

Compilation, Collage, and Film Publishing in 1950s–1960s Iran

Setāreh-ye Sinemā (Cinema Star)

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Massoud Mehrabi, the licensee and managing director of *Film Monthly*—the longest-running film journal in postrevolutionary Iran—posted this comment on Instagram in 2018, less than two years before he passed away: “In *Film [Monthly]*, we wanted to journey beyond Sohrab Shahid Sales and Parviz Kimiavi and [their] *A Simple Event* [1973] and *P for Pelican* [1972]. The path was too steep, however, and we fell into a valley. Now we’ve reached *Los Angeles–Tehran* [Tina Pakravan, 2018] and *Centipede* [Abolhassan Davoodi, 2018]. The ghost of *Setāreh-ye Sinemā (Cinema Star)* always returns to brazenly claim its due.”¹ We cannot ask Mehrabi what he meant by this evocation of a periodical that, while long out of print and not easily accessible, still haunts film intellectuals and fans. And yet, his self-deprecating tone toward the status of his own influential magazine alongside *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* provides an example of Iranians’ love-hate relationship with many aspects of their film industry, including its trade press.

Both of these publications have enjoyed a faithful readership. Their reviews were written by some of the most revered film critics in the country, and their translations have ensured an ongoing engagement among Persian speakers with important intellectual traditions in film theory and criticism from around the world. *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, in particular, was sometimes pitched by its former staff as the closest Iranian publication to the ambitions of *Sight and Sound*, *Movie*, or *Cahiers du cinéma*.² This status has been partially intensified by a postrevolutionary generation of cinephiles who could not access it due to the Islamic Republic’s strict laws about media related to the prerevolution film industry.³ At the same time, both magazines have been continually criticized for their policies: *Film Monthly* for its politically conservative approach that has ensured the magazine’s

ongoing run and *Setāreh-ye Sinema* for the pulpy associations with pinups and the cheaply made Iranian popular films, known as *filmfārsi*, that have presented a challenge for those primarily interested in its highbrow currents. This chapter sits with the many contradictions of *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* in all of their vitality. We argue for a reevaluation of a magazine which, during its run of 1,067 issues over twenty-five years (encompassing the conflicting views of various editorial boards), proved to be neither an exclusively elitist platform for promoting festival favorites like Shahid Sales and Kimiavi nor merely a collection of lurid promotions of the Iranian popular cinema and cheap imports.⁴ *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, promoted by its first editorial board as “the most beautiful and original cinema magazine in the Middle East,” was ambivalent in its forms of cinephilia.⁵

Our essay tracks the origins of the journal in 1954 out of a collaboration of a group of young film writers and the owner of a newsstand across the street from the famous Metropole cinema in Tehran. It points out the tumultuous editorial shifts as the journal increased its circulation, production values, and frequency to a weekly staple available at kiosks around major cinemas. Key topics include the place of the trade press within the Iranian film industry, *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*’s relation to other periodicals in Iran, and the collage style of its layout, design, and featured translations. The long life of the journal tracks precisely those tensions signaled by Mehrabi: between the critical reception of local productions and imports, and between popular fan service and the intellectual commitments of critics and filmmakers whose careers were incubated at the journal.

Between the release of the first Iranian feature in 1933 and the first issue of *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* twenty years later, only thirty Iranian films were exhibited in the country, and fewer than ten film-specific periodicals were launched and shortly died.⁶ The industry was emergent in the early 1950s, but studios still had to contend with a lack of infrastructure and cinematic training.⁷ Fledgling and fragile, they faced stiff competition with the stream of foreign movies dubbed into Persian in Iranian, Egyptian, and Italian studios since 1946.⁸ As a result, those publications that served as the promotional material for the newly established studios faced significant obstacles.⁹ It also took time for audiences to warm to the idea of making space for imported entertainment in the well-respected realm of print publication.

Setāreh-ye Sinemā arrived at a time when the demand for the ancillary services to support the economic aspects of both productions and imports had increased. The number of Iranian productions increased dramatically in the 1950s. More dubbing studios were founded in Tehran, the government offered low-interest loans and tax exemptions for building new movie theaters in provinces, and a national plan for eradicating illiteracy began, all around the same time.¹⁰ In addition to this auspicious atmosphere, *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* benefited from a sizable investment by its founder, Paruir Galestian, as well as a brigade of young cinephiles who had gained experience in previous film journals, especially *Jahān-e Sinemā* (*The World of Cinema*) and *Sinemā Teātr* (*Cinema & Theater*).¹¹ Film historian Jamal

Omid—who was one of the numerous editors-in-chief of *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* in different periods—quotes the first editor of the journal on how Galestian, the owner of a kiosk/bookshop that had become the regular hangout of Tehran’s cinephiles, invested 300,000 rials (roughly \$3,300) in the magazine.¹² It was indeed, for a venture of this kind, “an enormous capital investment.”¹³ This combination of experience and enthusiasm guaranteed the continuation of the magazine’s publication for at least about a decade before any significant reorganizing.¹⁴

But success and stature were two separate issues. Writing on cinema fared much better when it was relegated to a subsection of a broad cultural magazine. For this reason, while it was unrivaled as a cinema journal in its early years, *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* took a while to gain favor among the country’s intelligentsia. Despite the illiteracy of much of the country up until mid-century, Persian periodicals were popular and influential after World War II.¹⁵ In the twelve years between the Allied occupation of Iran in 1941 and Mohammad Reza Shah’s 1953 coup d’état, for example, a total of 2,682 new titles were introduced to the country—most of which were driven by political partisanship.¹⁶ Even during the politically dark period following the coup, many activists used the platform of periodicals for expressing their frustration with the failure of constitutional ideals.¹⁷ As a result, a variety of literary publications by progressive forces formed a line of cultural resistance. That is, not only did they take on the political *estebdād* (tyranny), they also railed against cultural *ebtezāl* (vulgarity).¹⁸ Just as the efforts to welcome films into museums elsewhere brought cultural legitimacy to the medium, it was the occasional cinema sections of arts and culture journals that rendered cinema worthy of debate among the intellectuals—even as many film critics wrote for both types of publications.

This condescending attitude toward journals focused exclusively on cinema was established in the 1950s, and it still exerted influence on film journalism and scholarship produced more than a generation later. Mehrabi, for example, elaborates on it in his influential book on the history of Iranian cinema, first published in 1984. He derides the “clamor of star-making and dream-selling in the vulgar and content-less cinema journals” such as *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* in contrast to the cinema pages of intellectual journals like *Ferdowsi*, *Rowshanfekr*, *Sadaf*, *Negin*, and *Sokhan*, which “mostly analyzed foreign films and belittled *filmfārsi*.”¹⁹ Such an assessment gestures back to divisions set up by readers and critics themselves in the publications of the 1950s. We can even see these tensions between cultural publications and cinema publications fictionalized in such films as *Tufān dar shahr-e mā* (*Storm in Our City*, Samuel Khachikian, 1958). In a scene designed to distinguish the naivete of Pari from her older brother Saeed (who works in publishing), Pari stands in front of cutout magazine portraits of Elizabeth Taylor and other stars while Saeed reads *Rowshanfekr* (*Intellectual*) on the other side of the room.

As with so many public debates about cinema’s increasing prominence, the emergent film publishing scene in Iran took on much of the labor of assuaging



FIGURE 4.1. High and low—from *Tufān dar shahr-e mā* (*Storm in Our City*, Samuel Khachikian, 1958).

suspensions about the medium's status as art and as a force for social betterment.²⁰ In order to avoid assumptions about the medium as a depoliticized distraction, the editorial boards of film journals initially made efforts to promote cinema as a novel technological invention with economic and educational value. This fostered ambivalent messaging. Editorial teams were often compelled to pay lip service to values of social uplift while focusing on material that did not necessarily reflect such an educational mission. The opening editorial of the first journal in Iran devoted wholly to the cinema, *Sinemā va Namāyeshāt* (*Cinema and Spectacle*, published in August 1930), claimed that the aim of the publication was the "progress and development of this noble technology and industry in Iran." Cinema, according to the writers of *Sinemā va Namāyeshāt*, was an "important agent of social life and a foundation for the edification of the society's ethics." And yet, the majority of the contents of the first of its total of two issues were about the appearance of Mary Pickford, the private life of Lili Damita, and the biography of Mabel Normand.²¹ This introduction of grand intentions while obsessively publishing pictures and snippets on US and European stars continued in subsequent magazines such as *Hollywood*, whose first editorial (July 1943) discussed World War II while dedicating much of its pages to Hedy Lamarr, Deanna Durbin, and Greta Garbo.²²

This tactic for negotiating the disparate concerns of the country's intelligentsia and its growing population of moviegoers is evident from *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*'s first issue as well. In the magazine's opening editorial, "The Way Forward," the

editorial board introduces the target audience of the magazine as those “who want to see cinema as it should be, not as it is.”²³ Rather than merely paying attention to the actors or copying the taste of US magazines, the writers claimed, *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* aimed to foreground “proper and educational criticism” centering on “the subject or content of the film.”²⁴ The emphasis of this editorial is on a conception of film art as tied to technological progress and social significance. Only some of the articles bore authors’ names (a practice of semi-obscure authorship that continued for years). Those articles that were signed by their authors tended to align with an agenda of social responsibility or technological development. They included, in the first issue, an article on “the new techniques of cinema,” introducing Cinerama, 3-D, and Cinemascope; an article on “the role of music in narrative films”; and two pages of reviews on respected foreign films screened in Tehran over the previous two weeks. The bulk of the magazine’s items, however, covered rumors about Hollywood stars or celebrations of the high-grossing movies and highest-paid actors. Thirty-five of the overall forty-two images of the issue are reprinted illustrations of non-Iranian movie stars, including two small photos and a large cover photo of Ava Gardner.

The editors did recognize that they needed to walk a fine line in their coverage of the forms of celebrity, the market successes, and the capital-intensive technologies of Hollywood and European commercial cinemas. The magazine continually qualified its choices even as the enthusiasm of its fan service continued apace. Even in the first issue, “The Way Forward” acknowledges a “contrast” between the general policy of the magazine and “what is now available [in the magazine itself].” The authors justify this “ostensible” contrast by stating that their objective in introducing foreign films and stressing their stars is to increase the knowledge of their readers about the films they are actually watching and to help those who want to take up the profession of acting. “That we talk more about Hollywood products should not give the impression that *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* is a Hollywoodography,” the writers stress. Their rationale is that it would be naive to ignore the fact that “95% of the films screened in Iranian theaters are of this type.”²⁵ Indeed, the majority of the items in the twenty-four pages of the first issue (counting the front and back covers) are about US and European filmmakers, companies, and stars, while fewer than four pages cover the topics related to Iranian cinema.²⁶ In the decades that followed, however, many changes occurred in the management, editors-in-chief, policies, staff, format, and organization of the magazine’s contents. Therefore, a thorough analysis of *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* would require distinguishing the different periods of the magazine. Just like the evolving meanings of cinema in the country, the identity of this cinema magazine was rarely immune to change.

The paradoxical policies and materials of the magazine are represented in both its design and its content. The composition of *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* in its first several years was a labor of compilation. Reprinted posters, celebrity news, translated interviews, and specs for new devices accompanied the critical writing. At times,

the discussion feels rather personal. Directors and producers in Iran aired the minutiae of their feuds over multiple issues, often with a level of detail that must have been challenging to follow for readers without a professional stake in studio politics. This eclecticism is part of the reason it is difficult to categorize the magazine as primarily serving one sector. If the assembled contents are any indication, the magazine served a diverse readership that included fans, critical cinephiles, exhibitors, and other tradespeople. The editors referred to the magazine as a trade paper, giving space for technical discussions and allowing producers and directors serialized columns to discuss the state of the industry.²⁷ But the magazine also spoke directly to those interested in celebrity news. It made space for young fans to write in and provided them film trivia, crossword puzzles, and color portraits of stars.²⁸

The world of the magazine was intertwined with the world of collectible print imagery circulating around the globe. The editors sourced material from film magazines as well as from the publicity material that was shipped along with the secondhand film prints destined for theaters. Warner Bros. distribution records, for example, indicate packages of posters, one-sheets, and press booklets sent from the Rome office (a key intermediary) to Iran, and we see these exact images for Warner's films reproduced in the magazine.²⁹ In many instances, an image of a globally recognizable actor is cut from studio publicity materials and pasted into an article, with scissor marks visible along the outline of the actor. In others, images were retouched, as in the 1959 Iranian New Year special issue, which features Lana Turner on the cover. The retouched cover included a generous addition of dark ink, which made her eyebrows heavier and extended the line of her eyes to correspond with Tehran fashion trends at the time.³⁰

Such tactics of compilation and revision are of interest to current media historians tracking the flows of print media as material culture, and they were also of interest to the readers themselves. In the early years, the magazine dutifully responded to readers' letters that expressed curiosity about the magazine's sources. For example, in the third issue, the editors let one reader know that a key illustration was taken from *Clubman*, a British men's magazine.³¹ They encouraged another reader to consider the images published in the magazine as comparable to posters and star photos that could be purchased à la carte in bookshops.³² The magazine had partly grown out of Galestian's newsstand business, after all. Not only did the writing styles offer a little of everything, but the publishers also enclosed popular items from the newsstand within its binding and instructed readers to extract these valuable objects at home. The editors and publishers paid careful attention to the ways the magazine served audiences through its material presentation—including audiences disinclined or unable to read its criticism.

The news itself, the editors were happy to reveal, was compiled from a variety of film magazines from abroad. Some of it was direct translation in which the original author was credited. Other pieces condensed longer articles from French or English into Persian without translating them in their entirety and sometimes

کمدین شهیر



سینمای آمریکا با وجودیکه بهترین کارگردانان و هنرپیشگان را در اختیار دارد و عموماً همیشه مترصد است که بعضی از این هنرپیشه یا کارگردانی در یکی از کشورهای خارجی شهرت و موفقیت بدست آورد آنها را بوسیله لالان کارآزموده خود بهالوود بکشاند

این آقا هم که از کمدین های مشهور اروپاست پس از بازی در یک سری از فیلمهای کشورش، آمریکا را اورا «قر» زدند و با اتفاق بابوب و آنتیا اکبریک فیلم شرکت دادند از فیلمهای جدید او میتوان همین فیلم «فالای» در دنیا در ۸۰ روز را که افتخار را کوچکی بهمه گرفته ، نام برد.

مسابقات ستاره سینما؟

(هنرمندان ناشناس)

شرایط شرکت در مسابقات

شرکت کنندگان محترم در مسابقات مجله با جواب هر مسابقه ۲ و یا ۳ مهر ساطل تشده ارسال و آدرس صحیح خود را نیز قید فرمائید قسا در قرعه کشی شرکت داده شوند.

مدت قبول جواب برای شرکت در هر مسابقه دو هفته است، و سه نفر از شرکت کنندگان بشماره دو بهلطف سینما تقدیم میشود.

هنرپیشه پرکار



از هنرپیشگان پرکار و قدیمی هالیوود یکی اریکالیجناب است که در مرکزیک متولد شده و نام اصالتش «لوئیس آرتیوود امانوآل اونسو» می باشد، او اولین بار با ایفای نقش «آرمان دووال» در فیلم «مادام کاملینا» که در مقابلش را «نسرما» نامید، بهمه داشت، بهالم سینما راودافت و فعالیت های سینمایی خود را آغاز نمود.

بیگانگان سون شماره ۱ اسپانیا فرنیلین سرگشتش کاویاز - در اعماق دریا ها و دور دنیا در هشتاد روز نام تعداد مختصری از فیلم های اوست.

پاسخ (اینهارا میدانید که) شماره گذشته

۱ - فیلمهای ردیای محبوب، کنگو، تارک، هودی، مشوقه زویر و ستاره هندی شریب با شرکت جین میسون و استوارت گرینجر، همفرز بوکارت و لورن بال - تونی کریتس وحتالی، هارچ شامپون و گور شامپیور کرلدواید و جین و آلیس بهیخته شدند.

۲ - نقش های کاپیتان کید، فرانکشتین، آن بونی، دیکر چکیل وستر هاید و کاریل چسمان را شریب مهندچار از لاقون، نورس کارلس و جین پیترز، فردریک سارج و ویلیام کاپیل بوده است.



از فیلمهای موزیکال جالبی که سال قبل کمپانی مترو تهیه نمود، فیلم جیوراب ابریشمی می باشد و کارگردانی آنرا روبن مامولیان بهمه دارد و همانطوریکه انتظار می رفت یک اثر جناب و بدیهی می باشد و مورد تحسین منتقدین مجلات سینمایی بزرگ دنیا قرار گرفته در کار بکثرت فوق که مستندای از فیلم مورد بحث می باشد کار بکثرت و پرست مجله موشن پیکچر هرا لند با هنرمندی زیادی کار بکثرت و دو هنرپیشه اول را ترسم نموده و تصور نمی کنیم شناختن آنها با توضیحاتی که داده شده برایشما مشکل باشد باری در صورتیکه نام این دو هنرپیشه را که اولین بار در سال ۱۹۵۴ در فیلمی با اتفاق یکدیگر شرکت کرده اند، میدانید برای ما بنویسید و از جوایز ما استفاده کنید.

صفحه ۴۱۹

شماره ۱۹۴

FIGURE 4.2. An example of *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*'s competitions for its readers: guess the names of these actors and win movie tickets.

without crediting the authors. This compilation strategy was prominent in the early years, but it continued even after the magazine became established. BBC critics such as Gordon Gow featured in these translations, which were often serialized over multiple issues.³³ The magazine incorporated serious criticism but hedged its bets with fan service. This strategy contrasted with that of short-lived highbrow



FIGURE 4.3. The Iranianization of foreign stars: Lana Turner on the cover of *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* issue 204, March 21, 1959.

magazines like *Honar va Sinemā* (*Art and Cinema*), which published a translation of Eisenstein's "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today" in its first issue.³⁴ By around 1960, the magazine had enlisted foreign correspondents to glean stories from the burgeoning auteurist film cultures in Europe: Bahman Farmanara from the UK, Kamran Shirdel from Italy, and Hajir Dariush from France.³⁵ All three of these foreign correspondents went on, after returning to Iran, to become major figures of the Iranian new wave and the festival scene of the 1970s.

This auteurist turn was not, however, a decisive break with previous editorial strategies. The magazine had carried regular director features long before it turned its attention to new waves. The coverage of Alfred Hitchcock offers one example. While Hitchcock was not the only prominent director in the 1950s issues of the journal, his interviews, the coverage of his films, and critics' engagement with those films do stand out. In the period from the first issue of the journal to 1960, every one of his new releases was advertised and reviewed. Photographs and illustrations of Hitchcock's face appear with frequency, sometimes cut and pasted onto posters or lobby cards reduced on the page so that taglines, exhibition information, and praise for the actors could be oriented in Persian text surrounding the original English text of the graphic. In one "photo corner" feature of the journal printed alongside an interview about *I Confess* (1953), Hitchcock's face is pasted over Montgomery Clift's belly, emerging from the layout of the original source poster in a sort of collage cameo, and in an advertisement for *The Wrong Man* (1956), the illustration combines a scene from the film with a production photo of the director with his arm extended. Suggestive of an act of conjuring, a dark cloud extends from the director's hand and envelops Henry Fonda's head and torso, superimposed over a police lineup.³⁶ Amid this steady stream of advertising and critical publicity that showcased Hitchcock as a public figure in



FIGURE 4.4. One of many disembodied Hitchcock cutouts, presented here in the “photo corner” illustration for *I Confess* (1953) in *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* issue 24, January 12, 1955.

the Iranian press, translations of interviews with the director were published, as were translations of synopses and original story material for films including *Rear Window* (1954) and *The Wrong Man*.³⁷ *Vertigo* (1958) received special treatment, with portions of Boileau-Narcejac’s original source novel, *D’entre les morts*, translated and serialized in seven installments over two months beginning in July 1958.³⁸

In the pages of *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, then, Iran's Hitchcock was pieced together through the sustained intellectual labor of editors, translators, critics, and graphic designers. They used the director's name as one way to frame prestige and aesthetic sophistication. Much of this critical discussion from the 1950s often took on effusive tones. This was the case for most of the writing on figures whose names had global currency, but Hitchcock's releases had an advantage in their ready-made publicity. "Undisputed master" accompanied the director's name in article titles and advertisements alike.³⁹ Some of *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*'s excessive praise might rightfully appear disingenuous or thin—it certainly did to some critics at the time and was, in fact, a topic of continual debate in the pages of the magazine. Critics were ever ready to call out their peers' puff pieces, and the magazine made room for rowdy disagreement. The debates around this collage approach to auteurism looked ahead to the focused auteurism in intellectual circles of the late 1960s, in which critics translated canonical pieces from *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Movie*.⁴⁰ Regardless of which side a critic may have taken in these discussions, such positions constituted the labor through which the magazine helped to build and manage cinema audiences. Reviews and advertisements occupied publication space alongside longer translations of interviews in which Hitchcock discussed the production context of his films, his relationship to art cinema, or the difference between mystery and suspense.⁴¹ To understand the splashy celebrations of a global name as fundamentally distinct from more discerning forms of director-centered critical labor might overlook their interconnected functions in film publishing in 1950s Iran.

A pattern emerged in some of these debates between two forms of critical prestige: a tradition of film criticism concerned with social uplift met an emergent interest in cinema aesthetics. Such tensions have accompanied the medium of cinema since the origins of the feature film, with US organizations like the National Board of Review advocating aesthetic, not moral, censorship in the 1910s.⁴² Certain genres and directors that engaged darker themes challenged straight moral or educational criteria of value. The crime thriller, particularly in its morbid postwar varieties, was less amenable than other genres to narratives of cinema as a vehicle for social uplift. It thus gave cinephile writers in Iran an opportunity to distinguish their work from that of other cultural critics who may have been less concerned with the possibilities of cinema as a medium of modern aesthetics. Cultural critics warning of the moral dangers of the crime film were, of course, common almost everywhere. Their work spanned the US press discussing its own national products, French writing on the crime film as a threat to versions of national culture, and worries by British colonial powers that US crime films would undermine their legitimacy among moviegoers in the colonies. What is worth stressing in this case is the way that film critics writing about crime thrillers in *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* saw debates about aesthetic or social criticism in local terms.

"A Little Bit about the History of the Crime Film," from 1956, offers an extensive discussion of the filmography of artistically notable noir directors and actors of the

postwar period, but the material is framed by a partial turn away from censorship based on the perceived social value of films. The author discusses the “misconception that crime films cause moral decadence and corruption among viewers” as an idea that is “prevalent in improving countries (for example, our own) where it is applied with even greater dogmatism.”⁴³ Whereas in “prominent countries of the world such as the US, UK, France, and Italy, crime films are not only marketable, they receive a surprisingly warm welcome.”⁴⁴ In order to understand these films as artistic achievements evidenced by their ability to circulate and gain international attention, the author brackets questions of morality and social uplift in favor of questions of aesthetics. It is this turn toward style, in which aesthetic sophistication peels away from fears of social decay, that makes it possible to understand the appeal of postwar crime thrillers, which “have emerged from their dry and monotonous past to become an international phenomenon.”⁴⁵ The issues of transnationalism appear here in the context of an essay that seeks, if not to eschew questions of uplift entirely, to switch over to aesthetic questions central to a definition of the medium. The crime film attracted those interested in the aesthetics of the medium. It placed questions of aesthetic value on the table for cultural critics in the habit of discussing the medium of cinema in terms of its social value. The critical life of Hitchcock and other stylists of foreign crime thrillers provide context for markers of prestige. *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*’s preoccupations demonstrate the global currency of the crime thriller and its stars for an emergent industry hard at work establishing codes of authorship and a sense of the aesthetic traditions of the medium.

Setāreh-ye Sinemā’s ambivalent policies, rowdy public feuds, and long-term material history continue to attract new generations of Iranian film scholars. While awards from international film festivals, the ever-politicized nature of film criticism inside Iran, and the continuous celebration of Iranian auteurs in the academy in the US and Europe have positioned textual (auteurist or symptomatic) analyses of Iranian films as a dominant tradition in the field, recent years have seen a wave of attempts to reroute such traditions. Partly influenced by the introduction of new cinema histories and partly as a result of the digital accessibility of many Iranian films and print sources, some scholars have considered cinema in Iran from the point of view of its transnational connections, its foreign and local distribution networks, its commercial productions, and the reception of those productions by both fans and critics. Widening their scope with the help of digital tools to incorporate not only the new wave or art films but a range of popular, marginalized, cultified, and detested products of Iranian media culture, these scholars have found a new appreciation for magazines such as *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*. The magazine now presents itself as more than a symptom—as evidence of either uplift or vulgarity, depending on the critic. As narrow evaluative impulses reveal themselves to be part of a long intellectual history to which the magazine itself belongs, it can serve as a fresh primary source. The magazine that started at a city-center newsstand, a relay point for print sources, is now freely available at another relay point online. Its searchability has already started to change the habits and expectations

of researchers in the field. Maybe now, seven decades after the publication of its first issue, the heterogeneous mixture of carnivalesque fan service and studied auteurism that was the very foundation of *Setāreh-ye Sinema* can offer leverage in the effort to overturn received ideas about the cinema of Iran.

NOTES

1. Massoud Mehrabi, Instagram post published on November 24, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bqk1m-WFNmR/> (accessed January 8, 2021).

2. In 2013, well-known critic Parviz Davai, who was one of the staff members of *Setāreh-ye Sinema* in the 1950s, recalled in a newspaper piece how they would translate many influential essays and interviews originally published in *Cahiers*, *Movie*, and *Sight and Sound*. See Parviz Davai, "From a Letter: Us and *Cahiers du cinéma*," *Shargh Newspaper* no. 1788, July 22, 2013, 7.

3. To this date, Iranian cinema is not taught at Iranian universities, nearly all prerevolutionary films are banned from distribution, and the print copies of old film journals are sold only in the underground market of vintage book sellers.

4. The regular issues of the magazine were published in its continuous biweekly and weekly formats until 1978. Moreover, close to twenty special issues were published by the same publication in the format of monthlies and annuals.

5. *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 2, 12 Esfand 1332 (March 3, 1954).

6. Some of the most important titles of these journals include *Hollywood* (1943, thirty-three issues), *Film* (1951, fourteen issues), *Jahān-e Sinemā* (1952, nineteen issues), *Setāregān-e Sinemā* (1952, one issue), and *Sinemā Teātr* (1952, six issues overall including its third issue under the title *Setāregān-e Sinemā Teātr*). See Abdolhamid Shoai Tehrani, "Film Journals, from the Beginning until Now," in *An Analytical History of One Hundred Years of the Iranian Cinema*, ed. Gh. Heidary, 155–74 (Tehran: Cultural Research Bureau, 2000), 155–58; Jamal Omid, *History of Iranian Cinema*, vol. 1: 1900–1978 (Tehran: Rowzaneh, 1995), 893–904; and Hosein Giti, *Iranian Cinema Press* (Tehran: Kabutar, 2016), 19–47.

7. The first official college of dramatic arts was not established until 1964. Therefore, most of the technical aspects of filmmaking were learned through various phases of apprenticeship and trial and error. Moreover, the cinematic infrastructure in the country was poor and outdated. See Fereydu Jeyrani, "The Fifties, a New Birth," in *An Analytical History of One Hundred Years of the Iranian Cinema*, ed. Gh. Heidary, 63–78 (Tehran: Cultural Research Bureau, 2000), 77–78.

8. In 1954, for example, 239 foreign films were screened in the country. Jeyrani, "The Fifties," 72.

9. Some of these studio publications included *Iran Film* for Sherkat-e Iran (1944, six issues), *Ālam-e Honar* (The World of Art) for Pars Film (1951–52, seventeen issues), and *Ālam-e Sinemā* (The World of Cinema) for Studio Alborz (1951, two issues).

10. Abbas Baharlu, *Iranian Filmography*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Kabutar, 2016), 11–12. Jeyrani, "The Fifties," 72; "Film and Cinema in Iran and Abroad," *Nāmeḥ-ye otāq-e bāzargāni* no. 76 (January 1959), 31–36.

11. See Giti, *Iranian Cinema Press*, 49.

12. Born in the city of Qazvin in 1923 and raised in the city of Masjed Soleyman, Paruir Galestian moved to Tehran after finishing high school in 1942 and owned a magazine kiosk on Lalezar Street. The dollar rate of his investment is the authors' estimate based on the exchange rate of about 90 rials per dollar at the end of the Iranian year 1332 (early 1954). See Research Group of the Iranian Museum of Cinema, *Armenians and Iranian Cinema* (Tehran: Museum of Cinema and Rowzaneh Kar Publication, 2004), 99; and Hosein Montazeri and Hosein Rahbarian, "The Ups and Downs of the Dollar Exchange Rate in Dr. Mosaddeq's Cabinet (1951–1953)," *Jādu-ye eqtesād*, last modified May 9, 2015, <http://economagic.blog.ir/1394/02/19/>.

13. Omid, *History of Iranian Cinema*, 904.
14. In 1962, Galestian sold the license of the magazine due to financial hardship. However, he regained it after about six months in March 1963. See Giti, *Iranian Cinema Press*, 51–52.
15. According to the first-ever overall census of Iran in 1956, only 22.2 percent of men and 7.3 percent of women among the Iranians (a total population of 18,954,704) knew how to read and write. See “1956 Census: The Whole Country,” *Statistical Center of Iran*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210518144040/https://ssis.sci.org.ir/> (accessed January 10, 2021).
16. “Presses in Iran,” *Encyclopedia of the World of Islam*, <https://rch.ac.ir/article/details?id=9621> (accessed January 10, 2021).
17. Afshin Matin-Asgari, “The Pahlavi Era Iranian Modernity in Global Context,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Iranian History*, ed. Touraj Daryaei (published online in September 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhdb/9780199732159.013.0016>.
18. Ali Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 78–82.
19. Massoud Mehrabi, *History of Iranian Cinema from the Beginning until 1979*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Film, 1987), 535, 557.
20. In *Iranian Cosmopolitanism*, Golbarg Rekabtalaei traces the elites’ attitude toward cinema until the 1979 revolution. In her first chapter, she investigates the efforts of “the cosmopolitan intellectuals and the elite” of early twentieth-century Iran for promoting the educational and scientific values of cinema. The bleak intellectual atmosphere of the postcoup period, however, did not allow for a widespread acceptance of narrative features as a valid form of cultural expression by the elites of the time, “who either encouraged the blossoming of a high art or opted for a more pious lifestyle.” Golbarg Rekabtalaei, *Iranian Cosmopolitanism: A Cinematic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 25, 156.
21. Behzad Rahimian, “Present Perfect: The Old Dossier of *Majalleh-ye Sinemā va Namāyeshāt*,” *Film*, no. 53 (September 1987), 92–93.
22. Omid, *History of Iranian Cinema*, 895–96.
23. Editorial Board, “The Way Forward,” *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 1 (February 17, 1954), 2.
24. Editorial Board, “The Way Forward,” 2.
25. Editorial Board, “The Way Forward,” 23.
26. These include the editorial (pp. 2 and 23), an interview with an Iranian actor (8), and a report on an Iranian production studio (16–17).
27. “Letters to the Editor” *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 2, 12 Esfand 1332 (March 3, 1954), 19. It should be noted that the dates of the second and third issue were misprinted in the magazine. We have used the correct dates in this essay.
28. “*Setāreh-ye Sinemā*’s competitions,” *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 194, 21 Dey 1337 (January 11, 1959), 41.
29. Warner Bros. Collection, University of Southern California, Iran Correspondence, box 2.
30. *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 204: New Year Special Issue, 30 Esfand 1337 (March 21, 1959), cover page. This illustration is discussed in Kaveh Askari, *Relaying Cinema in Midcentury Iran: Material Cultures in Transit* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022).
31. “Letters to the Editor,” *Setāreh-ye Sinemā* 3, 26 Esfand 1332 (March 17, 1954), 18.
32. Ibid.
33. For example, an excerpted translation of a Gordon Gow essay named *Ostādān-e jenāyat* (Masters of Crime) was serialized over three consecutive issues beginning with *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 184, 11 Aban 1337 (November 2, 1958), 20.
34. *Honar va Sinemā*, Nowruz 1340 (March 1961).
35. Ahmad Talebinezhad, *The Book of the New Wave* (Tehran: Cheshmeh, 2018), 98.
36. The image of the gestating cameo appeared in a translated interview with the director about *I Confess* in *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 24, 22 Dey 1333 (January 12, 1955), 12–13. The magic hand of the

director appeared in an ad for the film's premiere at the Cinema Rex in *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 148, 20 Bahman 1336 (February 9, 1958), 31. The first appears to have been assembled for the journal, while the second appears to have been an imported illustration (possibly illustrated in Italy where much of the export publicity to the Middle East was created) selected for the journal and reproduced unaltered.

37. A synopsis for *Rear Window* or *Window Facing the Garden* (both titles were used for the film), translated by "Bahram," appeared in *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 34, 31 Khordad 1334 (June 22, 1956), 34–38. A serialized version of excerpts from the *Life* magazine true crime source for *The Wrong Man*, translated into Persian by Jahangir Afshari, appeared in six issues beginning with "*The Wrong Man (Mard-e 'Avazi)*," *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 117, 2 Tir 1336 (June 23, 1957), 28–29. It is a full translation of Herbert Brean, "A Case of Identity," *Life* (June 29, 1953), 97–107.

38. The first issue of the *Vertigo (Sargijeh)* serialization is in *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 170, 29 Tir 1337 (July 20, 1958), 28–29.

39. "Alfred Hitchcock, the Artist and Undisputed Master of Crime Films," *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 9, 27 Tir 1333 (July 18, 1954), 9.

40. For example, the critic who translated a number of Hitchcock articles on spectatorship, Hajir Dariush, was by the following decade making films associated with the New Wave and taking on leadership roles in the Tehran Film Festival and the National Iranian Radio and Television Corporation.

41. See, for example, "I Make Suspense Films Not Mystery Films," *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 24, 22 Dey 1333 (January 12, 1955), 12–13.

42. The National Board of Review started out as the National Board of Censorship but clarified its emphasis on the artistic quality of motion pictures in the mid-1910s. This goal was made clear in the board's early publication *Exceptional Photoplays*.

43. *Setāreh-ye Sinemā*, no. 90, 11 Azar 1335 (December 2, 1956), 12.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., 13.

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