



Woman in Culture and Arts

Discourse Analysis of Infidelity in Iranian Cinema (Post-Islamic Revolution)

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article type:</p> <p>Research Article</p> <p>Article history:</p> <p>Received: 21 July 2024</p> <p>Received in revised form: 10 December 2024</p> <p>Accepted: 10 November 2025</p> <p>Published online: 31 December 2025</p> <p>Keywords:</p> <p><i>Wife Infidelity,</i></p> <p><i>Marital Infidelity,</i></p> <p><i>Infidelity in Cinema,</i></p> <p><i>Iranian Cinema.</i></p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>The motif of a wife's infidelity has been prevalent in Iranian cinema for an extended period of time; however, it has recently become more prevalent. Due to the existing limitations, filmmakers have frequently attempted to avoid explicitly addressing the issue, instead incorporating it into the context of other concepts to increase its appeal to the audience. This theme has been incorporated into the value framework that defines a wife's infidelity over the years. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate additional concepts that are concealed within the film's buried layers. Consequently, the objective of this research is to examine the discourse of films and the concepts concealed within their concealed layers. Stuart Hall's theory of representation serves as the foundation for this investigation. In discourse analysis, the metatextual aspects and social constructions affecting human perception are investigated. Representation decodes messages and their relationship to the sources of power of ideologies. Reflective, intentional, and constructionist are the three perspectives of representation theory. Constructivism posits that objects and events communicate significance through the use of cultural and conceptual frameworks. The constructionist perspective encompasses two methodologies: 1) semiotic and 2) discursive. Discourses assign significance to concepts in accordance with the speaker and audience, as well as the historical-cultural context, temporal, and spatial conditions.</p> <p>Methodology</p> <p>Fairclough's discourse analysis methodology was implemented in this investigation. The investigation employs a purposive sampling methodology. The theme of a wife's betrayal to her spouse has been examined in all cinematographic works produced after the Islamic Revolution. The films were chosen such that the content of the film is accessible and the existence of betrayal is inviolable.</p> <p>Findings</p> <p>The research findings indicate that the betrayal of a wife to her husband is not denounced in the films in question, but rather defined and justified in accordance with other pre-established values.</p> <p><i>Bone Marrow:</i> The betrayal of a woman to her second husband and her subsequent relationship with her ex-husband to save her cancer-stricken son are depicted as a sacrifice. The legitimacy of the Iranian identity and the structures of the religious government are also called into question by demonstrating the ease with which it is possible to fabricate marriage and divorce documents.</p> <p><i>Wooden Bridge:</i> A woman travels to Dubai to obtain a US visa for herself, her spouse, and her professor, with whom she had a previous romantic relationship. Her spouse contacts his ex-girlfriend, who has returned to Iran, during this period. The positive characters are all depicted as opponents of the regime and are engaged in extra-religious relationships; the distinction lies in the manner in which they express their opposition, whether it be soft or harsh.</p> <p><i>African Violet:</i> A woman visits her current husband's residence to provide care for her ex-husband. The woman in this film is depicted as a loyal, selfless, and intellectual woman who advocates for detainees for security crimes, free relationships between girls and boys,</p>

runaway girls, and stands against the traditional, customary, religious and political norms prevailing in the country, is portrayed as a loyal, selfless and intellectual woman.

Yalda Night: A woman has fled to Germany with her daughter after engaging in an affair with her husband's acquaintance. The imposition of numerous restrictions, immigration, and the dissolution of families is attributed to the governing regime that emerged following the revolution. The man is the symbol of atheism, modernity, awareness, intellectualism, and feminism in a discursive opposition to the others, which define him as the symbol of staleness, adherence to morality, traditions, and religious precepts. Hypocrisy is also indicated by religious behaviors, while sincerity is indicated by non-compliance with religious matters.

Razor and Termeh: The husband's suicide is the result of the seductress's betrayal of a woman and her relationship with her brother-in-law. It is possible to interpret the woman as a symbol of the land, who has lost her former spouse, the previous ruler, and has now returned to avenge the second man or the current rulers.

Snow on the Pines: After discovering of her husband's alleged trip abroad and betrayal, a woman initiates an emotional relationship with a boy. Although the film does not specify the date of the divorce and implies that Roya is in the 'Iddah Ruje' (retroactive divorce period), the woman's attire, cosmetics, and lifestyle demonstrate a shift toward liberal and feminist values. Her husband apologizes upon his return. At the juncture of the woman's transformation, the film employs discursive signs, including foreign travel, participation in street demonstrations and concerts, and Zibakalam's "Book of Tradition and Modernity."

Meadow: Women from a high-ranking religious family who had connections among officials have been assaulted by men from a low-class religious family. The family's daughter-in-law is unwilling to extend forgiveness. However, her sister, who was also assaulted, has been engaging in illicit relations with her co-worker in the same garden on a weekly basis. Her betrayal is exposed in the event that she is referred to forensic medicine. Rape and betrayal have been extended to religious families of low-class individuals and officials in the film. The officials' religiosity is depicted as pretense and hypocrisy, and they have been unable to transmit their ideology to their offspring. It demonstrates a significant disparity between this generation of elderly rulers who pretend to be religious, and the new generation of society.

Conclusion

These works all adhere to a single model of a modern woman (or at least in the transition from tradition to modernism), who is indifferent to religion, libertarian, and in some cases, seeking the same rights as men (even customary rights, not moral, religious, or legal) with a specific lifestyle in line with the Western model.

In the majority of works, the characters' lives are characterized by music, concerts, and gatherings. The individual does not exhibit any religious inclinations. The woman's free relationships are positively accepted by the man, and he does not exhibit any jealousy. In the 2000s, the man is only mildly disturbed; however, in the later works, the man's discomfort is a result of the shame he feels in front of the public, rather than the actual betrayal.

In certain works, women are not restricted to the confines of the home and family. They are depicted as a deterrent to infidelity through social activities, participation in anti-government protests, more open relationships, and the provision of prospective alternatives for the husband. The spouse is discouraged from engaging in infidelity due to the threat of reciprocal infidelity.

The discourse is directed against the Islamic state, and religious individuals are blamed for the deaths of children. Positive characters are depicted as being inclined toward a Western lifestyle, emigrating to the West, and collaborating with security offenders. These films distinguish non-religious or even anti-religious ideology from religious ideology, feminist ideology from Islamic family-oriented ideology, liberalist ideology from moral and normative ideology, and modernist ideology from traditionalist and fundamentalist ideology in a general classification.

This theory of "representation" posits that all methods of conveying a message conceptualize external realities.

The representation of betrayal in the aforementioned films suggests that it is associated with concepts such as sacrifice, urgency, the restoration of the vitality of life, or a just revenge. This is in stark contrast to the causes of betrayal that have been identified in previous studies, including sexual dissatisfaction, negative personality traits, and religious and social values.

Conflict of Interest

The writing and dissemination of this investigation do not implicate any individual or organization in a conflict of interest.

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