A particular kind of knowledge, aesthetic and narrative based, has been constitutive of the institutional formation around the study of film. This approach has ignored the historical impulses that have conditioned the emergence and success of film industries around the world (significantly, the impulse for territorial expansion, colonialism, the after-effects of regional wars and the two world wars). The standard institutional approach has, in this way, obscured the sites of the debates that brought into being the discipline of Film Studies (post-colonial studies in particular and its powerful engagement with the terms of authority, of power and authenticity, of representation, and identification in its analyses of films). To speak with any accuracy about film requires that we study the conditions for the emergence of film industries around the world, take into account vested interests in the expansion of land and resources, note ideological differences, and tally the machinery of propaganda that is duly activated in support of war. Sustained and critical reflection on the industrial foundations for films that have become the mere subjects of narratival and aesthetic readings would inevitably upset the cosy institutionalization of Film Studies in disciplinary programmes such as English and Comparative Literature. Additionally, it would question the standard approaches to the study of film, that of reciting narrative content for the uninformed reader or of reading the texture of film for metaphor and meaning without attending to the assemblage of enunciation that underlies and is productive of the film statement.

To say, however, that national cinema is predicated on national trauma, as does Hamid Dabashi in the preface to *Iranian Sacred Defence Cinema*, is historically misleading. The rise of the French New Wave as a result of a traumatic coming to terms with the French colonial past does not in any way summarize the history of French Cinema or its character as national cinema. Nor does Neo-realism represent the entirety of Italian national cinema, regardless of the film movement’s response to the traumatic and impoverished aftermath of Italian fascism.

Iranian cinema, like most national cinemas, began with silent films. These were, in the case of Iran, associated with the state and the monarchy. Iranian cinema was properly established as an industry in support of the British and American quest for oil. It then went on to circulate and perpetuate, in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, a vernacular modernity with habits of interaction, of dress, and of leisure comparable to those of other modern national film industries around the world. That the industry...
was impacted significantly by the legal and moral restraints of a theocratic state in the early 1980s – restraints which in turn affected the representation of women in particular, as Sholeh Shahrrokhi and Pershang Sadegh-Vaziri outline in chapters 3 and 4 – and that it produced a film movement dedicated to the propagation of a state engaged in the Iran-Iraq war, is not to say that the national trauma produced Iranian cinema or that the Cinema of Sacred Defence made Iranian cinema possible.

One could argue, rather, as Agnes Devictor does in chapter 6, that certain of the films included under the rubric of the cinema of Iranian Sacred Defence, the work of Morteza Avini, for example, to whose filmography Pedram Khosronejad’s introduction is dedicated, are comparable to films made by John Huston (*The Battle of San Pietro*) or to *Le Section Anderson* by Pierre Schoendoerffer. This alone may justify the dedication of two major sections of the edited volume to the study of the auteur, here Avini and Ebrahim Hatamikia (the latter’s work examined by Shahab Esfanyari and Michael Abecassis in chapters 1 and 2). Yet, the study of the auteur as auteur seems ill-fitted when we come to realize in Reza Poudéh and Bahman Zonoozi’s historical analysis of the war film and its industrial contexts in Iran in chapter 5, that the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance provided in-kind support to numerous institutions that were called upon to make Sacred Defence films. Among these were government affiliates such as the Farabi Cinema Foundation, Islamic Republic Broadcasting, the military, Revolutionary Guard Corp, The Art Center (Hozeyeh Honari), Orouj Film, and other private entities. Regardless of how distant a filmmaker of the tradition may be from governmental bodies, such economic and industrial realities dictate that the support for the Cinema of the Sacred Defence would necessarily come with restrictions that are both political and undeniably ideological. In this, they almost entirely abort the freedom and possibilities of ‘the personal signature’ that is attributed to the auteur.

Khosronejad argues otherwise. Young revolutionary artists garnered funding and authority ‘to create and to speak freely’ within The Art Center, and worked under the leadership of Morteza Avini to produce what came to be referred to as *cinemay-e defa-e moqadas* (Sacred Defence Cinema). Avini’s auteurial signature is largely ideological here: a belief that the truth of the camera is predicated on faith and on the duty of the cameraman to value the warfront. Thus the task of the cameraman is to reflect the soul of the soldier and his deep mystical understandings of Islam and the Sacred Defence in the act of filming. This is to say that the terms that arise from an organic reading of such films have their roots in mystical philosophy and popular religious practice: truth (*haqiqat*), soul (*ruh*), faith (*iman*), heart’s connection (*peyvand-e qalbi*), attributes by which the film becomes a mirror to the sacred reality (*haqiqat-e moqadas*) of war – a sacred reality that sometimes draws on popular ritual and mourning practices associated with the defining narrative of Imam Husayn’s martyrdom in Karbalā.
Engagement with such terms in light of the ethnographic realities of the cinema of Sacred Defence, rather than a recitation of film narratives (e.g. chapter 7) or the reading of symbolism for meaning (e.g. chapter 2), would in all likelihood upset the terms that sustain and secure the study of film within the stronghold of Literary Studies and open it up powerfully (beyond rote readings of narrative structure and representation) to the fields of Anthropology and Religious Studies.

The future of Iranian Sacred Defense Cinema itself is similarly determined, according to Khosronejad. Its future rests not on the government and its willingness to fund the cinema as part of its machinery of propaganda, but on the degree to which ethnographers willingly engage with those who experienced the war and reconstruct the truth of that experience with their camera.

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Pedram Khosronejad’s *Les Lions en Pierre Sculptée chez les Bakhtiari* represents a major interdisciplinary contribution to a little known, but important subject of sculpture within a range of contexts. Funerary stone lions are to be found throughout western Iran, but are concentrated in the Bakhtiari, today’s provinces of Chāhār Mahāl and Bakhthiari, west of Isfahān, and Khuzistān. Extant tombstones perhaps number c.450, and Khosronejad examines some 150 of them in detail; most of them are from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but some of them date back to the sixteenth century.

The first chapter places them in their historical, social, religious, geographic and symbolic contexts, before moving on, in the second, to describe cemeteries where the lion tombstones are to be found, along with a structural analysis of them. In the next three chapters, the lion tombstones are individually described in detail, by region with photographs and measurements, and are classified. In addition, their inscriptions are read, including dates, genealogies and tribal affiliations, epitaphs and the names of stonecutters, identified when possible. This volume includes numerous photographs, drawings, charts and maps, appendices – including a most interesting one on the stonecutters themselves – and bibliography.

*Les Lions en Pierre Sculptée chez les Bakhtiari* is based on extensive fieldwork and represents something of a rescue project. Some tombstones have been relocated to public parks, thus removed from their original context, and even painted. Others have recently been crushed and used in road repairs, and the surfaces of many are being further eroded by weather. This volume, however, goes further in raising three inter-related issues: why have these important artefacts been neglected even by