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### Original Research Article

## Sociological Reading of the Play “New Governors”, Written by Moayed-Ol-Mamalek Fekri Ershad\*

Hamed Shakouri<sup>1</sup>, Mehdi Purrezaian<sup>\*\*2</sup>

1. Ph.D. Candidate of the Art Research, Shahed University, Tehran, Iran.

2. Assistant Professor of Art Research, Faculty of Art, Shahed University, Tehran, Iran.

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### Abstract

**Problem statement:** the manifestation of the intellectual structure of social classes of the society the artist belongs to, would be possible through social evaluation of the literary and artistic works of art which lights the way to reach the maximum possible conscience and collective worldview. New Governors is an outstanding work of art written in the intense atmosphere of the constitutional era in which not only reflects the written works and ideas of the author but also represents the worldview of a particular social class.

**Research objective:** By evaluating the play New Governors, this article is intended to comprehend the essence of worldview and conscience of the class that created it, and consequently the dominant intellectual and social system of that era, and look at the revolution itself more deeply than just a purely historical study. One also can understand the comprehensive ideas causes the historic transformations and creations of prominent works of art from that time to the present.

**Research method:** From a sociological point of view, this study has used the library method and has reread the text of the play in the framework of the basic theories of sociological critique by looking at the writings of Lucien Goldman and considering the class and economic systems of the constitutional era.

**Conclusion:** In the view of the Iranian intellectuals, the worldview and signification are to see the many shortcomings and sicknesses of Iran and the way out of it is collective conscience and unity. By describing and comprehending the structure of the play, a representative has been selected for each of the classes, who in their fictional struggle scene, each of the opposite groups did their actions and reactions, but in the end the scales did not weigh in favor of the supporters of the law, therefore the end of the constitution and the intellectual class has been warned. Modern concepts, words, and semantic structures, such as freedom or theater which have been borrowed from the ideas and writings of earlier intellectuals, have not yet been institutionalized in Iranian social history and are on the verge of extinction in a fragile view like the isolated intellectual class itself. At the end of this study, other scholars interested in evaluating literary and artistic works of art were invited to rethink the cultural and historical foundations of Iran to reveal the structures of social thought of later periods to the present day in the study of various works of art.

**Keywords:** *Constitutional theater, Sociological criticism, Drama criticism, Art criticism, New Governors, Moayed-Ol-Mamalek Fekri Ershad.*

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\*\* Corresponding author: Purrezaian@Shahed.ac.ir, +989121756145

## Problem statement

New Governors is one of the worthwhile plays of the Iranian constitutional era (1916-1931), which was written by the master of playwright of its time, Moayed-Ol-Mamalek Fekri Ershad, the one who was a political fighter, a newspaper owner and a theater practitioner for many years during the constitutional revolution. In terms of theme, New Governors is a socio-political text, and on the other hand, from a historical point of view, the play was written in the heart of a large socio-political transformation in Iranian history which is the constitutional period, therefore its basic approach is toward a specific time and revolution. In revolutions, the idea and narrative of a total coherence are always considered by revolutionary groups, and although many years have passed since the constitutional revolution and its objective aspects have been recorded and analyzed from the documents left, the specific mental structures that lead to the revolution have not been studied. One of the places where comprehensive coherence and worldview can emerge is the valuable works of art at that time, which not only can analyze the structure of the work of art, but also examine the artistic and social quality of the work and reflect the mental structures of social activist groups. In this regard, the fundamental questions this study seeks to answer are:

1. What does the play New Governors have to do with the social and historical context of the time it has been written, and how does it respond to the environment and social conditions of its time?
2. How are sociological foundations derived from the conditions of Iran at that time, such as the trans individual actant, class conscience, and the maximum possible conscience, represented in this play?

Additionally, the research objectives are:

1. Comprehension and description of the independent structural components of New Governors based on the method of sociological criticism in the first step, and in the second step, explication of this play

by placing its general structure in more general structures of society and social ideas of its time.

2. Explication and interpretation of the words, speeches, structures, and semantic systems within conversations, characters, and class origins, ideas, and social forces of different groups involved in social conflicts.

## Research background

One of the first outstanding works of art which have studied the literary and artistic works of the constitutional era and the perspective of the literary revolution at the end of the thirteenth century is the book From Saba to Nima (Arianpoor, 2008). But after that, the three-volume book Dramatic Literature in Iran (Malekpour, 2006) is the only available book dedicated to the history of drama and playwriting in Iran. Amjad (1999) wrote the book Theater of the 13th Century through which he reviewed the life and works of three prominent playwrights of this century, Mirza Agha Tabrizi, Moayed-Ol-Mamalek Fekri Ershadi, and Kamal Al Vazare Mahmoudi. In 1979, Amjad published the book Old Governors, New Governors, Three Theaters (Fekri Ershad, 2000), and represented his findings on the intellectual life of Fekri Ershad and also the versions of his plays, especially New Governors at the beginning of his book. With the publication of the book Theatrocracy in the Constitutional Era, Sepehran (2009), for the first time, explored the study of theatrical works of the constitutional age from a special perspective and in a clear theoretical framework in the manner of modern research. But none of these works followed a structural and meticulous examination of the texts. Many of Goldman's works have been translated and published in different years, and many articles and books have been written or translated about his ideas; Such as the books Society, Art and Literature (Goldman, 1997), translated by Pooyandeh, the book Developmental Criticism (Goldman, 2003), translated by Ghiasi and Sociological Criticism and Lucien Goldman

(Kahnamoepoor, 2011), each of which dealt with important parts of Goldmann’s thoughts. In this study, which owes itself to all previous works, we take a step further in the examination and evaluation of a play particularly from a sociological perspective.

### Research method

The research method in this study is analytical-descriptive while the method of data collection is the library. The biggest limitation of the study was the lack of written sources, from the lack of information about the author’s life to the disappearance of his other works, as well as the lack of analytical samples in the Persian language in the way it is. However, in this study, various aspects of the play *New Governors* are organized in the framework of the sociological ideas of Lucien Goldmann and other art critics of this school to clarify the various aspects of these works.

### Theoretical foundations

#### • Introduction

The traditional approach and the first sociological criticism of the works can be called the empirical sociology of art or the thematic sociology of art. The beginning of sociological evaluation is linked to the movement of the new social sciences and the exploration of social and cultural realities. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the sociological approach changed to artistic criticism while Marxism had a huge influence on this change. Marxism sought to unveil the laws of history and society, the mainstream of social opposition, and the future of humanity. Marx, a Hegelian philosopher, believed that art, like any other cultural phenomenon, is a reflection of the basic structure of society’s economy. The same forces that create social classes can also create epic works of poetry and drama, and works of art cannot be known without considering these forces. The thinkers of this school considered the

work of art not as a heavenly inspiration, but as the achievement of “production” just like other kinds of works of art (Ramin, 2011, 116).

After Marx, Lukács, the most prominent researcher in the sociology of art and literature in the twentieth century, believed that each person creates his or her art world, and different lifestyles allow people to create their artistic themes. He also took the view that there is a dialectical relationship between the structure of the work of art and the mental structure of his creator.

Lukacs’s most prominent student, Lucien Goldmann, based his “Genetic Structuralism” methodology on the criticism and the assumption that every human behavior is an attempt to give a significant response to a particular situation, and therefore tends to create a balance between the doers of action and its subject matter (the world around man) (Adorno, 1998, 311). In the same way, Goldmann, having Hegel and Lukacs’s ideology in mind, established a coherent and orderly system for sociological criticism which will be introduced and analyzed in the following together with the socio-economic situation of Iran during the constitutional era, social groups and classes and the possibilities of thinking and reaching awareness in groups and classes of Iran to comprehend and explain the works of art at that time.

#### • Foundations of sociological criticism in art

In sociological criticism, the signification of a work of art or its purpose is to achieve a coherent structure or a significative totality. Because there is a human tendency in the eyes of individuals and groups to achieve total coherence in a set of structured sub-sections to larger sections. This cohesive structure can be provided only by a great philosopher or artist at the moment of reaching the maximum possible conscience. This is inaccessible to the majority, except in times of war over national conscience and in times of revolution over class conscience; because it is only during genesis, creation, and becoming that conscience, coherence and mental structure

reach their maximum limit (That's why Lucien Goldmann calls this kind of analysis "Genetic Structuralism").

But this coherent view cannot be the sole product of a writer's thought and mentality, since it differs from the ever-changing view of the individual and must represent the intellectual apparatus of a group of human beings living in the same economic and social situation.

• **Comprehension and explication in sociological criticism**

Sociological criticism tries to reach the signification of the work of art in two stages; the first stage is the comprehension, in the sense that we describe the structure of the work of art or the author's written thought; and the second stage which is explication, that is, to incorporate this structure into a larger structure. For example, if we take the total content of the play *New Governors* as modernism and structuralism ideas, we have described each of the individual ideas presented in the various pages of this play (each of which we can take and describe separately).

• **Worldview**

Every great literary or artistic work of art is ultimately an expression of a worldview. worldview is a phenomenon of collective conscience that has reached the maximum conceptual enlightenment in the mind of the thinker or artist. Not every group can have its idea or worldview in which by placing the author in it we can reach the stage of explication, a coherent tonality, and structure. Only a group with a class conscience can reach the stage of worldview, and class conscience is a common tendency in the feelings, inclinations and thoughts of class members, a tendency formed precisely on the basis of an economic and social status that gives birth to an activity whose collective agent is a real or potential collection composed of a social class.

• **Coherence totality and signification of the work of art in sociological criticism**

To make a better comprehension of Goldmann's

sociological theories in art, we must consider some of the principles and concepts of Hegel's systematic philosophy and Lukacs's interpretation from which Goldmann borrowed his thoughts. One of the fundamental ideas of Hegel's philosophy is that reality can only be understood as a total coherence and a significative totality. According to Hegel, the philosopher's task is to comprehend the world as a significant, evolving and historical totality. Totality is the essence or nature which discovers through evolution. According to Hegel, art, just like philosophy, has a cognitive function that must ensure a better comprehension of reality. A work of art, like philosophy, must reveal the essence behind the phenomena. But in Hegel's view, the general law that philosophy achieves with conceptual thought will be clarified at the work of art in a special phenomenon that is available to the human senses, and thus artistic creation follows the conceptual word of philosophy (*ibid.*). Therefore, Lukacs, a Hegelian critic and thinker, believed that only when a particular matter finds a natural and intrinsic quality and reveals the essence, the subject {or objective reality} as a totality with a rational structure based on rational relations, rises to the level of a special typical action.

Goldmann considered all human behaviors to have signification and rationality to complement Hegel and Lukacs's ideas and to organize them to achieve a structuralism genetic. This rationality is not Cartesian or logical rationality but means that human behavior is always a response to issues arising from the human environment, and the signification and rationality of the human response provides the most effective possibility of survival and progress for the individual or group.

• **Transindividual actant concept in criticism**

Comparing genetic structuralism to non-genetic structuralism about the author or artist, it can be said that nongenetic structuralism rejects the actant or artist in the work of art and replaces

it with linguistic, mental, and social structures and only places a role and function within structures for humans and their behaviors which are the endpoint of research or explication. Although genetic structuralism, like non-genetic structuralism, rejects the trans individual actant in the field of history and culture, it does not eliminate the concept of the actant but replaces it with the concept of the trans individual actant. In the view of this school, structures are the general feature of every action and every human reality. There is no human phenomenon that is not structured, and there is no structure that is not significant, which is not to function as a characteristic of the human psyche and behavior (Goldmann, 1997, 273).

• **Socio-economic classes of Iran from pre-constitution to the revolution**

The sociological study of art first requires focusing on empirical facts about the relationship between socio-economic structure and artistic agency, and then focusing on measuring the extent to which these relationships provided the basis for works of art to embody “ideology” (Ramin, 2011, 116). To give a sociological study of the works of art in the constitutional era, we must find some information about the class order of the Iranian people at that time. In pre-constitutional era, which is the early years of the thirteenth century, Iranian people were divided into four main classes: first, feudalism class composed of the central elites including the Qajar dynasty, princes, courtiers, fief owners, tax collectors, ministers, commanders, and local officials and elites, later known as the ruling body or ruling class. Second, the affluent middle class, consisting of merchants and artisans. Third, the class of urban wage earners, especially hired craftsmen, apprentices, mercenary workers, etc. and finally the fourth class included the farmers, tribes and peasants (Abrahamian, 2009).

Before Western Influence, although markets, bazaars, artisans, and merchants (second class) had important socio-economic functions, they

had little political influence, and the reason was that geographical factors caused most of the economically isolated villages, tribes, and cities to be independent and produce and consume most of their handicrafts and agricultural goods. But with the influence and pressure of the West at the beginning of the twentieth century, this class became a nationally united force that for the first time was aware of its common political personality and identity. The creation of telegraph lines, the construction of new roads, the publication of newspapers, and the establishment of the postal system in the 1870s facilitated communication, import of factory products increased the internal trade and destroyed the self-sufficiency of indigenous communities. Hence, the attention of many state cities was drawn to important economic decisions of the capital, such as the sale of concessions to foreigners or the establishment of a central bank in 1883. Thus, an approach to the constitutional revolution could be seen as the economic upheaval of the middle class over the ruling class, because with the sale of the upper-class concessions, which leads to losing all resources and economic interests of the country, the second class would suffer the most.

On the other hand, contact and relation with the West, especially intellectual and ideological contact through new educational institutions, paved the way for the spread of new ideas and new jobs, which led to the emergence of a new professional middle class called the intellectual class, and the writer of the play *New Governors* was an important member of this class. The worldview of these new intellectuals was very different from that of the ancients. They believed not in the divine right of kings but in the inalienable right of the individual, they praised the principles of equality, freedom and fraternity, and in their political writings or works of art not only they introduced many Western words into the political culture of society but also gave new

signification to most of the ancient expressions). Under the influence of the Enlightenment in France, they saw human progress as possible only if three chains of royal tyranny, religious dogma, and foreign imperialism were broken, and believed that constitutionalism, secularism, and nationalism were three key tools for building new societies. In this regard, they were united with the king against philosophers, with philosophers against the king, with the king against imperialist powers, and sometimes, just like the constitutional revolution, united with philosophers against the king and imperialist powers (ibid., 79-80).

Enjoying sociological criticism theories as well as knowledge of Iran's social and class organization in the constitutional era, we can consider the play *New Governors* as a narrative of the actions and reactions of various social classes of society in which this narrative is the author's critical view of the members of the intellectual class of the time with their particular class presuppositions and expectations.

## Discussion

### • Moayed-Ol-Mamalek Fekri Ershad and the play "New Governors"

Morteza Gholi Khan Moayed-Ol-Mamalek Fekri Ershad, was born in 1869, studied French law and language at Dar ul-funun, and then was sent to Mazandaran, Arak, and Golpayegan provinces as the Governor of the central government. When the constitutional decree was issued, he left the government and published the newspaper *Sobh-e-Sadegh* in Tehran with clear support for the constitution, freedom, and modernity, which continued to exist until the day when the tyrannical forces bombarded the parliament. After the coup, Moayed al-Mamalek fled to the Caucasus and was displaced for a year in the Caucasus, Syria, and the Ottoman Empire until he returned to Tehran in 1909 and resumed journalism. Along with the newspaper, which he considered to be one of the basic manifestations of modern

civilization, he was also interested in theater as the "follow-up of an important newspaper"; not only he praised both in all his writings, but also in an unprecedented action he created a theater group called "Great Ershad Show" and divided the last years of his life between theater and newspapers. He died of typhus in Tehran in 1916 (Fekri Ershad, 2000, 6-7).

After writing and performing two other successful plays, *The Story of a Journalist* and *Love in Old Age*, Moayed al-Mamalek wrote the play *Old Governors, New Governors* in 1915. The story of *New Governors* is that a new Governor comes to the city, and even though the country is under a period of rule of law, he restores all the relations of city rule to the time before the constitutional law, tyranny, and coercion. He encroaches on the property and rights of the people, in a way that farmers and people of the lower classes find no power or right to defend themselves against the oppressor. Gradually, people of different classes, from the simple peasants to the middle-class and intellectuals unite to reject these actions and report the ruling behavior to the capital. After studying all the reports, the capital government removes the ruling governor and calls him back to the center. The second scene takes place in the capital, where a merchant who is aware of his rights and knows the identity of his social class (traditional middle class), hires a lawyer with the hope of justice, and tries to seize his right from the ruler. But behind the scenes, all those terms which are apparently disappeared, are still standing, preventing him from achieving his right, and finally the ruler escapes punishment by bribing the judge and the lawyer.

### • Comprehension and explication of the structure of the play through sociological criticism

#### - Description of the characters of "New Governors"

The main character of this play, the Governor of the city, represents the ruling class, with an idea of illegalism.

**“Governor:** *As you say, the responsibility of the order of the city is for the law enforcement forces, the complaints are for the judiciary, the tax is for the taxman, and endowed properties are for the endowment office, all of which depends on the lawmen permission. As far as I know, the telegraph office and the post office have nothing to do with us, so you and I are the rulers of our own houses, so why the city ruler sent us?! We have been sent here to be unemployed. Sit here from morning till night, watch this, watch that? No, Mr. Deputy! The ruler said that you should be imprisoned from morning till night, foot whipped people and deal with the plaintiff and the accused. People think that when they said it is constitutional era they can do whatever they want? No one can even fuss with them? No, it is not like that, I know my duty better”* (ibid., 168).

The Governor is a supporter of the old order, coercion and encroachment on the property of the lower classes and preventing other classes from coming to the forefront and enjoying their legal rights. His main protagonist is the ruling deputy, who is a supporter of law enforcement and the rights of individuals. He is from a class of salaried intellectuals who have become familiar with their thoughts by studying in the West.

**“Deputy:** *... I cannot violate legal procedures in any way. I have worked abroad for many years, studied, got a doctorate in law, and came to Iran to serve the country. I do not steal. I do not get involved in legal work. I do not deal with finances. I do not interfere with the duties of the police and the municipality. My task is only to supervise the work of government offices and maintain the order of the city, and also to sign in the absence of the ruler”* (ibid., 166).

From other intellectual figures in opposition to the ruling class are two “dandy” figures. Another prominent figure is Haji Mohammad the

merchant. He represents the traditional middle class but in opposition to the governor, he is in the intellectuals’ side:

**“Governor:** *Well, gentlemen, you must be aware that they have wanted you in Tehran.*

**Haji Mohammad:** *Have they? Did they want me in Tehran! What happened? Am I a thief? Did I steal anyone’s property? Have I done something wrong? I am a merchant ...*

**Governor:** *sheriff, dismiss these two and send them back to Tehran.*

**Haji Mohammad:** *Mr. Governor! We are not someone who can be sent to Tehran for no reason. We are credible, we are merchants. If we are dismissed, this city will collapse ...”* (ibid., 184).

In this play (as elsewhere in the real history of the constitutional revolution) the masses of the people, who are from third and fourth classes, allied with two higher groups in confrontation with the oppressors to regain their lost rights:

**“Haji:** *dear sir, I paid taxes every year and I did not violate even one year. The peasants consider taxes more obligatory than debt ...”* (Malekpour, 2006, 334).

#### **- Explication and Characterization of the Characters’ Actions against Opposite Classes**

The fundamental action of the Governor is to break all the laws and behave in all the old ways for his benefit. This action is derived from the structure in which the governor and his class are living. Their rivalry with the other classes is their significative response to a time when all their unintentional gains and benefits are lost and their very existence may be questioned.

The second action is the confrontation of the law-abiding allies group and their efforts against the ruler and his eventual removal from the government led by the intellectuals. This action in the intellectual structure of the activists represents

their desire to achieve the justice accompanied by peace that was approaching in the early days of the constitution victory. But as time passed it became more and more unreachable, so that this new and influential class finds its significative answer to stay, to strive immediately, and to stand and to keep the constitution.

The third action is the action of Haji Mohammad the merchant and his appeal to the governor in the capital court to achieve his right. And the fourth action, the governor action and his victory in court: he can still escape the punishment of his deed by breaking the law and paying a bribe.

The work begins with the governor's action and ends with the second governor's action. The first action of the governor is an "action" to dominate and encroach on the property and rights of others, but the second action is a "reaction" to escape punishment.

We see two actions by other classes, all of which are in opposition to the ruling class, because the reconciliation of the two middle classes of society, the traditional middle class with the intellectuals, brings the masses of people along with them, the group who can be called as allies. These allies revolt twice against the ruling class, once publicly and once through the merchant who went to the capital alone. In his two actions, the governor is once victorious and once a loser, in that he becomes lost when he has to face everyone, but he wins in front of the merchant, so neither side of the battle finds complete dominance.

**• Explication of Superstructure/Infrastructure and Text/Reference in New Governors**

The second stage in sociological criticism is the explication of the work of art, that is, the inclusion of the structure of the work in a larger structure to achieve its signification. To do this, one must analyze the word, that is, to discover the system or network of utterances, whether overt or covert and their relation to the time and place in which events occur. In the sociological approach, an individual's ideology is evident in all his movements and

thoughts, economic and political applications, family behaviors, opposition to others, his comprehension of the general signification of his life and culture, and his beliefs. Behavior and speech act the same in different situations. Sociological criticism believes that in explication, as in the creation of the work, there is the possibility of exploring the words and semantic domains of larger social structures and presenting a combination of superstructure/infrastructure, conscious/unconscious, text/reference, etc. (Kahnamoepoor, 2011, 24).

The obscure and latent significations of the works manifest themselves in the behaviors and dialogues of the play. Moayed-OI-Mamalek graduated from Dar ul-Funun, a companion and ally of the intellectual class in the constitutional era, certainly looks at the events and oppositions of that time from his class' point of view. Although the characters of the play representing the intellectual class are not as comical and humorous as tyrants in the superstructure and attract fewer audiences, in the infrastructure they are at the core of the work and all issues are expressed and reflected from their point of view. In this text full of humor and criticism, there is no evidence of criticism of the intellectual group, except in a scene that the dandy appearance of two young intellectuals intelligently ridiculed in the name of ostensible constitutionalism. The play is written in the last years of the constitution and the arrest of the dandies shows us that this class, once strong, is gradually becoming isolated and is approaching destruction with the destruction of constitution itself. It is only a year after New Governors that typhus comes to Ershad, and little by little the dispersal, suicide and assassination reach his accomplices. If there is hope for survival, it is in their significative response to what is being overcome: the return of authoritarianism.

In portraying reality, the play reaches a point where, according to Lukacs, displays the nature of the particular matters and makes the totality and the essence visible in it. The totality in which here is the



grand narrative of the history of the constitutional revolution, is reflected in the narrative of this work in a minor manner. The constitution that came to an end with the unification of the two Sayyids<sup>1</sup> and the support of the various classes in closing the Bazaar and settling down (1906), has been retreated with fear and the scattering of the allies from the Kazakh canons of Liakhov (1908) or weakness against the Russian ultimatum (1911):

*“Governor: Basically, the parliament is closed. The coup has happened and Tehran is a military city now, and according to the Cabinet, every movement happened was originated in Tehran, like the members of parliament, the heads of the factions, they were taken to Qom, Kashan, some of them were smart and fled” (Fekri Ershad, 2000, 182).*

On the other hand, everywhere in the play, there is a reference to the text of the Iranian constitution law, which is a prominent socio-political reference for this text:

*“Governor: Gentlemen, the government has ordered you to be sent to the center.*

*Dandy: No one can be convicted and forced to move and remain silent except by law.*

*Governor: I do not know the law in that matter, the government has ordered me and I have to obey.*

*Dandy: No culprit can be kept in prison unless he is convicted within twenty-four hours. In this way, it is good to determine our guilt so that we know what wrong we have done to cause punishment” (ibid., 186).*

#### **- Explaining the Words and Semantic Domains of Trans-individual Actants in New Governors**

As stated before in the method of genetic structuralism, the unique author is negated and replaced by a class of like-minded people who whatever they do is within a structure. A new structure such as theater was obtained from the legacy of Akhundzadeh, an enlightened

writer whose views had a great influence on the constitutional revolution and who tried to introduce modern concepts into Persian words from the European language. In the first pages of Letters of Kamal al-Dawla in the cause of representing the French-Russian origin of some important terms, he explained that “their translation was very difficult in the language of Islam”, so the author of the treatise “quoted the same terms in the letters of Islam” and inevitably an explication of them has been added. At the beginning of the book Letters of Kamal al-Dawla, he explained the signification of nineteen important foreign words that he had mentioned in his treatise. These terms are represented here: Despote (Despot, authoritarian king), Civilisation (Civilization), Fanatic (Salafi<sup>2</sup>), Philosophe (Philosopher), Révolution (Revolution), Procréation (Procreation), Poétesse (Poetess), Patriote (Patriot), Cangeman (Regime change), Politique (Politics), Protestantisme (Protestantism), Libérale (Liberal, intellectual), Electricité, Penseur (Philosopher), Charlatan (Shyster), Parlement (Assembly), Petrarca and Voltaire (French philosopher), Chimie (Chemistry) (Akhundzadeh, 1978, 25-27).

In this play, the author is not only Ershad, but it’s the subconscious of Akhundzadeh himself and the writers after him, who uses the same words, concepts and signs, and like all previous parts of the words they bring together a bipolar dichotomy in the opposition between the ruling class and the allies.

Frequent words of allies:

Oppression, Nation, Law, Freedom, Discipline, Justice, Parliament, Parties, Press, Tyranny, Reform  
Frequent words and phrases of the ruling class:

Entry, Utilization, Customs, Benefits, Bribes, Compliments, Tip, Fines, Fines Purchased, “The governor is the embodiment of the king and the king is the embodiment of God.” ...

“Freedom” is one of the most important keywords of the allied group, which refers to the text of society and the text of the social thought of the constitutional revolution. For example, when

the governor orders the deportation of political culprits, the deputy responds:

**“Deputy:** *The articles of the constitution stipulate that people are “free” in motion and nothing can force them to move. Except the law”* (Fekri Ershad, 2000, 181).

As France Rosenthal has shown in his research, in general, until the nineteenth century, the concept of “freedom” -and its equivalents in the languages of the Islamic world - had a legal context. The concept of freedom first found a political signification in the nineteenth century through the translation of European socio-political writings, although there was a fundamental ambiguity in its application (Tabatabai, 2016, 106). In Letters of Kamal al-Dawla, Akhundzadeh brought the word freedom in its new signification and, according to the “French books”, divided freedom or “freedom” into “spiritual freedom” in the translation of “liberte ‘morale” and “physical freedom” in the translation of “liberte’ physique”. He also believed that Iranians did not have the authority to interfere in these two articles: “We have been obedient servants of the clergy in the matter of spiritual freedom, we have been deprived of the blessing of freedom, and our physical freedom has been taken away from us by despotic Governors.” (Akhundzadeh, 1978, 59).

And so is the word “politic” that has been used in the play:

**“Governor:** *Well, Mr. Deputy, now there is another important issue. The day we came from Tehran, they secretly instructed us that some people are politically guilty and we should arrest them and send them to the center. Their names have also been given to me, you should take action to send them back to the center”* (Fekri Ershad, 2000, 181).

In this regard, Akhundzadeh said: “Eleventh: Politics is all those affairs and sciences that belong to the

monarchy and the state, and the economy and the good of the monarchy and the state are significant in it.” (Akhundzadeh, 1978, 16).

But what was the fate of the constitution, the theater, freedom, politics, and all the structures in which Akhundzadeh and others up to Ershad had thought and lived with? Wasn’t it like the theater itself, as a modern phenomenon, arising in Akhundzadeh’s mind at the same time as the emergence of new ideas both fragile in concept and hasty in government? The theater that Ershad speaks of is still the unattainable phenomenon for Iranian structures that Akhundzadeh has only the right to dream of in the days of voluntary exile in Russia. And after all this, the destiny of the intellectual class itself is the same as that of the theater: it was born very weak and fragile from the beginning, and it quickly moved into its time of destruction.

## Conclusion

The New Governor is artistic writing that emerged in the social context of its time, the revolution, and achieved a coherent structure by reaching the maximum possible conscience. This coherent structure or significative totality is the result of the worldview of a group of people who have reached class conscience. This group was Iranian intellectuals, the nascent class who see both social survival and ontological existence as dependent on the constitution, individual rights, courts, administration and new cultural institutions. The loss of revolution of this class has no destiny other than the destruction or dissolution within the other classes. The worldview of those who hold this view is a kind of report on the state of society and social classes in which the leadership of the revolution can only be in the hands of intellectual groups. In this work of art, society is seen and criticized through the eyes of the deputy and the two young dandy men since they are the ones who have achieved the overall perspective and

comprehension of the coherent structure. This mental system describes the external reality of the classes in such a way that it is on the verge of exploding due to inequality in all classes except the ruling class in their former system. Although the lower classes are wounded and have a lot of power, without intelligent leaders, they will not be able to face the oppressors, and the religious middle class, in spite of its dissatisfaction, can end injustice only by empathizing with the intellectuals and following them. Accordingly, this play itself is significant response of this group (intellectuals) to the group of opposition (dictators) who also see the destruction of all their interests and existence with the existence of the constitution and its new systems. Therefore, the text is an endless opposition between these two groups and expects from the reality around, that is the people of other classes, to support him, otherwise isolation and destruction would destroy both intellectuals and the revolution.

The characters of the text each come to represent a class and an idea, and their actions and reactions are done to achieve the desires of their class. The explication of this text shows the social motivations of the intellectuals of that time in a way that it borrows these concepts from semantic and symbolic systems of modern thinkers and seeks to internalize this system of thought to inform the ignored groups and classes of their dissonant condition, and to lead their social forces in the way they believe.

The plot of New Governors is very similar to the historical narrative of the constitutional revolution, and therefore, according to Lukacs, it can be considered as a part of a nature in which the totality or essence, which is the spirit of the revolution, is revealed. But, as it said, this narrative is not the work of one person but the creation of a group of human beings, the trans individual actants: The Iranian intellectual class, which begins with Akhundzadeh, who dreamed of building a theater in Iran but never succeeded,

followed by his subsequent activists, who all had the same fate as Akhundzadeh, and continues up to Ershad. New Governor fails just like Akhundzadeh's theater or his treatise *Kamal al-Dawla*, which contains modern words and ideas, and has a very short life and fragile balance like the Iranian intellectual class.

After New Governors, both the intellectuals and the constitutional revolution will soon die, and it is worthwhile for other scholars to examine the further decline of this class in Iranian works of art to clarify the social context these works arose, and reveal their connections with social classes of their times. On the other hand, researchers who want to study and evaluate contemporary literary and artistic works should not ignore the cultural past of this land and examine where the struggle, that started from the constitutional era, has now reached, what was the fate of each group, and what new ideas or classifications have been established between them.

### Endnote

1. "Sayyid" is an honorific title denoting people accepted as descendants of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his cousin and son-in-law Ali through his grandsons, Hasan ibn Ali and Husayn ibn Ali, sons of Muhammad's daughter Fatimah and Ali.
2. The Salafist doctrine is based on looking back to the early years of the religion to understand how the contemporary Muslims should practice their faith. They reject religious innovation or *bid'ah* and support the implementation of sharia (Islamic law).

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