

1968: A Global Perspective

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Unsettling Binaries: Ebrahim Golestan's *The Brick and the Mirror*

Al-e Ahmad's seminal essay "Gharbzadegi" ("Westoxification") in 1962 inaugurated a highly prolific period of poetry, fiction and film in the Iranian intellectual community of the 1960s. In particular, artists were grappling with the influence of Europe on the one hand and drawing upon native resources on the other. Within this saturated atmosphere, filmmaking took a particularly sharp turn with stylized films like Ebrahim Golestan's *Khesht o Ayeneh* [*The Brick and the Mirror*] (1965).

While 1969 is often earmarked as the beginning of Iranian New Wave cinema, Ebrahim Golestan's *Khesht o Ayeneh* exhibits the burgeoning of the Iranian tradition of auteur filmmaking. In this film, Golestan renders a dystopic Tehran under the declining monarchy of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1941-1979). When the central character, Hesham, finds an abandoned baby in the back of his taxi, he and his girlfriend, Taji wander through the streets of Tehran, frustrated with their divergent solutions. While critics often compare the Iranian New Wave with Italian Neo-realism, *The Brick and the Mirror* demonstrates the intertextuality of poetry and film that marks the particular Iranian tradition of auteur filmmaking to come.