

In 1932, Sadegh Hedayat (1903–1951) wrote a short story, "Dash Akol", which later became one of the most renowned classic examples of his repertoire of works.[1] The story revolves around a *pahlavan* named Dash Akol in the southern city of Shiraz, who is deeply in love with a young girl.[2] Yet, he must relinquish his love, honouring his ethical principles of manhood, honour, and chivalry. Thirty-nine years after the publication of Hedayat's story, Masoud Kimiai (b. 1941) directed a film based on the same story.[3] Kimiai's adaptation of Hedayat's story, due to its medium, had to incorporate sound and music.[4] The movie's score heavily drew upon Iranian classical music modes, rhythms, and themes. This paved the way for the expressive possibility to depict a certain traditional understanding of masculinity through the embodiment of the *pahlavan* figure. The concept of the *pahlavan*, as I will elaborate later, is intricately woven into masculine ethical codes. Therefore, *Dash Akol* provides a unique example of how traditional notions of masculinity in Iran can find sonic and musical interpretation in cinema.

However, scholarship exploring gendered representations in Iranian classical music, especially within the context of cinema, is scarce, if not entirely absent.[5] To address this, I will first delve into the question of how Iranian classical music has been harnessed to portray the figure of the *pahlavan* – a traditional masculine archetype in Iranian cultural history. This serves as a specific illustration of expressing a gendered interpretation within Iranian classical music. It will shape the first part of my discussion about the sonic expression of masculinity and the figure of the *pahlavan* in *Dash Akol*. I will delve into the musical score of the movie, analyzing its modes and orchestration.

1- HEDAYAT, Sadegh, "Dash Akol", in HEDAYAT, Sadegh, *Seh ghatreh khun [Three Drops of Blood]* (Tehran: Amirkabir, 1962/1341), pp. 43-62. Sadegh Hedayat was a renowned Iranian author, known for his avant-garde and surrealist writings. He is considered one of the most influential figures in Iranian literature of the twentieth century. Hedayat's works, which include short stories, novellas, and novels, explore themes of alienation, despair, and existential angst. His most famous and widely translated work is *Buf-e Kur* (*The Blind Owl*), published in 1936. His unique literary style and exploration of the human psyche have had a significant impact on Iranian literature.

2- As will be elaborated below, a *pahlavan* is a type of masculine hero endowed with athletic and honourable qualities. There are debates about whether the name of this Shirazi *pahlavan* should be pronounced "Dash Akal" or "Dash Akol". In this article, I will deploy the more common pronunciation, which is also used in the title of Masoud Kimiaei's movie, *Dash Akol* (1971).

3- *Dash Akol* (Dir. Masoud Kimiai, 1979, Iran).

4- The difference in the medium has also resulted in other variations. One notable example is the scene where a group of prisoners pass by Dash Akol in the bazaar at night. In the story, after falling in love, Dash Akol contemplates the following couplet: "I envy the nocturnal gatherings of prisoners, where their sustenance is the grains of chains" (my translation). In the movie, this poem is portrayed through a group of prisoners walking in chains while Dash Akol holds Marjan's scarf from the funeral tightly in his fist.

5- The existing body of literature on gender and Iranian classical music does not specifically delve into how the music represents gendered notions and traits. See, for example, FATEMI, Sasan, "Music, festivity, and gender in Iran from the Qajar to the early Pahlavi period", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2005), pp. 399–416; SEMATI, Mehdi, and BEHROOZI, Nima, "Paradoxes of gender, technology, and the pandemic in the Iranian music industry", *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2021), pp. 1–13; and MEFTAHI, Ida, *Gender and Dance in Modern Iran: Biopolitics on Stage*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2017.

Furthermore, I will draw on theoretical writings on Iranian classical music to identify the gendered masculine connotations linked to certain elements in Iranian classical music and how they are reproduced in the movie score.

As Laudan Nooshin notes, scholars and artists are overly preoccupied with the visual when reading Iranian arthouse cinema, while the "empowering potential of sound" has been largely unacknowledged.[6] In this case, too, sonic aspects such as silence and non-verbal communication play an important role both in Hedayat's story and Kimiai's movie. They are closely associated with the masculine charm, charisma, and the ethical codes embedded in the traditional figure of a *pahlavan*. In the second part of my discussion, I will explore the ways in which non-verbal communication and particularly silence are appraised as mystical and masculine virtues, as well as being a means to express the inexpressible. I will deal with the concept of silence as a way of avoiding direct sonic communication between characters – in the plot, characterization, dialogue, and certain scenes in the movie. Simultaneously, I will draw on Persian classical literature, both mystical and romantic, to accentuate the ways silence has been appraised and how it is related to both Sufism and *pahlavani* culture.

The Figure of the *Pahlavan*

In Hedayat's story, the protagonist after whom the story is named is a *pahlavan* – an urban masculine heroic figure who is ethically bound to moral etiquettes such as generosity, helping the weak, aiding the poor, and avoiding women outside of the traditional norms. Dash Akol exemplifies the qualities of a typical *pahlavan* or *javanmard*, showcasing strength, masculine demeanour, assistance to the vulnerable, having a free soul, bravery, generosity, fearlessness, and a reluctance to express emotions. These qualities align with the traditional characteristics associated with a good *luti*, a related masculine archetype also associated with *javanmardi*, or chivalric manliness. As Mehrdad Bahar elaborates in his article on the figure of the *pahlavan* and its relation to the Iranian-Roman deity Mithra, a *pahlavan* should embody the following traits:

> brave, pure, an early riser, and possessing pure sight [avoiding sinful looks towards women]. Furthermore, he should faithfully adhere to traditions and religious duties, exhibit a well-tempered disposition, provide assistance to the poor to the best of his ability, and refrain from engaging in wrongful actions.[7]

6- NOOSHIN, Laudan "Affective Listening, Sonic Intimacy, and the Power of Quiet Voices in Rakhshan Banietemad's *The May Lady*: Towards a Cinema of Empathy," in GHORBANKARIMI, Maryam (ed.), *ReFocus: The Films of Rakhshan Banietemad*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021, p. 117. Nooshin makes this claim regarding post-1979 Iranian arthouse films; however, the same can be applied to pre-1979 movies.

7- BAHAR, Mehrdad, "Varzesh-e bastani-ye Iran va risheh-haye tarikhiye an [The Iranian ancient sport and its historic roots]", *Chista*, no. 2 (1981/1360), p. 143.

According to Naficy, the *pahlavan* is one of the more "laudatory" expressions of the multi-faceted *luti* or tough guy figure,[8] a character that was a recurrent presence in Iranian cinema before the 1979 revolution.[9] The *pahlavan* also possesses more bodily connotations, as it is more intertwined with physical exercises practised in a *zurkhaneh*.[10] In Philippe Rochard's words, a *zurkhaneh* is "the traditional gymnasium in which athletes practice a series of gymnastic and bodybuilding exercises",[11] as well as traditional Iranian wrestling. The protagonist of *Dash Akol* is also a frequent visitor to a *zurkhaneh*, embodying the role of a *pahlavan* with his ethical chivalry codes.

Dash Akol's Plot

The short story "Dash Akol" revolves around the feud between Dash Akol and his nemesis Kaka Rostam,[12] and Dash Akol's love for a young girl named Marjan. Following the death of Haji Samad, a wealthy merchant who, like many other residents of the city, trusts Dash Akol, he is appointed as the executor of Haji Samad's estate. It is during this time that he falls in love with Marjan, Haji

8- NAFICY, Hamid, "Males, Masculinity, and Power: The Tough-Guy Movie Genre and Its Evolution", in NAFICY, Hamid, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 2: The Industrializing Years, 1941–1978*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011, p. 267.

9- The implications of *luti* and *javanmard* went through a thorough transition during the Constitutional and first Pahlavi era's process of modernization. As Robert Joseph Bell argues, starting in the late nineteenth century, the *javanmardi* aspects of *lutis* began conflicting with emerging ideals of manliness promoted in Iranian modernization efforts. This tension intensified during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1906), casting *lutis* as counter-normative and opposing the formation of a unified national masculine identity centered on heterosexuality, monogamy, political roles, and Western attire. During the Qajar (1785-1925) and first Pahlavi (1925-1941) eras, *lutis* came to be seen as deviant, chaotic, and sexually ambiguous figures in the Iranian cultural and political narrative. Part of the different connotations attributed to different words used to describe *lutis* comes from these contextual nuances. See BELL, Robert Joseph, "Luti Masculinity in Iranian Modernity, 1785–1941: Marginalization and the Anxieties of Proper Masculine Comportment", PhD dissertation, City University of New York, 2015 [online]. Link: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/856 (accessed 10 September 2023). Similarly, Farshad Zahedi writes, "Dash Akol's masculine crisis is one of the primary signs of the disintegration of the traditional values of masculine characters, regarded as a turning point in Iran's cultural production." ZAHEDI, Farshad, "Masculinity Crisis and the Javanmard Icon in Iranian Cinema", in RIDGEON, Lloyd (ed.), *Javanmardi: The Ethics and Practice of Persianate Perfection*, London: Gingko, 2018, p. 324.

10- The case of Gholamreza Takhti (1930-1968), arguably the most popular and renowned Iranian wrestler, highlights the distinction between an athlete and a *pahlavan*. While there have been many successful wrestlers in Iran's history, he stands out as a *pahlavan* due to his socio-cultural reputation for sportsmanship. An example of his commitment to *pahlavani* ethics occurred during an international match against Soviet wrestler Alexander Medvedev. Takhti intentionally refrained from attacking Medvedev's injured knee. Despite losing the match, he earned respect. His later suicide raised suspicions of possible murder by the Shah's regime. This echoes Iranian-Islamic heroic/tragic fates popular among Iranians, such as Emam Hossein or Siavash. Furthermore, it recalls Henry Corbin's concept of the transition from the epic to the mystical in Iranian culture, a topic I will elaborate later in the article.

11- ROCHARD, Philippe, "The Identities of the Iranian Zūrkhanah", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (2002), p. 313. In Persian, *Zur* means "force" and "strength", while *khaneh* translates to "place", "house", or "room".

12- In the Shirazi dialect, *Kaka* means "brother".

Samad's daughter.[13] The setting of the story is early twentieth-century Shiraz, which is now one of the biggest historical cities in Iran.[14] Dash Akol is convinced that he is too old and scarred to ask for Marjan's hand in marriage, and he considers marrying a girl entrusted to his care as "being ungrateful" and, more importantly, against his free will as a *pahlavan*. Instead, he dedicates himself to taking care of the affairs of the deceased Haji Samad. Eventually, a less appealing suitor ends up marrying Marjan. Heartbroken, Dash Akol faces Kaka Rostam during the night, and they start a battle. Kaka Rostam stabs him, inflicting a mortal wound. Before his death, Dash Akol entrusts his parrot to Marjan, who is moved to tears when the parrot recites in Dash Akol's voice, "Marjan... Marjan... you killed me... To whom can I speak... Marjan... my love for you... killed me."[15]

In his cinematic adaptation, Kimiai made some changes to the original story, including adding a third element to the untold love story of Dash Akol and Marjan: the character of Aghdas, a female dancer working in a *mey-khaneh* (Iranian tavern). In Kimiai's adaptation, Marjan appears to be aware of and affected by Dash Akol's love, which is unlike Hedayat's original story. Also, the final battle does not happen on the same night as Marjan's marriage, giving more time to Dash Akol to prepare and, thus, appear heroic and victorious in

13- However, according to Naficy, "The film fails to fully attend to Dash Akol's divided loyalties and pain, which had both heterosexual and homosexual origins. The film highlights the former over the latter in the interest of its compulsion toward modernity, even though it is filled with nostalgia for premodern times." See NAFICY, Hamid, "Males, Masculinity, and Power", *op. cit.*, p. 280.

14- The story is set during the first Pahlavi period (1921–41). However, the settings, architecture, and costume design in the movie are more reminiscent of the Qajar period in the nineteenth century.

15- As Naficy writes, both Kaka Rostam and Dash Akol were loosely based on two actual historical figures of the same names in Shiraz. However, unlike the story and the movie's narrative, Kaka Rostam was the popular *luti*, and Dash Akol was shamed due to a scandal. It is said that Kaka Rostam's funeral created a nine-hour traffic jam in Shiraz. Kaka Rostam was the child of an enslaved African family in Shiraz, serving the famous aristocratic and powerful Qavam family. This is why Kaka Rostam is depicted as a black *luti* in Kimiai's film, whereas Hedayat's story makes no mention of his African background. On one winter night, after his father's refusal to comply with their master's advances toward his wife, Kaka Rostam's parents were exiled to the icy courtyard of the house, where they froze to death in front of Kaka Rostam's eyes. Seeking revenge, he decides to turn into a *luti*. Kaka Rostam becomes an apprentice of Dash Akol, the most famous *luti* of the neighborhood. Later, during Qavam family's Haj pilgrimage, as tradition dictates, they ask Dash Akol – the most powerful *luti* of the neighborhood – to look after their daughter who remains in Shiraz. Dash Akol's boy lover violates her sexually and, to hide his homosexuality, Dash Akol takes the blame himself. Therefore, it appears that he had violated the daughter. He is tied to a tree and murdered by the next powerful *luti* in the neighborhood, Kaka Rostam. In Kimiai's cinematic narrative, there are allusions to Kaka Rostam's background story, which reveal his intentions and traumatic past. Due to the popularity of leftist ideologies amongst the Shah regime's opposition groups, these allusions are censored and, thus, the final edit portrays Kaka Rostam as a stereotypical antagonist. Also, in line with the modern narrative of sexuality in Iran, neither Hedayat nor Kimiai – who had researched the actual story of Kaka Rostam and Dash Akol – mention Dash Akol's homosexual traits. See NAFICY, Hamid, "Males, Masculinity, and Power", *op. cit.*, pp. 278–279. However, in Naficy's account, apparently based on an interview with the actor Bahman Mofid (who plays Kaka Rostam in the film), it remains unclear how the original story of the violation by Dash Akol's boy lover was revealed to the public.

the battle.[16] I will later elaborate on how the third side of the added love triangle acts as a mirror opposite of the desire between Dash Akol and Marjan in its sonic implications. Additionally, as Golshiri points out,[17] Dash Akol is portrayed as more isolated and introverted in the film.[18] This also accentuates the inner tension of the protagonist, marking a more intense contrast between the two sides of Dash Akol's character, which is also echoed in the score.

Iranian Classical Music and the Representation of the Figure of the *Pahlavan* in *Dash Akol*

Dash Akol's score was composed by Esfandiar Monfaredzadeh (b. 1941), a renowned composer known for his contributions to film and pop music. However, his work encompasses various musical styles, including Western classical, Iranian classical, jazz, and even *kucheh-bazari.*[19] He composed his first music score for *Come Stranger* (1967),[20] and continued his career with Kimiai. After the enormous success of *Gheysar* in 1969, they collaborated again on other films, one of them being *Dash Akol* (1971).[21] The score of *Dash Akol* is composed for a classical orchestra, accompanied by an Iranian instrument, the *tombak-e zurkhaneh* (a type of drum used in the *zurkhaneh* to harmonize the collective movements of the athletes).[22] Some of the other instruments include strings, woodwinds, and brass instruments. In *Dash Akol*'s score, it appears that the composer has attempted to depict an inner tension in the protagonist's character. The tension in his character stems from a dual and contrasting struggle. On the

16- For detailed comparison of the story and the movie, see DASHTI, Azam, and YASER, Hadidi, "An Interdisciplinary Study of Narrative Structure in Dash Akol as a Short Story and Dash Akol as a Movie", *K@ta*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2015), pp. 9–16, and NAFICY, Hamid, "Iranian Writers, the Iranian Cinema, and the Case of *Dash Akol*", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 18, no. 2–4 (1985), pp. 231–51.

17- GOLSHIRI, Hushang, «Dash Akol va barzakh-e Kimiayi [Dash Akol and Kimiai's Limbo]», in *Majmu'eh maghalat dar naghd va mo'arefi-ye asar-e Masud-e Kimiayi [A Collection of Articles in Introduction and Critique of Masoud Kimiai's Works]*, Tehran: Agah Press, 1990/1369, p. 177.

18- Another difference between the two versions is the portrayal of Marjan's husband. In Hedayat's story, he is described as older and less attractive than Dash Akol, whereas in Kimiai's adaptation, the groom is depicted as young, wealthy, and in good health. Furthermore, in Hedayat's story, the time span from Haji's death to Dash Akol's demise is seven years while, in the film, it is portrayed as a much shorter period. On the wedding night, Dash Akol, drunk and heartbroken, passively sleeps with the dancer, holding Marjan's scarf tightly in his fist. All of these events occur before he is brutally beaten up by Kaka Rostam and his companions on the same night. Most significantly, the first encounter between Dash Akol and Marjan occurs in Marjan's house in the story, whereas, in the movie, it takes place in a more poignant and symbolic setting: a graveyard during Marjan's father's funeral, accompanied by weeping women dressed in black, autumn leaves, and the cawing of crows. This is a setting that foreshadows the tragic conclusion of Dash Akol's love story. Additionally, Dash Akol manages to kill Kaka Rostam after being wounded by him, emerging as the victorious side in the film.

19- *Kucheh-bazari* is a style that is influenced by popular music genres in southern Arab countries and is usually associated with lower socio-cultural classes. The main hub for the performance of this style of music was Lalehzar street in Tehran, starting from the 1940s onwards.

20- *Come Stranger [biganeh biya]* (Dir. Masoud Kimiai, 1967, Iran).

21- The other films include *Reza Motorcyclist* (1970), *Balouch* (1972), *Soil* (1973), and *The Deer* (1974).

22- *Dash Akol*'s score was officially published by Ahang-e Ruz company in 1971 on a 45 rpm record. *Tombak-e zurkhaneh* literally means "the t*ombak* [goblet drum] of *zurkhaneh*".

one hand, Dash Akol's character exemplifies Bahar and Naficy's descriptions of the *pahlavan* and *luti*, both closely associated with masculinity, sportsmanship, and – especially in the case of the *pahlavan* – bound to specific ethical codes of behavior. This constitutes the first facet of the protagonist's character, a facet we witness when he confronts Kaka Rostam in the coffeehouse, during the latter's boasting, and even in Haji's house.

However, there exists another side to his character, one that is emotional, fragile, sensitive, more entwined with inner feelings, in love, and vulnerable.[23] This facet comes to the forefront as a consequence of his encounter with Marjan. Following this encounter, he transgresses the ethical codes of a *pahlavan*. As Hedayat writes:

> The remarkable thing was that, up until then, the subject of love and passion had not entered his life. Even when his friends gathered around him and arranged private gatherings [with women], he always kept his distance. However, from the day that he became Haji Samad's lawyer and guardian, and he saw Marjan, a complete change occurred in his life. On one hand, he considered himself living under the burden of the dead's legacy and the weight of responsibilities; on the other hand, he had fallen for Marjan. But these responsibilities had put more pressure on him than anything else.[24]

His free will becomes bound both with love and responsibility for Haji's estate, giving rise to a tension within his character. This tension serves as the driving force of the entire plot and becomes a source of inspiration for the movie's score. In Hedayat's story, this vulnerable and fragile side of his character is unveiled when he is alone with his parrot or when the narrator delves into his inner emotions.[25] In Kimiai's adaptation, we are more exposed to this side of Dash Akol to some extent, particularly when he confronts the dancer in the tavern who loves Dash Akol. However, intriguingly, Hedayat presents these ethical traditional codes as constraining principles while describing Dash Akol's passionate and sensual dreams involving Marjan. According to Hedayat, this represented the "real Dash Akol", who unabashedly defied societal norms to embrace Marjan's body and kiss her "fiery" lips openly.[26] This introduces another layer of tension for Dash Akol: although he feels "liberated" after fulfilling his responsibility in Marjan's marriage, he also experiences restraint due to his inability to propose to her.

23- As Naficy notes while writing about the figure of *luti* or tough guy in Iranian pre-revolutionary cinema, this co-existence of both masculine and feminine traits can be seen in the famous *baba karam* dance. See NAFICY, Hamid, "Males, Masculinity, and Power", *op. cit*., p. 281

24- HEDAYAT, Sadegh, "Dash Akol", *op. cit*., p. 52.

25- In Hedayat's words, "At nights, ... he would sit in front of the cage, pouring out his heart to the parrot. If Dash Akol sought Marjan's hand in marriage, of course, her mother would offer her hand to him willingly. However, on the other hand, he did not want to become tied to a wife and children; he wanted to be free, just like the way he was brought up. Moreover, he believed that if the girl entrusted to him were to be married to him, it would be untrustworthy of him." HEDAYAT, Sadegh, "Dash Akol", *op. cit*., p. 55.

26- HEDAYAT, Sadegh, "Dash Akol", *op. cit*., p. 56

This tension arises from the conflict between individual free will, as encouraged by the then-emerging modern values, and the socio-ethical detachment and free will associated with the pre-modern *pahlavan* figure.

The inner tension of Dash Akol's character is sonically represented by the allocation of two different musical modes to the two different sides of his character. For the more "masculine" side, the composer utilizes motifs that are reminiscent of the *Chahargah* mode.[27] As I have argued in another article, *Chahargah* is historically associated with manhood, *pahlavani* culture, epic, and *varzesh-e zurkhaneh*, the traditional Iranian sport of chivalry, in which the accompanying music is often performed in this same mode.[28] Even in the supposedly more "objective" theoretical writings, *Chahargah* is linked to these specific characteristics.[29] For example, Daryush Safvat and Nelly Caron contrast the *Chahargah* and *Shur* modes by employing geometrical metaphors, describing them as "angled" and "curved", respectively.[30] These metaphors resemble certain notions about geometric forms and gender, associating circles and curves with females and squares with males.[31] Within the traditional *radif* repertoire, which serves as the primary source for grasping the essentials of Iranian classical music, only a select few *gushehs*[32] are accompanied by verses from the *Shahnameh* epic, as opposed to most *gushehs* which are accompanied by lyrical or mystical poems. These *gushehs* are exclusively in the *Chahargah* mode. This stereotype has been reproduced in more recent works as well, including Hamid Motebasem's all-Iranian orchestral project, *Simorgh* (2011), and Hushang Kamkar's song, «Athletes", composed for the Iranian National Football team in the 2018 World Cup.[33] More importantly, in many non-professional and non-specialized writings about music found on the internet, *Chahargah* is often associated with manhood and heroism. The emotional characteristics of different modes are typically overlooked in theoretical writings, as they are

27- The *Chahargah* scale has intervals of 3/4, 5/4, 1/2, 1, 3/4, 5/4, 1/2, with the starting tone playing the role of *shahed* (similar to a tonic). It consists of two tetrachords (in C, it will be C-F, G-C, with a whole tone separating them). However, the scale is more of a theoretical concept rather than a practical application in Iranian classical music, since the modal units used – at least in its more traditional forms – are within a range of less than an octave, usually around a tetrachord's range. Also, *shaheds* in Iranian classical music are not entirely similar to tonics. In the case of *Chahargah*, however, it more or less has the same role since it is both the *shahed* and *forud* (similar to cadence).

28- SALAVATI, Kamyar, "Gender representation in today's Iranian classical music: A case study of Zal & Rudabeh in Simorq Project", *Mahoor Ethnomusicology Quarterly*, 78 (2018), p. 65.

29- NETTL, Bruno, "Gerd-avarandeh-ye Chahargah [The collector of Chahargah]", translated by ROSHAN, Payam, *Mahoor Ethnomusicology Quarterly,* 27 (2005/1384), p. 22.

30- SAFVAT, Daryush and CARON, Nelly, *Musighi-ye melli-ye Iran [National Music of Iran]*, translated by SALIMZADEH, Susan, Tehran: Tandis, 2009/1388, p. 111.

31- See NEGRIN, Llwellyn, "Ornament and the Feminine", *Feminist Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2006), pp. 219-235, and STROESSNER, S.J., BENITEZ, J., PEREZ, M.A., WYMAN, A.B., CARPINELLA, C.M., and JOHNSON, K.L., "What's in a shape? Evidence of gender category associations with basic forms", *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 87 (2020), Article 103915.

32- *Gusheh* refers to a short melodic motif or phrase that is an essential component of the *radif*, the traditional repertoire of Iranian classical music. It is a fundamental building block that musicians use as a basis for improvisation and composition.

33- Available at: http://music.iranseda.ir/DetailsAlbum/?VALID=TRUE&g=109043

considered subjective and unreliable interpretations. While the more informal writings on the internet may not hold theoretical significance, they do reveal common perceptions regarding the ethos of this mode.

In the movie's score, motifs in or reminiscent of *Chahargah* represent the "masculine" and "heroic" side of Dash Akol's character. With his heroic entrance to the coffeehouse (00:11:30), a traditional masculine social space in Iranian towns, the accompanying music features a short melodic motif in *Chahargah*. Dash Akol's entrance to the coffeehouse can be seen as a heroic act, as he confronts Kaka Rostam, who is mistreating the owner and young teaboy. Another notable connection between masculinity, heroism, and *Chahargah* can be heard in the scene where Dash Akol prepares for the final battle with Kaka Rostam (1:18:00). In this scene, he decides to go to the *zurkhaneh*, the arena for the traditional Iranian sport that is associated with *pahlavani* culture. His act of preparing himself for the final battle is accompanied by brass wind instruments performing in what seems to be in *Chahargah*, with strings playing in the same musical mode. The orchestra is accompanied by the *tombak-e zurkhaneh.* The scene portrays the protagonist's semi-naked body as he trains and turns around, emphasizing his masculine physique.

The *tombak-e zurkhaneh,* with its deeper, louder and less delicate sonority compared to ordinary *tombak*, is associated with the masculine atmosphere of *zurkhaneh*. This instrument has a larger resonance box and is rarely used in Iranian classical music ensembles. It is usually accompanied by a bell, called *zang*, which is used both to perform music in the *zurkhaneh* and to announce something, like a new *pahlavan* entering the often circular arena of a zurkhaneh. A *zang* is also used in *Dash Akol*'s score to highlight the connections with the *zurkhaneh* and to punctuate certain points in the rhythm.[34] The *tombak-e zurkhaneh* and *zang's* heroic associations are evident in the first unfriendly encounter between Dash Akol and Kaka Rostam in the coffeehouse, where we hear both of these instruments (00:06:00). Immediately after the scene with Dash Akol in the *zurkhaneh*, a famous motif in *Chahargah*, based on an ascending "half-major" third interval[35] can be heard in an anxious melody played by strings in tremolos. This emphasizes both the *pahlavani*/masculinity ideas and the tension before the final battle (1:26:00). When the actual battle begins, the orchestra continues to play in *Chahargah* in a 4/4 metre, accompanied by wind instruments, the *tombak-e zurkhaneh*, and drums (1:27:00-1:29:00). Interestingly, in this part of the movie, the flute is brought into the background rather than the foreground, allowing lower wind instruments to take the lead. The high pitch of the flute,

34- In a *zurkhaneh*, both instruments are played by someone called a *morshed*, an Arabic word that can be translated as "the guide." In Sufism, *morshed* refers to a lead Sufi who guides other Sufis to the right paths. This further emphasizes the shared roots of the *pahlavani* subculture with Sufism.

35- According to most theoretical writings on Iranian classical music, a half-major third is an interval consisting of seven quarter-tones (equivalent to one whole tone plus three-quarters of a tone).

compared to instruments like the tuba, can be associated with femininity, as the biological female voice is known to have a higher frequency than that of males.

The more fragile, delicate, lonely, and vulnerable side of Dash Akol, which is provoked by his love for Marjan, is musically represented by the *Dashti* mode.[36] As evident in the interpretations of Ruhollah Khaleghi, and Safvat and Caron, *Dashti* – unlike *Chahargah* – is traditionally connected to feelings of sorrow, lyricism, romance, and sentimentality.[37] Based on this stereotypical reading of *Dashti*, it represents Dash Akol's second facet, as mentioned earlier. This interconnection is evident on many different occasions and scenes in the movie. *Dashti* is mostly used when we find a way to dig into Dash Akol's feelings, most importantly his love and affection for Marjan. This can be seen in almost all the scenes that are related to Marjan, from his first encounter with her in the graveyard (00:23:50) to Marjan's wedding night in her house (01:02:00). Here, *Dashti* signifies solitude, love, and compassion. It stands for the untold, for hidden desires. In another well-crafted scene which depicts Dash Akol's solitude, the affected and love-sick *pahlavan* is sitting in what seems to be a bazaar on a silent night and a group of chained prisoners pass by (00:37:00). The association of *Dashti* with his solitude and inner, untold emotions create a spatial contrast with that of *Chahargah*. While *Dashti* represents the more private realms of Dash Akol's life, such as his private conversations with his parrot (00:37:40) or his solitude in the closed bazaar (00:37:00), *Chahargah* is more entangled with social space, such as the first and last fight, both being held in public places with observers, such as a *meydan* (public square) or *tekyeh* (public space for religious *taziyeh* performances).[38]

Similarly, the masculine side of Dash Akol's character is represented by lower-pitched instruments and the *tombak-e zurkhaneh.* However, in a few scenes, especially after Dash Akol departs from the tavern in a drunken and emotionally-affected state due to his love for Marjan, the *tombak-e zurkhaneh* accompanies a melancholic and sorrowful melody in *Dashti* mode, in a 4/4 metre (00:38:10), effectively capturing the dual inner tension of the protagonist.

36- There are different theories on how to explain Iranian classical modes and *dastgahs*. In the case of modes like *Dashti*, it becomes more complicated. However, a clearer and widely-accepted description is as follows: it is a sub-category of the grand *Shur dastgah*, built on the same scale with a different *shahed* (similar to tonic), *forud* (similar to cadence), and *motaghayyer* (flexible or changing tone). It is constructed on the fifth degree above *Shur*'s tonic. This is *Shur*'s scale: 3/4, 3/4, 1, 1, 1/2, 1, 1. It consists of two tetrachords (in G *Shur*: G-C, D-G), separated by a whole tone. In the *Dashti* mode, the tonic (fifth degree) is flexible by a quarter tone (based on the tetrachord used and whether the melody is ascending or descending), so the scale would be like this: 3/4, 3/4, 1, 3/4 or 1, 1/2, 1, 1.

37- See KHALEGHI, Ruhollah, *Nazari be musighi [A Glance at Music]*, Tehran: Safi Alishah, 1983/ 1362, p. 167, and SAFVAT, Daryush and CARON, Nelly, *Musighi-ye melli-ye Iran [National Music of Iran]*, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

38- *Taziyeh* refers to Shi'a plays about the battle of Karbala and its events. They are held annually in Iran, Iraq, India, Lebanon, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and even in the Caribbean, and are both tragic and epic.

Figure 1: As shown through Dash Akol's point-of-view shot, he and Marjan exchange gazes on her wedding night.

Silence in the Plot, Characters and Dialogue

To discuss the sonic representations of the classical Iranian figure of the *pahlavan* in *Dash Akol*, one should not only rely on the musical score but also consider the sonic implications embedded in the dialogue and the plot. This includes not only the sounds but also the silences, non-sonic interactions, and non-verbal communications. The theme of silence is implicitly or explicitly referred to in *Dash Akol*, and the entire love tension of the story relies on silence.[39] To begin with, Dash Akol's love for Marjan is never verbally expressed, for he must remain silent and act in accordance with the traditional moral codes of being a *pahlavan*.[40] In the short story "Dash Akol", Hedayat attributes certain qualities to the protagonist that exemplify those of a *pahlavan*. He writes:

> Everyone in Shiraz loved Dash Akol. Even when he occasionally closed off Sardozak [neighborhood], he never caused harm to women and children. On the contrary, he displayed kindness towards everyone. If anyone dared to mock a woman or mistreat someone unjustly, they would not escape the consequences imposed by Dash Akol. He was frequently seen assisting others, exhibiting generosity, and when he felt inclined, he willingly helped individuals carry their burdens.[41]

In addition,

> Dash Akol was known for his generosity and his disregard for earthly wealth. He lived his life with a sense of manhood, free-spiritedness, generosity, and nobility. He had no other personal attachments and would generously

39- Some scholars have examined the ways in which non-verbal communication and specifically sounds have played a significant role in Iranian cinema to convey certain messages. See, for example: MOTTAHEDEH, Negar, "Iranian Cinema in the Twentieth Century: A Sensory History", *Iranian Studies* Vol. 42, no. 4 (2009), pp. 529–48; NAFICY, Hamid, "Veiled Voice and Vision in Iranian Cinema: The Evolution of Rakhshan Banietemad's Films", *Social Research*, Vol. 67, no. 2 (2000): 559–76; NAFICY, Hamid, "Veiled Voice and Vision in Iranian Cinema: The Evolution of Rakhshan Banietemad's Films", *Social Research*, Vol. 67, no. 2 (2000), pp. 559–76 ; and NAFICY, Hamid, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema*, 4 vols, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011–12.

40- It is also worth noting that, in parallel with Dash Akol's silences, Kaka Rostam, the antagonist, is talkative but suffers from a stammer.

41- HEDAYAT, Sadegh, "Dash Akol", *op. cit*., p.46.

> donate his wealth to support the poor and destitute. On certain occasions, he drank double distilled *aragh*[42] and expressed himself loudly at crossroads, or he would socialize with acquaintances known for their parasitic tendencies at lively gatherings.[43]

Hedayat and Mehrdad Bahar's descriptions of a *pahlavan* are very similar to the characteristics associated with the mystical figure of a dervish. Bahar introduces the concept of the "crown of poverty",[44] which bears resemblance to the mystical Iranian notion of spiritual poverty.[45] An important aspect of this "poverty", which emerges from a state of abstinence, is characterized by silence, detachment, and avoidance. Henry Corbin argues that in Iranian culture, with its deep Sufi traditions, there exists a constant inclination towards a process of transforming a *pahlavani* epic into a mystical one.[46] The philosopher Sohrevardi's re-characterization of ancient Iranian heroes as mystical figures stands as a profound example of this trait. He depicts the strong connection between *javanmardi/pahlavani* etiquettes and Sufism through examining a series of old writings called *fotovatnamehs*. Similarly, many of the characteristics attributed to a pahlavan by Hedayat and Bahar, such as detachment, abstinence, and generosity, align with those of dervishes. Furthermore, silence as a means to reach redemption, unity, avoidance, and abstinence seems to be common to both dervishes and *pahlavans*.

The theme of silence is central to the film *Dash Akol*, with references to how silence is considered a virtue in the masculine traditions of *pahlavani* culture. This theme is expressed both explicitly in the dialogue and implicitly throughout the film. For instance, in an early scene at the coffeehouse, Kaka Rostam confronts Dash Akol and states, "It is the women's job to talk" (00:05:45). The emphasis on "women" implies that men are expected to remain silent. Similarly, in a tavern scene, when Dash Akol is drunk after seeing Marjan in Haji's house, the dancer, who is in love with Dash Akol, expresses her frustration, saying:

> You neither talk, nor express your pain. You think if you speak about your pain, hell breaks loose! (00:52:35)

The dancer's statement highlights the interconnection between the Persian traditional notion of masculinity, the culture of *pahlavani*, and the value placed on silence. Another aphorism, repeated by both the dancer and Dash Akol, reinforces this connection: "When a man is in sorrow, he has a mountain of pain [inside]" (00:33:15). Furthermore, during the same night at the tavern, when the tavern-

42- *Aragh* is a strong Iranian alcoholic drink, made by distilling raisin.
43- HEDAYAT, Sadegh, "Dash Akol", *op. cit*., pp. 51–52.
44- BAHAR, Mehrdad, *Az ostureh ta tarikh [From Myth to History]*, Tehran: Cheshmeh, 1997/1376, pp. 37-38.
45- ALGAR, Hamid, "Darvis", in *Encyclopædia Iranica vol. VII*, Fasc 1, pp. 72-76 [available online]. Link: https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/darvis (accessed 10 September 2023).
46- CORBIN, Henry, *Ayin-e Javanmardi [Traités des Compagnons-Chevaliers]*, translated by NARAGHI, Ehsan. Tehran: Sokhan, 2003/1382, p. 6.

owner expresses gratitude to Dash Akol, he only responds with a nonchalant word: *eyvallah*, which can be translated as "good" or "bravo" (00:32:10). These instances, along with the overarching theme of Dash Akol keeping his secret to himself, establish a link between silence, masculinity, and sorrow in the film.

Figure 2: *Dash Akol* talking to his parrot with the delicate dome of *Shahcheragh* shrine in the background, emphasizing the more emotional side of his character.

As mentioned earlier, traces of this concept can be found throughout Persian classical lyrical mystical and romantic poems. As reflected in the words of Hafez, who is widely regarded as one of the most renowned Persian classical poets,

> Dialogue was not the way of the dervishes,
> Otherwise, I would have had stories with you.[47]

Likewise, in *Tazkarat-al-Oliya*, a collection of biographies of renowned Sufis written by the esteemed poet and Sufi Attar (1145-1221 AD), the author quotes Bayazid Bastami (804–874 AD), a Sufi and a philosopher:

> ...I did not witness a light brighter than darkness, nor heard a word better than wordlessness. I settled in the house of silence and adorned myself with the cloak of patience, and then I reached the ultimate destination.[48]

Accordingly, a whole chapter of the famous *Golestan* (1258), written by Sa'di (1210–1291/2) is dedicated to "the advantages of silence". As Bastami highlights, silence, along with qualities such as abstinence, patience, and detachment, serves as a pathway to attaining higher levels of Sufism and experiencing unity

47- HAFEZ, *Divan-e Hafez*, edited by ANJOVI SHIRAZI, Abolghasem, Tehran: Badraghe-ye Javidan, 1982/1361, p. 198. My translation.

48- ATTAR Neyshaburi, *Tazkarat-al-Owliya [Biographies of the Saints]*, edited by TAVAKOLI, A., Tehran: Behzad, 1994/1373, p. 250. My translation.

with the divine. Thus, the presence of silence within *pahlavani* culture can be traced back to its mystical origins.

In the context of *Dash Akol*, silence is not only inherent to the protagonist's role as a *pahlavan*, where selflessness and humility are expected, but also arises from the complex situation in which he finds himself. As the executor of Haji's estate and a surrogate father figure to Marjan, he must maintain a discreet silence about his love for her. The silence of the male protagonist, a modern *pahlavan*, is also exemplified in another film by Kimiai, *Reza, the Motorcyclist* (1970). In the renowned song composed for that film by Monfaredzadeh, the lyrics begin as follows:

> With a voiceless voice,
> Tall[49] as a mountain,
> Fleeting as a dream,
> A man,
> He was a man.[50]

In the film, the association of *pahlavani* and silence goes beyond themes of love and sorrow. In certain scenes, silence exudes power, stemming from the charismatic nature of a strong masculine *pahlavan* figure. For instance, Dash Akol's prolonged silent gaze prompts one of Kaka Rostam's disciples and companions to feel so embarrassed that he leaves his seat (00:11:50). The same occurs during the tavern fight when Dash Akol silently deters a man from brandishing a dagger (00:30:50). Dash Akol's, and by extension the *pahlavan's*, silence conveys kindness and generosity when confronted with the weak or oppressed. After a waiter at the coffeehouse is mistreated by Kaka Rostam and his companions, Dash Akol comes to his defence and, in return, the waiter brings him a cup of tea and is met with a kind silence as Dash Akol looks at him (00:12:20). Similarly, following Dash Akol's initial battle with Kaka Rostam, he is left alone with a child, and he does the same, smiling without uttering a word (00:08:35). These different silences capture various facets of being a *pahlavan*, as defined and described by Bahar and Hedayat.

In this context, however, silence does not necessarily entail abandoning all forms of communication; rather, it implies refraining from direct sonic expression. Therefore, although Dash Akol's love for Marjan is not expressed verbally, it finds alternative means of expression. Despite never engaging in direct conversation, they communicate through exchanged glances, which serves as another mode of connection between them. Two notable instances of this non-verbal communication occur in the film. The first is at Marjan's father's funeral, where Dash Akol unveils her face (00:24:10). The second is prior to

49- The word used by the lyricist is *boland*, a Persian word that can be translated as "high", "tall", or "loud".

50- The lyrics are by Shahyar Ghanbari (born 1950).

Marjan's wedding, with Dash Akol standing in the central courtyard and Marjan inside a room, exchanging glances through a window (01:01:00). In contrast to their initial visual encounter where Marjan's face was unveiled to Dash Akol in the graveyard, this time Marjan's face is veiled by her mother, symbolizing the conclusion and closure of their love.

It is important to recognize that these non-verbal modes of communication have a rich history in Persian lyrical and mystical classical literature. The theme of *nazarbazi* (the play of glances), as described by Sirus Shamisa, is a recurring motif in Persian classical poems.[51] Within a culture rich in metaphors, secrets, and silences, communicating through gazes has served as an alternative method to convey messages of affection.

Figure 4: The final battle between Dash Akol and Kaka Rostam in a *taziyeh* setting, foreshadowing the tragic and epic fate of the protagonist.

Another way in which secrecy and silence are intertwined in Persian literature is through the concept of *ghased* (messenger). In classical Persian poetry, messengers serve as intermediaries, conveying the message of the lover to the beloved in order to overcome the obstacles that lovers face in their communication. There are numerous examples of winds in Persian poetry

51- *Nazarbazi*, according to Sirus Shamisa, was typically a way of expressing love and affection through gazes instead of verbal communication in Iranian pre-modern history. These gazes were often directed towards young boys. As I will elaborate later, and as Naficy highlights, the pre-modern *pahlavans* were involved in relationships with younger boys. See SHAMISA, Sirus, *Shahedbazi dar adabiyat-e Farsi [Shahedbazi in Persian Literature]*, Tehran: Ferdows, 2001/1381.

symbolically taking on the role of a messenger, including spring winds, *saba*[52] wind, night wind, Nowruz wind,[53] and the dawn breeze. For example:

> O' the spring wind of the lovers, do you have any news of my beloved?

Or:

> May I kiss his sacred feet,
>
> The messenger who brought the beloved's message[54]

Also, communicating through indirect, subtle, or metaphorical means has its own roots in Iranian cultural history. In her discussion of the use of poetry as voice-over instead of music in a post-1979 movie, *The May Lady* (1998), and how its sonic qualities convey love and affection, Nooshin emphasizes how the director Rakhshan Banietemad, like many other Iranian directors, draws on a "centuries-old tradition of poetry as a vehicle for hidden messages."[55] Similarly, she further highlights the importance of auditory poetic expressions of love rather than visible displays, which are more constrained in the post-1979 cinema climate.[56] The case of *Dash Akol*, however, shows that the inclination towards expressing love and affection in more indirect ways is not entirely a post-1979 concept. In *Dash Akol,* the protagonist keeps a parrot, a bird renowned for its ability to mimic human speech, in his room. The parrot later becomes what Nooshin refers to as the "vehicle" or, in the words of classical poets, "the messenger." While Dash Akol has erotic dreams about Marjan, they all remain unspoken and unanswered, communicated through gazes, the parrot, the chained prisoners passing by, and Dash Akol's sexual encounter with the dancer, Aghdas. In the final scene, the parrot delivers Dash Akol's message revealing his love for Marjan to her after his death, serving as his voice by repeating his affectionate words.

Compared to Dash Akol and Marjan's undisclosed interest, Aghdas and her love for Dash Akol play a mirroring role in the overall plot. In terms of communication and directness, Aghdas and Dash Akol stand at the extreme opposite of Dash Akol and Marjan's dynamics. Aghdas is talkative and openly expresses her feelings for Dash Akol, despite being a woman, in a context where direct expression of love for a man is not a norm. Unlike Dash Akol, who, according to Hedayat, only dreams about kissing and making love with Marjan, Aghdas attempts to seduce Dash Akol in the tavern and eventually sleeps with him when Dash Akol is most hurt on Marjan's wedding night. In Dash Akol and Marjan's story, Dash Akol is the one who finally expresses his love via the parrot. However, in Aghdas and Dash Akol's case, Aghdas is the one who openly expresses her love. Aghdas undresses

52- Nowruz wind is a cool, pleasant breeze which blows from east or north-east in the spring.
53- Nowruz is the Persian New Year, which begins at the exact moment of the spring equinox.
54- SA'DI, sonnet number 118, *Qazaliyat* [online]. Link: https://ganjoor.net/saadi/divan/ghazals/sh181.
55- NOOSHIN, Laudan "Affective Listening, Sonic Intimacy, and the Power of Quiet Voices in Rakhshan Banietemad's *The May Lady*", *op. cit.*, p. 136.
56- *Ibid*., p137.

in front of Dash Akol, while, in the final exchange of gazes between Dash Akol and Marjan, Marjan's mother veils her face. This opposing duality is even echoed in the architectural layout of Haji's house compared to that of the tavern. In the former, a layered structure is evident in the spatial arrangement of the house when Dash Akol prays and Marjan passes through walls, windows, and doors to secretly look at him (43:00). However, in the tavern, there are almost no barriers between Aghdas's room and the public space of the courtyard, allowing Aghdas and Dash to easily access her room (01:43:10).[57]

Figure 5: Marjan in her family house walks through different spatial layers to secretly see Dash Akol praying.

The duality of Aghdas/Marjan, with one being communicative and easily accessible, and the other silent and unreachable, further brings to mind a familiar feminine duality found in Iranian contemporary fiction literature, a theme that was embarked on in none other than Hedayat's magnum opus, *The Blind Owl* (1936). This duality is known as the ethereal/whorish women duality, which marks two distinct characters: one accessible, the other pure and out of reach.[58] In *Prince Ehtejab* (1978) by Houshang Golshiri (1938–2000), "the prince's wife (the ethereal woman) always looks at him through her glasses and seemingly does not have the smallest affection toward anything but their forebear's

57- Similarly, Naficy writes: "Like all gender representations, this one is spatialized. Purity is confined to the private spaces of the home, while impurity enters the public sphere. In *Dash Akol*, Marjan is pure; Aqdas is impure. The roles come with costs and rewards. Purity comes with confinement and limited horizons, but it is rewarded with dignity and respect. Impurity is publicly degraded, but sexuality and other aspirations are potentially open." NAFICY, Hamid, "Males, Masculinity, and Power", *op. cit.*, p. 289.

58- This is not dissimilar to the Madonna-whore complex identified by Sigmund Freud.

diaries",[59] while the prince makes love to his maid, imposing makeup on her that makes her resemble his wife. Similarly, there are many layers, similar to the prince's wife's glasses, between Dash Akol's affection and Marjan: Dash Akol's ethical codes of behavior as a *pahlavan*, his responsibility towards Marjan's family, societal norms, and his masculine performance. Unlike Hedayat's story, which unveils Dash Akol's physical desire towards Marjan, in Kimiai's adaptation, we see no indication of any physical or sexual attraction to Marjan in Dash Akol. Interestingly enough, Aghdas is a dancer, and all the scenes involving her commence with an ensemble performing in the background, within the tavern's courtyard. She also conveys expressiveness through her dance, performing it directly in front of the heartbroken and silent Dash Akol, in an attempt to uplift his spirits. By introducing the character of Aghdas, the modern Iranian duality of the ethereal and the whorish woman is re-enacted in Kimiai's movie, manifested sonically in the silence of the ethereal girl, Marjan, and the over-audibility of Aghdas.

Figure 6: Aghdas dancing in front of love-sick Dash Akol in the tavern.

Conclusion

The traditional masculine figure of the pahlavan is usually understood in the light of its connections with mythologies, mysticism, mannerism, ethical codes, and sportsmanship. However, part of the *pahlavan's* persona can be represented through sonic media, distinct from other explicit ethical and practical instructions. Through a study of Masoud Kimiai's *Dash Akol*, I have argued that, on the one hand, Iranian classical music carries certain gendered connotations that have been reproduced by *Dash Akol's* score composer. These connotations link

59- KARAMI, Ronak, "'We neither are of the past nor of the future': Analyzing the Two Opposing Aspects of a Female Character Through Four Modern Works of Persian Fiction", *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 7 (2019), p. 264.

masculinity, *pahlavani* culture, and sportsmanship with specific musical elements such as the duality of the *Chahargah*/*Dashti* modes. The *Chahargah* mode is used to represent Dash Akol's epic and masculine side, and *Dashti* mode to convey his romantic, fragile, emotional, and sensitive side. Furthermore, the *tombak-e zurkhaneh* is utilized to accentuate these two aspects of his character. Both *Chahargah* and *tombak-e zurkhaneh* carry cultural associations that align them with the masculine archetype of the *pahlavan*. On the other hand, by demonstrating that silence is a core concept in *Dash Akol* – both in its themes and characterization – I emphasized the narrative potential of silence and non-verbal communication, their implications in a certain Iranian sub-culture, and their role in constructing masculinity. The masculine stereotype of "silence", as opposed to the supposedly "feminine" trait of verbal communication, is considered a virtue for the masculine figure of the *pahlavan*/*luti*. However, a thorough study of mystical literature reveals that silence is considered a virtue in Sufi and dervish etiquette as well. Similarly, it is noteworthy that *pahlavani*/*javanmardi* has been historically linked to Sufism. The cultural phenomenon of conveying the unspeakable through alternative means of communication is largely traceable in Persian romantic and mystical literature.

This research could be expanded by conducting similar studies to address questions such as whether different works within Iranian classical music reveal variations in gendered connotations. Moreover, it is worth considering how Iranian classical music represents modern masculinities beyond a traditional setting. How is Iranian classical music, or other historical musical genres in the MENA region, linked with ideas such as bravery, heroism, and sportsmanship, particularly in the context of cinema? Furthermore, it remains to be explored how these elements resonate with audiences beyond Iranian culture. Are there parallels between the use of silence in *Dash Akol* and other cinematic works or cultural practices worldwide that shed light on the cross-cultural significance of these intricate forms of expression? Beyond *Dash Akol*, how does silence, as a narrative device, feature in other cinematic works, both within and outside Iranian cinema? And finally, what other potential relationships exist between masculinity and silence?

Bibliography

- ALGAR, Hamid, "Darvis", in *Encyclopædia Iranica vol. VII*, Fasc 1, pp. 72-76 [available online]. Link: https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/darvis (accessed 10 September 2023).
- ATTAR Neyshaburi, *Tazkarat-al-Owliya [Biographies of the Saints]*, edited by TAVAKOLI, A., Tehran: Behzad, 1994/1373.
- BAHAR, Mehrdad, *Az ostureh ta tarikh [From Myth to History]*, Tehran: Cheshmeh, 1997/1376.
- BAHAR, Mehrdad, "Varzesh-e bastani-ye Iran va risheh-haye tarikhiye an [The Iranian ancient sport and its historic roots]", *Chista*, no. 2 (1981/1360), pp. 140–59.
- BELL, Robert Joseph, "Luti Masculinity in Iranian Modernity, 1785–1941: Marginalization and the Anxieties of Proper Masculine Comportment", PhD dissertation, City University of New York, 2015 [online]. Link: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/856 (accessed 10 September 2023).
- CORBIN, Henry, *Ayin-e Javanmardi [Traités des Compagnons-Chevaliers]*, translated by NARAGHI, Ehsan. Tehran: Sokhan, 2003/1382.
- DASHTI, Azam, and YASER, Hadidi, "An Interdisciplinary Study of Narrative Structure in Dash Akol as a Short Story and Dash Akol as a Movie", *K@ta*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2015), pp. 9–16.
- FATEMI, Sasan, "Music, festivity, and gender in Iran from the Qajar to the early Pahlavi period", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2005), pp. 399–416.
- GOLSHIRI, Hushang, «Dash Akol va barzakh-e Kimiayi [Dash Akol and Kimiai's Limbo]», in *Majmu'eh maghalat dar naghd va mo'arefi-ye asar-e Masud-e Kimiayi [A Collection of Articles in Introduction and Critique of Masoud Kimiai's Works]*, Tehran: Agah Press, 1990/1369.
- HAFEZ, *Divan-e Hafez*, edited by ANJOVI SHIRAZI, Abolghasem, Tehran: Badraghe-ye Javidan, 1982/1361.
- HEDAYAT, Sadegh, "Dash Akol", in *Seh ghatreh khun [Three Drops of Blood]*, Tehran: Amirkabir, 1962/1341.
- KARAMI, Ronak, "'We neither are of the past nor of the future': Analyzing the Two Opposing Aspects of a Female Character through Four Modern Works of Persian Fiction", *Journal of International Women's Studies,* Vol. 20, no. 7 (2019), pp. 259–271.
- KHALEGHI, Ruhollah, *Nazari be musighi [A Glance at Music]*, Tehran: Safi Alishah, 1983/1362.
- MEFTAHI, Ida, *Gender and Dance in Modern Iran: Biopolitics on Stage*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2017.
- MOTTAHEDEH, Negar, "Iranian Cinema in the Twentieth Century: A Sensory History", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 42, no. 4 (2009), pp. 529–48.
- NAFICY, Hamid, "Iranian Writers, the Iranian Cinema, and the Case of *Dash Akol*", *Iranian Studies,* Vol. 18, no. 2–4 (1985), pp. 231–51.

- NAFICY, Hamid, "Veiled Voice and Vision in Iranian Cinema: The Evolution of Rakhshan Banietemad's Films", *Social Research*, Vol. 67, no. 2 (2000), pp. 559–76.
- NAFICY, Hamid, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema,* 4 vols, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011–12.
- NAFICY, Hamid, "Males, Masculinity, and Power: The Tough-Guy Movie Genre and Its Evolution", in NAFICY, Hamid, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 2: The Industrializing Years, 1941–1978*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 261–324.
- NEGRIN, Llwellyn, "Ornament and the Feminine", *Feminist Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2006), pp. 219-235.
- NETTL, Bruno, "Gerd-avarandeh-ye Chahargah [The collector of Chahargah]", translated by ROSHAN, Payam, *Mahoor Ethnomusicology Quarterly*, 27 (2005/1384), pp. 9–38.
- NOOSHIN, Laudan, "Windows onto Other Worlds: Music and the Negotiation of Otherness in Iranian Cinema", *Music and the Moving Image*, Vol. 12, no. 3 (2019), pp. 25–57.
- NOOSHIN, Laudan, "Affective Listening, Sonic Intimacy, and the Power of Quiet Voices in Rakhshan Banietemad's *The May Lady*: Towards a Cinema of Empathy", in GHORBANKARIMI, Maryam (ed.), *ReFocus: The Films of Rakhshan Banietemad*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021, pp. 115–39.
- ROCHARD, Philippe, "The Identities of the Iranian Zūrkhanah", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (2002), pp. 313–340.
- RUMI, *Divan-e Shams* [online]. Link: https://ganjoor.net/moulavi/shams/ghazalsh/sh12.
- SA'DI, *Qazaliyat* [online]. Link : https://ganjoor.net/saadi/divan/ghazals/sh181.
- SAFVAT, Daryush and CARON, Nelly, *Musighi-ye melli-ye Iran [National Music of Iran]*, translated by SALIMZADEH, Susan, Tehran: Tandis, 2009/1388.
- SALAVATI, Kamyar, "Gender representation in today's Iranian classical music: A case study of Zal & Rudabeh in Simorq Project", *Mahoor Ethnomusicology Quarterly*, 78 (2018), pp. 59–87.
- SEMATI, Mehdi, and BEHROOZI, Nima, "Paradoxes of gender, technology, and the pandemic in the Iranian music industry", *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2021), pp. 1–13.
- SHAMISA, Sirus, *Shahedbazi dar adabiyat-e Farsi [Shahedbazi in Persian Literature]*, Tehran: Ferdows, 2001/1381.
- STROESSNER, S.J., BENITEZ, J., PEREZ, M.A., WYMAN, A.B., CARPINELLA, C.M., and JOHNSON, K.L., "What's in a shape? Evidence of gender category associations with basic forms", *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 87 (2020), Article 103915.
- ZAHEDI, Farshad, "Masculinity Crisis and the Javanmard Icon in Iranian Cinema", in RIDGEON, Lloyd (ed.), *Javanmardi: The Ethics and Practice of Persianate Perfection*, London: Gingko, 2018, pp. 319–37.

ملخص | يمثل المصطلح الفارسي «پهلوان» شخصية نموذجية لرجل قوي كريم وغير فاسد ومتواضع في مواجهة الضعف. ستركز هذه المقالة على الجوانب الصوتية للپهلوان من خلال تسليط الضوء على أحد أفلام مسعود كيمياي، «داش أكول» (١٩٧١)، المستوحى من قصة تحمل الاسم نفسه لصادق هدايت. أولاً، سأركز على كيفية ربط الفيلم بين الذكورة البطولية ونمط الموسيقى الكلاسيكية الفارسية تشاهارغاه وآلة تمباك الزرخانة، ومقارنتها مع الارتباطات المأساوية والرومانسية لدشتي، وهو نمط كلاسيكي فارسي آخر، يمثل وجهًا آخر أكثر ضعفًا من شخصية بطل الرواية لتسليط الضوء على التوتر الداخلي له. ثانياً، سأستكشف دور الصمت والتواصل غير اللفظي في الحبكة والحوار والشخصيات. سأوضح كيف أن صمت شخصية داش أكول فيما يتعلق بحبه للبنت مرجان يعكس تاريخًا من أخلاقيات الصمت الذكورية، المتشابكة أيضًا مع التصوف والغنائية الإيرانية.

كلمات مفتاحية |
مسعود كيمياي، «داش أكول»، صادق هدايت، الذكورة، السينما الإيرانية، الموسيقى الكلاسيكية الإيرانية، الصمت

Notice biographique | Kamyar Salavati is a PhD candidate in Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter and holds an MA degree in Architectural Studies from the University of Tehran. An architectural historian, architect, and musicologist, he was the Editor-in-Chief of ***Dalan Quarterly***, an interdisciplinary socio-cultural and urban magazine in Iran. His articles have been published in numerous architectural and music journals and magazines such as ***Mahoor Quarterly***, ***Songlines***, ***Wired***, ***The Quietus***, ***Journal of Fine Arts: Architecture and Urban Planning***, ***Journal of Iranian Architectural Studies***, ***Noise Reviews***, ***Hamshahri Me'mari***, and ***Koubeh***.