Nature as a Builder of Meaning in Majid Majidi's Films

Majid Majidi Filmlerinde Anlamın İnşacısı Olarak Doğa

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Abstract

This study focuses on, one of the leading film director of the New Iranian Cinema, Majid Majidi's intensive usage of the various meanings he attributes to nature and, in turn, the types of effect these meanings have on his cinematographic representations. The study suggests that the director treats nature as if it is a conscious being that contributes to the production of the meaning, thus reveals a new form of relationship between cinema and nature.

The study examines the films *Baduk* (1992), *Father* (Pedar, 1996), *Children of Heaven* (Bacheha-ye Aseman, 1999), *Color of Heaven* (Rang-e Khoda, 1999), *Baran* (2001), *Willow Tree* (Beed-e Majnoon, 2005), *Song of Sparrows* (Avaze Gonjeshk-ha, 2008) and *Beyond the Clouds* (2017) of Majidi and conducts a semiotic analysis based on the views of authors such as Roland Barthes, Christian Metz, and Peter Wollen. In this context, it aims to determine the contributions of the elements of nature to the atmosphere of the scenes, progress of the story and the inner journeys of the characters in these films. Additionally, the study questions the obvious and metaphorical meanings implied by the elements in the director's narratives which is based on allegories. The findings are discussed in relation to the contexts of the director's film making technique and the sources that give the meaning to the framework.

Keywords: New Iranian Cinema, Majid Majidi, Nature, Sufism, Semiotics.

Özet

Bu çalışma Yeni İran Sinemasının önemli yönetmenlerinden olan ve filmlerinde doğayı çeşitli biçimlerde yoğun bir biçimde kullanan Majid Majidi'nin, anlatılarında doğaya yüklediği anlamları ve bu unsurların anlatıya ne tür katkılar yaptığı sorularına yoğunlaşmaktadır. Çalışma, yönetmenin doğayı anlamın üretilmesine katkı sağlayan bilinçli bir varlıkmış gibi işlediği böylece sinema ve doğa arasında yeni bir ilişki biçimi ortaya koyduğu iddiasına dayanmaktadır.

Majidi'nin Baduk (1992), Baba (Pedar, 1996), Cennet'in Çocukları (Bacheha-ye Aseman, 1999), Cennet'in Rengi (Rang-e Khoda, 1999), Baran (2001), Söğüt Ağacı (Beed-e Majnoon, 2005), Serçelerin Şarkısı (Avaze Gonjeshk-ha, 2008) ve Bulutların Ötesinde (Beyond The Clouds, 2017) filmlerinin incelendiği çalışmada Roland Barthes, Christian Metz, Peter Wollen gibi yazarların görüşlerini temel alan göstergebilimsel bir analiz yapılmıştır. Bu çerçevede örneklemi oluşturan filmlerde yer bulan doğaya ait unsurların filmin atmosferine, öykünün akışına, karakterlerin içsel yolculuklarına yaptığı katkılar belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Ayrıca yönetmenin alegorilere dayanan anlatımı içerisinde bu unsurların imlediği görünen ve metaforik anlamların neler olabileceği sorgulanmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, yönetmenin sinema üslubuna ve filmlerde ortaya koyduğu anlam çerçevesine kaynaklık eden bağlamlarla ilişkili biçimde tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yeni İran Sineması, Majid Majidi, Doğa, Sufizm, Göstergebilim.*

Introduction

In most cases, the relationship between films and nature is established in the way of that nature contextualizes the narrative. Particularly in realistic cinema, while interactions, struggles and collaborations between elements of nature and film characters are being organized; it is addressed in the form of film characters' orientation to the nature or struggle to establish their own reality in the ordinary flow of nature. At this point, as it is defined by Kracauer, transfering the "found stories" (Kracauer, 2015) to the cinema screen or dramatizing authentic life in a realistic way, brings nature to the center of the narrative and it becomes the place or the object of the struggle in the films.

This study is based on the claim that Majid Majidi's treatment of nature as a conscious being that contributes to the construction of the meaning, is a new form of connection between cinema and nature. From this point of view, the study examines the functions of nature in the narratives and the metaphorical meanings associated with the nature in Majidi's films, influenced by the Neo-Realistic Italian cinema. He gives the most remarkable examples of the use of nature in the New Iranian Cinema which combines the elements of the exotic nature of Iran, and the distinctive narration elements of the city environment.

The study includes all the films that Majidi has made after 1992 which is the period when his work has started gaining recognition worldwide, and as he has started intensively introducing nature into his films. Only *Hz. Muhammed: The*

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Messenger of God dated 2015, is excluded from the sample for being based on religious texts and narratives. Thus, in the film, nature is used in an unprecedented form beyond its own reality. In this framework, the study examines the director's films titled *Baduk* (1992), *Father* (*Pedar*, 1996), *Children of Heaven* (*Bacheha-ye Aseman*, 1999), *Color of Heaven* (*Range-e Khoda*, 1999), *Baran* (2001), *Willow Tree* (*Beed-e Majnoon*, 2005), *Song of Sparrows* (*Avaze Gonjeshk-ha*, 2008), and *Beyond the Clouds* (2017).

In the sample, to determine the obvious and metaphorical meanings signified by the elements of nature that are all based on allegorical narration; the atmosphere of the film, the story flow, the inner journeys of the characters are investigated by using semiotic analysis. As it is well known the semiology has been developed by Charles Sanders and later enhanced by Ferdinand de Saussure, has mainly focused on the structure of the language. However, the writers such as Louis Hjelmjlev, Roland Barthes, Christian Metz have improved the theory to allow the analysis of images. In his work *Course in General Linguistics,* Saussure (2001:46) presents semiotics as a method of explaining the laws the signs develop and the kind of structure in which the meanings produced by signs are established. His approach, which builds the concept of sign based on a main distinction as signifiers and signified, is cited by studies employing this method to analyze the images. The idea that sign system is a structure involving associations, myths, and metaphors and includes the way the meaning is produced, becomes prominent in Barthes's approach, who further developed semiotics to allow the analysis of side meanings and metaphorical meanings produced in sign system.

The writers such as Christian Metz and Peter Wollen, who adapted semiotics to the field of cinema, concentrate on how the meaning is produced in cinema and how the impression of film left on the audience is built. Starting from Saussure's point of view, Metz likens cinema to a language and tries to reveal the mechanism that produces meaning within the specific material conditions of cinema. This approach, which Metz calls the semiotics of cinema (Andrew, 2010: 322), is based on the question of how the film builds the meaning, and he turns to the examination of the meaning patterns of the film. Within this framework, this structure, which includes images, writings, graphics, speeches, sound effects, and music in the film, forms the elements of the mechanism in which meaning is produced (Andrew, 2010: 326). Wollen, started from the point of Pierce and found Metz's views limited, had the opinion that meaning in cinema was built by the use of a combination of the images, indications, and symbolic signs systems, which were proposed by Pierce, to establish an aesthetic narrative (Wollen, 2004: 127). In this context, due to the aesthetic competence of the film, the side meanings can be produced by means of the codes reflected on the screen. As Büker (1985: 42) emphasizes, semiotic analysis aims to reveal signified or implied meanings by uncovering meanings created in connection with the cultural context and the codes that are presented implicitly.

Considering these views, this study analyzes the presentations in the films related to the nature and the cinematic codes producing meaning within a layered approach involving explicit and metaphorical meanings pointed by sign systems. At this point, especially the cultural background that forms the context of the films and the mind structure of the director reflected in cinema are considered as the main determinants of meaning. Such that, Majidi gives a dominant place to conceptualizations of existence by Shiite thinking, which is one of the Islam interpretations, Sufism's conceptualizations of existence, and particularly Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi's views. In connection with the use of indirect narrative features of the Iranian poetry and narrative tradition, the representations of nature are constructed within a layered structure.

A table which suitable for semiotic analyses, was prepared and applied to all films in the sample to analyze the contributions of the nature to the meaning produced in the film and to the story flow both in its obvious form and within the frame of metaphysical references. The findings are discussed in relation to the contexts which are the source of the director's style of cinema and the meaning frame he presents in his films.

1. The Context of Majid Majidi's Films

After the Islamic revolution in 1979, a new era began for cinema. As Mahrokh Shirin Pour emphasizes, the radical changes in the political and cultural structure of the post-revolutionary country have brought about changes in the content of the cinema (Pour 2007: 13). While the cinema was reorganized within the framework of Islamic rules, the Farabi Cinema Institute, which was founded in 1983, played a decisive role in the formation of new cinema in both positive and negative way. Censorship practices, in particular, pushed directors to a search for creative solutions in terms of the subjects discussed, the style of narration, and the cinema aesthetics. New Iranian Cinema or, in other words, Iranian New Wave Cinema, which was said to have started with the film *Gav* by Dariush Mehrjui in 1969, has become a strong trend since the second half of the 1980s. The roots of cinema of this period, influenced by French New Wave Cinema and Italian Neo Realism, as emphasized by different writers studying on Iranian films (Dabaşi, 2004; Naficy, 1995; Aktaş, 2005; Sadr, 2006) is based on ancient Iran narrative tradition, Iranian literature, and poetry. Especially, poets like Firdevsi, Hafiz, Mevlana, Sadi, Hayyam, Ehavan-ı Salis, Sepehri, Shahriyar, Fürüğ Ferruhzad influenced Iranian cinema with their emphasis on universal human feelings (Sheibani, 2010). The impressive metaphorical narratives of these poets are reflected in the films in the form of a strong poetic aesthetics and indirect narrative talent. The directors who preferred to treat social problems have managed to overcome heavy censorship through indirect narrative techniques borrowed from the cultural background, abstractions, and metaphors. Telling the realistic stories in a poetic cinema aesthetics, they exhibited an "innovative" and "sensational" cinema approach, as Tapper's words (2007: 2).

Majid Majidi, known for his films about children and disadvantaged people as of mid-1990s, is one of the most successful directors of New Iranian Cinema in the international area. Like other filmmakers within the New Iranian Cinema, Majidi carried to his films the cultural context to which he belonged. In his films, the director describes the worlds of children, people with disabilities, minorities and people struggling with poverty, and their efforts to deal with life and the problems caused by other people who have difficulty in understanding this world. Thus, his concept of cinema similar to the Italian

New Realism is distinguished from this cinema approach within the frame of discussions about the meaning he adds to his stories as a second dimension. Majidi, who directs his camera to the everyday efforts of ordinary people, places the little stories that emerged within these efforts at the center of his narratives. He found various miracles in these ordinary stories spreading throughout Iran geography, and established metaphysical meanings in the axis of these miracles. As determined by Sreekumar and Vidyapeetham (2015: 90), in the films of some directors such as Abbas Kiarostami and Jafar Panahi, staging approach which has metaphysical references and in which implications are frequently used towards various meaning layers of metaphors transforms Majidi's films to a layered structure proceeding on realistic stories and metaphysical meanings.

In the films of Majidi, the stories taken from the daily life are treated through untrained actors, particularly children, a simple cinematography, and a poetic language. While these methods produce strong identification relations between the films and the audience, the metaphorical meanings created in the sections where the elements of nature are used provide the films with an intellectual background. As pointed out by the researchers like Michael Pitman, Sabire Batur, Farhang Erfani, Annie Gregory, Omid Tofighian, in many of these films, this intellectual background, which constitutes the main story, are fed by the verses of Koran, Shiite discipline and important authors and poets of Sufi thinking, mainly Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi (Pitman, 2012; Batur, 2007; Erfani, 2012; Gregory, 2008; Tofighian, 2013). The names of the films of the director, the names of his characters, the metaphorical meanings attributed to the daily elements and natural phenomena are nourished by the intellectual background mentioned. A prominent theme in Majidi's films is conceptualization of existence as a somewhat large integrity in Sufi thinking which defines the maturation process of human as the knowledge of God hidden in physical world and the discovery of its beauty. The progress of the stories is based on the evolution of characters into a maturity that can grasp the reality. This narrative strategy based on the idea of unity of being or a holistic understanding of world preaches that nature and the humanity as a part of nature should be approached with love and tolerance. These suggestions operate through poetic visualization forms, dialogues, and delicate and devoted characters.

As Sözen emphasizes (2012: 219), this approach is also found in other examples of New Iranian Cinema. According to the author, although the dilemmas experienced by the individuals related to the life are dealt with a critical approach in these films bearing the traces of existential art, it is seen that the characters are not reactive to the social values. Sufi themes become prominent in these films as a leitmotiv within the frame of poetic dialogues and allegorical narrative. These narratives differentiate from existentialism in the Western sense, which is shaped in line with Jean Paul Sartre's ideas, by problematizing existential themes within metaphysical semantic depths.

Although the narratives of Majidi include characters' searches related to existence, this quest does not correspond to an individual construction. Characters' searches are different from the self-realization strategy based on the idea of "subject" suggested in existentialist philosophy. Although the stories are based on struggles against harsh living conditions, it is observed that the characters do not develop strong reactions to these conditions. At this point, social problems Majidi dealt with in his cinema overlaps with the Neo Realism concept in terms of delicate struggles of the actors of these problems in daily life, natural acting, and cinematography preferences. However, it differs from the Western cinema narratives as well as from the tradition of thought that is traced in these narratives in terms of existential problems and the approach related to the making sense of life. Instead, a cinema concept becomes prominent, in which the meaning frameworks that shape the director's world come to the forefront. As Zargar (2016: 1) emphasizes, Majidi uses Sufism and Shiite theologies to find the meaning in the world that is changed by war, modernization, economic inequality, and nationalism.

The presentation of the elements of nature in Majidi's fims, the interaction or struggle of people with nature and making sense of it are also realized within the scope of the mentioned cinema. In this context, nature participates in the narratives as a distinctive cinematography element with its objective existence including both its beauties, exotic qualities, merciful side or challenging conditions, its indocibility and the allegories established by Majidi related to the metaphysical realm.

2. Participation of Nature to the Narrative

In Majid Majidi's films, the elements of nature such as rain, wind, streams, lakes, trees, flowers, animals, earth, fog, dust, fire, thunder, lightning, and bird calls are quite strikingly visible. As can be seen in Table 1, the nature, which took part to a very limited extent in his first full-length film *Baduk* made in 1992, was increasingly more represented in his following films. Nature then becomes more and more remarkable in terms of participation in the narrative.

Table-1: Natural Sign Systems in *Baduk*				
Sign			Signified	Contribution to the Narrative
Existence-Object	Presentation		Obvious Meaning	Metaphorical Meaning	
Water	Thirst	Negative	Challenging living conditions	-	Solidarity between the characters
	Heavy rain	"	"	The necessity for character to return to the space where the he/she left; Divine references	Character trapped in bad conditions
Air	Dust-storm	"	"	-	Solidarity between the characters
Soil	Landslide	"	"	-	Establishes the conflict

Baduk tells the story of Jafar and Cemile who fell into the hands of child smugglers after their father had died being buried in the wreckage while sinking a well to find water deep down underground in their village suffering from drought. The nature in the form of water, wind, and soil in the film constitute the reasons for the coincidences directing the narrative. Nature,

which often adversely affects the story flow, is mostly used within the frame of its literal meaning. The main reasons for children to face with ruthless conditions are that the thirst and the soft soil caused the death of the father. Dust storms complicate the journey for the children who carry various smuggled fabrics, electronics, etc from the border. A heavy rain starts in the scene in which Jafar escapes from Abdullah who uses children in border smuggle to find his sister and this rain plays a determining role in the story flow by causing the child to return to the place from which he once tried to escape. Accordingly, nature contributes to the narrative in terms of establishing the conflict, enhancing the solidarity between the characters, and causing them to be trapped in bad conditions.

In the next film of Majidi, *Pedar*, as can be seen from Table 2, it is seen that nature is used in a much more remarkable way to create the atmosphere and produce metaphorical meanings.

Table-2: Nature-Related Sign Systems in *Pedar*				
Sign		**Signified**		**Contribution to the Narrative**
Existence-Object	**Presentation**	**Obvious Meaning**	**Metaphorical Meaning**	
Water	Clean water Stream — Positive	Natural beauties; Source of life	The appearance of divine mercy	Contribution to conflict resolution; The liberation of characters from death; Mediation in the establishment of family ties
	Heavy rain — Negative; extraordinary	Tension	Divine warnings: Anger, positive relationships	The character becoming ill and connecting with his family; Ensuring solidarity
Air	Heavy wind — Negative; extraordinary	Tension; Rush; Danger	Divine advice: Being patient, giving up anger	Creating atmosphere; Reflecting emotion
	Light breeze — Positive	Natural beauties; Happiness; Friendship	Adaptation	Introducing the environment; Creating atmosphere
	Dust storm — Negative presentation – positive result	Difficulty of conditions; Tension; Danger of death	Solidarity; Patience	Intimacy among characters
Soil	Mudbrick — Positive	Beautifying the house; traditional life	Being created from soil and returning to soil	Character establishing an order

Returning to his village to visit his mother and siblings, whom he had not seen for so long, Mehrollah found that his mother had married an outpost commander. It would not be easy to accept a new father for the character who had not yet accustomed to his father's absence, who died a few years ago. Mehrollah's tense relationship with his mother and stepfather gains a much more tense look with the nature's taking part in the narrative with its combative face. Natural events such as heavy rain, heavy wind, dust storm, which suddenly show up and then end with the end of the tension in the scene, not only contribute to the atmosphere of the scene with their extraordinary presentations, but also indicate the existence of a supernatural power. One of the best examples of the use of the air as a dominant narrative factor and being intensified in line with the dominant tense mental state is the scene where Mehrollah's mother realized that her children were absent and got into a flap because they are taken by Mehrollah. As depicted in this scene, heavy rains, heavy winds, and dust storms change into a sunny, bright, and serene atmosphere in scenes in which the solidarity and friendship between Mehrollah and Latef is apparent. In the final section, where the relationship between Mehrollah and his stepfather is transformed into a consensus and solidarity, it is seen that nature contributes to the solidarity between the characters with emergence of the water like a miracle in the middle of the desert with its refreshing beauty. Unlike his previous film, Majidi far more included nature in his story in its both literal and metaphorical meaning and he started to include nature in the primary elements of the narrative after that film.

Table-3: Nature-Related Sign Systems in *Children of Heaven*				
Sign		**Signified**		**Contribution to the Narrative**
Existence-Object	**Presentation**	**Obvious Meaning**	**Metaphorical Meaning**	
Water	Water trench — Negative presentation – positive result	Shoes getting wet	The virtue of enduring the difficulties	Construction of characters Solidarity between characters
	Pool — Positive	Beauties of nature; Interaction and collaboration with nature; The merciful face of nature;	Abundance; Compassion; God's grace and Compassion	Introducing the environment; Reason for coincidences that make the story progress

			City and nature intertwined		
	Heavy rain	Negative presentation – positive result	Shoes getting wet	The virtue of enduring the difficulties	Construction of characters
Animals	Dove	Positive, Extraordinary	Beauties of nature; Interaction and collaboration with nature; The merciful face of nature; City and nature intertwined	innocence; Compassion; Identification with characters; Holism; Divine references: Being heralded an award	Introducing the environment; Construction of characters Atmosphere building: calmness, rush
	Fishes in the pool	Positive	Beauties of nature; Interaction and collaboration with nature	innocence; Compassion; Identification with characters; Holism; Divine references: Being heralded an award	Introducing the environment; Construction of characters
Plants	Trees, Fruits, Flowers	Positive	Beauties of nature; collaboration with nature	Abundance; Likening family life to the Heaven	Contribution to the emergence of the conflict; Introducing the environment

Although the *Children of Heaven* film tells a story in the city by witnessing the life of an ordinary Iranian family living a frugal life in poverty and focusing on little children of the family, Ali and Zahra, nature takes part in the film as a determining narrative tool. Ali takes Zahra's torn shoes to the shoe repair shop. While he is doing shopping in a greengrocer on the way back to home, a waste-collector takes Zahra's shoes. Children cannot tell this to their father because they abstain from him and know that he has no money to buy new shoes, and they try to find a solution to the problem in a much more mature attitude for their ages.

As the name of the film implies, the virtues of Ali and Zahra, such as patience, sacrifice, accepting their destiny, and their solidarity carry them to the status of being the children of Heaven in Majidi's eyes. Such an implication is mostly realized in the context of relationships that the children establish with the elements of nature which are shown in a close relationship with them. The small pool in the courtyard of the house, the trees around it, the fishes and the pigeons, most of which are located in almost every scene where children appear, are transformed into tools for the construction of children as innocent, loving characters. As an accompanying theme in many films of the director, children, who are often around the pool to feed the fishes and who are shown in close relationship with water, plants, in short, nature, help the narrative to depict the children as beings belonging to the nature in the tense relationship between modernization and nature.

In accordance with the fact that the locale of the story is the city, elements of the nature are rather used to enhance the values attributed to the characters; or in other words, they are used as the elements of the construction of the characters in this film of the director in which nature is shown less than his following films.

The fact that Majidi found identities between the characters and the elements of nature such as birds and rain and the use of nature as metaphors revealing the meaning worlds of the characters, is becoming more evident in his next film, *The Color of Heaven*.

Table-4: Nature-Related Sign Systems in *The Color of Heaven*					
Sign			Signified		Contribution to the Narrative
Existence-Object	Presentation		Obvious Meaning	Metaphorical Meaning	
Universe	Course subjects	Positive	Information about the functioning of the solar system; Interaction with nature	Holism / unity in existence; Divine references	Construction of the character
Water	Fountains; Lake; Sea; Streams	Positive	Beauties of nature; Interaction and collaboration with nature	Holism / unity in existence; Knowledge of existence; Secret hidden by mirror nature	Introducing the environment; Construction of characters
		Positive	The dangers of nature; Conflict with nature	Questioning the reality; Divine warnings	Conflict resolution
	Heavy rain	Negative; Extraordinary	Characteristics of Iranian nature; Tension	Questioning the reality; Divine warnings	Introducing the environment; Strengthening the conflict
Air	Light Breeze	Positive	Beauties of nature; Interaction and collaboration with nature	Holism / unity in existence; Knowledge of existence; Secret hidden by nature	Introducing the environment; Strengthening conflict

		Heavy Wind	Negative; Extraordinary	Tension	Separation	Strengthening the conflict
Soil		Mudbrick; Sand; Gravel	Positive	Interaction and collaboration with nature	Holism / unity in existence; Knowledge of existence; Secret hidden by nature	Introducing the environment; Strengthening conflict
Animals		Woodpecker and other birds	Positive	Beauties of nature; Interaction and collaboration with nature	innocence; Identity with character; Cleansing the soul; Holism / unity in existence; Mirror nature; Divine references	Introducing the environment; Strengthening conflict
		Bird Sounds	Positive	Beauties of nature; Interaction and collaboration with nature	Knowledge of existence; The secret hidden by nature	Introducing and constructing the character
		Scary sounds	Negative; Extraordinary	Fear; Conflict with nature	Blindness of sight; The dark side of the soul; Divine warnings	Introducing and constructing the character; Creating the atmosphere: fear / tension
Plants		Trees; Crops; Herbs; Flowers	Positive	Beauties of nature; Interaction and collaboration with nature Traditional Life	Holism / unity in existence; God's paint	Introducing the environment; Interaction between the characters
Light		Sunlight	Positive	Sunlight	Divine References	Introducing the characters
		Divine Light	Positive; Extraordinary	Light from an unknown source	Spiritual maturity; Tactile vision; God's paint	Construction of the character; Allegories; Uncertain End

As the place of the story is a village with an authentic life established in the middle of Iran's natural beauties, nature, as can be seen in Table 4, is much more included in the narrative in this film than in the earlier works of Majidi. From the beginning of the film about the story of Mohammed, a visually impaired child who lost his mother and tried to be expelled from the house by his father, nature accompanies the story with images, sounds, and dialogues between characters. Mohammed, his father Hashem, and his grandmother with which Mohammed is possibly have the strongest bonds are introduced to the audience with their orientation to the nature rather than the relationships they establish with each other. In the film, which opens the door to the philosophical discussions haptically or in the form of seeing with the eye of the heart, the nature responds to the child who approaches it with love and curiosity, by presenting him all its beauties. While Mohammed is hearing beautiful sounds of nature reflecting the beauty of his inner world, his father hears scary sounds in connection with his pessimism. The grandmother is aware of the beauty in nature like Mohammed. The metaphysical secrets hidden in the nature which are subject to Mohammed's curious search and hidden in the nature take shape as authentic beauties in the eyes of his grandmother, such as bright colors or madder offered by the nature.

Nature, which reflects the inner world of the characters and directs their identification relations with the audience, is also used as an impressive cinematographic element in order to increase the inner tension of the scenes or to create an atmosphere. Nature is shown as a sunny, calm, and refreshing setting in the scenes in which Mohammed appears with his siblings and grandmother in prairies, in crops area, feeding the chickens, and extracting madder with prominent family bonds. In latter parts of the film where the tension between the characters increases, there is a depiction of nature that leads to an uneasy atmosphere with its cloudy, foggy, rainy weather, heavy winds, stream floods, whitecaps, and blurred waves. Thunders, winds, and heavy rains make the tension prevailing in the story much more apparent, especially in the scenes where Hashem removed Mohammed from the house and the relationship between him and his mother were irreversibly disturbed. For example, in the scene where his grandmother realized that Mohammed left home, the wind starts blowing suddenly in parallel with the deep sorrow and anxiety that the old woman feels for her grandson's leave. As the woman walks slowly through the chicken feathers blowing in the wind, the sound of the wind accompanies this image. Immediately after that, wavy and blurred sea is shown, and thus the turning point of the story and the pessimism is emphasized through the nature.

On the other hand, Majid Majidi uses nature in this film as an impressive cinematographic element in aforementioned way and carries out a philosophical debate about the essence of knowledge and existence based on the relationships that the characters establish with nature. Majidi makes sense of existence as a holistic structure involving beyond the visible in accordance with the Sufi thinking and he treats Mohammed's search of understanding the nature and discovering its secrets together with metaphysical debates. The director, who makes sense of existence as a holistic structure involving meanings which are interconnected and beyond the visible, progresses Mohammed's quest for understanding the nature and discovering its secrets together with metaphysical discussions. At this point, nature makes important contributions both to the obvious flow of the narrative and in fictionalizing the meaning maturity established through the allegories that carries the story to the fantastic dimensions.

Majid Majidi's next film *Willow Tree* is one of the works in which nature is used as a clear narrative tool and the elements of nature take part more in their metaphorical meanings.

Table-5: Nature-Related Sign Systems in *Willow Tree*				
Sign		**Signified**		**Contribution to the Narrative**
Existence-Object	**Presentation**	**Obvious Meaning**	**Metaphorical Meaning**	
Water	Wavy or blurred water — Negative	City and nature intertwined	Warning that conflicts will occur; The complexity of the soul; Blurry look Covering the secret	Providing tips about the flow of events
	Clean and clear water — Positive	City and nature intertwined	The serene mood; Knowledge of existence; The secret hidden by nature	Contribution to conflict resolution
	Thunder; Heavy rain — Negative; Extraordinary	Tension	The complexity of the soul; Warning to correct the mistake	Creating atmosphere: tension, desperation Contribution to spiritual maturation
Air	Heavy Wind — Positive; Extraordinary	Blowing ashes and papers, Tension	Being purified Uncovering the secret	The emergence of the conflict, Conflict resolution; Contribution to the transformation of character
Soil	Mud — Negative	Combative aspect of the nature	Divine warnings to the character	Creating atmosphere: tension
Animals	Pigeon, sparrow etc. — Positive	City and nature intertwined	Contentment, serenity	Introducing the environment
	Caws — Negative; Extraordinary	City and nature intertwined; Tension	Divine warnings to the character	Creating atmosphere: tension, danger, fear
	Ant — Positive	City and nature intertwined; Contentment	Patience; Enduring difficulties; A second chance	Creating atmosphere: contentment, hope
Plants	Trees; Flowers — Positive	City and nature intertwined; Contentment	Signs of existence; References to secrets hidden by nature	Introducing the environment; Contribution to the interactions between character

As he did in his previous film, Majidi carries out a debate through a visually impaired child in the film *Willow Tree* which discusses seeing as a phenomenon beyond the capacity of the eyes and grounds on the problem of "blindness of the vision" in Hüseyin Köse's words (2014: 48). Yusuf, who is a literature professor specialized in Mathnawi, his wife Roya and his little daughter Mariam live a happy life together. Yusuf's house is depicted as a little paradise with the intense interest of his wife, the love of his daughter, the small pool in the courtyard, trees, and birds. However, Yusuf, who lost his eyes in a firework accident when he was eight years old, wishes to be able to see again. This wish comes true when a tumor appears in his brain and he regains his sight in the treatment process. However, the happy dream that the character lives without being aware of ends because he falls in love with another woman and tends towards a life strategy based on earthly pleasures.

Nature also participates in Yusuf's journey from physical blindness to seeing and then to blindness again, in a way that overlaps with the themes prevailing in the scenes. The relationships between the characters based on happiness are exhibited together with their serene and restful images in the sections in which Yusuf cannot see but lives a happy family life and in the sequence in which he meets and becomes friends with Murtaza whom he met in the hospital in France to which he went for the treatment. Clean and calm flowing waters, the small pool in the garden of the house, ponds, trees, and birds can be seen frequently and this serene atmosphere is supported by the sounds of nature such as babbling water and bird calls. Heavy rains, blustering winds, blurred waters and muds are displayed frequently following Yusuf's mental depression and the tensions between the characters after he can see again. The beautiful bird calls in the previous scenes of the film are replaced by annoying caw sounds.

The elements of nature that appear in the important scenes where the story line is evolved in a significant way provide the viewer with connotations about what might happen in the film as well as creating the atmosphere. Nature appears suddenly to support the tension and emphasize the breaking point of the story in the scenes in which the tumor emerges and changes his life, his eyes open, he realizes that Peri whom he loves is with another young man, and he finds the letter from Murtaza. On the other hand, the walnut which is highlighted through Murtaza and the ant, the first thing Yusuf sees, which appears again in the last scene of the film, play important roles in terms of philosophical debates carried out through the film within the frame of the metaphorical meanings attributed to them.

Baran is another film which Majid Majidi uses nature to narrate the various aspects of the human spirit and construct semantic bridges between the metaphysical realm and objective world as well as creating the atmosphere, introducing the context of the story, and emphasizing the beauties of Iran nature. This, as can be seen in the Table 6, is one of the most remarkable films like *The Color of Heaven* and *The Song of Sparrows* both in terms of nature participating in the narrative with many different views such as water, air, soil, animals, plants, and sounds, and in terms of the roles nature plays within the narrative.

Table-6: Nature-Related Sign Systems in *Baran*				
Sign		**Signified**		**Contribution to the Narrative Presentation**
Existence-Object	**Presentation**	**Obvious Meaning**	**Metaphorical Meaning**	
Water	Fountains; Ponds; Streams — Positive	Natural beauties; Life and nature intertwined	Cleansing the soul; Abundance	Introducing the environment
	Thunderclap; Heavy rain — Negative; Extraordinary	Characteristics of Iranian nature; Tension	Abundance; Deletion of earthly traces; Purification of the soul	Introducing the environment Creating the atmosphere: tension, rush; Contribution to the transformation of the character
	Snowfall; City is entirely snowed — Positive	Natural beauties	Euphoria of love; Seclusion; Spirit's departure from worldly stimuli	Creating the atmosphere: serenity, slowdown in the time perception; Lowering the tempo of the film
Air	Wind — Negative Presentation – Positive Result	Characteristics of Iranian nature; Tension	Uncovering the secret; Pointing to the truth behind the view	Contribution to the emergence of the conflict; Creating atmosphere: tension
Soil	Mortar, sand, soil, mud — Positive	Intensive use of soil in the construction of the city	Human and soil identity; Abundance	Visual wealth; Creating an authentic environment
Animals	Birds — Positive	Natural beauties; everyday life and nature intertwined	Identity with character; Cleansing the soul; innocence; Compassion; Holism / unity in existence	Construction of characters; Introducing the environment Creating atmosphere: worry, rush, peace, happiness
Fire	Powerful fire and sound — Positive	The role of fire in everyday life	Maturing with the fire of love; Spirit maturing through love and pain	Enhancing visual expression
Sounds	Mysterious murmurs — Positive; Extraordinary	-	Call to reality behind the view	Creating a mystical atmosphere

The film focuses on a construction area despite the bad weather conditions in one of the ghettos of Tehran and tells the story of the earthly love of Latef, a construction worker, for *Baran* who is the daughter of an Afqhan refugee and his spiritual maturation process in parallel with this love. The use of nature varies depending on the stages of his process and the emotional themes that dominate the different parts of the story.

As in the other films of Majidi, the most obvious use of nature in *Baran* is that it is a means of creating an atmosphere to reflect or strengthen the feeling that dominates the scene. For this purpose, the director uses rain, wind, snow and especially fire as a basic aesthetic tool that adds originality to his cinema. Heavy rain and wind that emerge together with thunderclap and lightning are used in the scenes in which Latef realizes that the real name of the character who is known as Rahmat is Baran, and a certain separation and an introversion for the character take place after Baran goes back to Afghanistan. Serene nature supports the emotional atmosphere with its elements such as blue sky, clear and clean waters, light breeze, a slow snowfall, and bird calls in the scenes in which Latef turns in on himself and Baran*,* who is associated with innocence, appears. For example, the sadness and loneliness of Latef, who appear to be lonely and depressed after the departure of *Baran* from the construction site, is reflected in the participation of nature in the narrative. In these sections, Latef is shown outside the construction area and on roads, and the director uses snowfall, houses covered in snow and caw sounds to reinforce this cold atmosphere. A slow music and a very slow and long turnings slows down the tempo of the film and overlaps with the mental state of the character together with the slow motions and thoughtful look of Latef.

The sounds of nature also differ depending on the atmosphere of the scenes in the film. In tense scenes, the sound of heavy rain and buzz of wind and thunderclaps are noteworthy. For example, in the scene in which Latef gets angry with *Baran* and messed up the kitchen of the construction site breaking the kitchenware, the buzz of wind is as clear as the sound of kitchenware which are thrown and clash. As soon as the tension in the scene ends, the buzz of the wind also disappears.

In Baran, fire is included in the narrative in many scenes with its appearance and sound in accordance with the fact that the story is based on love and love is associated with fire. The everlasting noise of the fire constantly emerge very loudly in the construction site scenes. The emphasis on fire is supported by accompanying elements such as smoke and steam. The relationships between the characters take place around the continuously smoldering fire in front of the frame. The steam rising from the water-filled barrels, which are almost never let off the fire, cause the characters to be shown in a cloud of fog. Within the frame of this visualization strategy, these characters, most of whom are Afghan refugees who try

to survive with the hard work they do in the construction site, try to carry on by getting matured, so to say, in fire and boiling water.

In the film, the degrees of spiritual maturity of the characters are defined within the framework of their relations with nature. Birds and plants gain meanings in the relations of identity established with some characters beyond their objective existence. For example, Baran, who is often seen in loving and intimate relationships with pigeons, is also the bearer of values attributed to the pigeons, such as innocence, timidity, and lack of protection. While some of the meanings attributed to these beings are transferred to the characters through such relations of identity, the bonds established between the audience and these characters are also guided by these identities. In this way, various implications are put forward within the framework of the discussion of the human spirit, which proceeds parallel to the narrative of earthly love.

Lastly, while the earthly love story which the film is based on and the evolution of the love of Latef for Baran to a divine love take place by mans of the discovery of some secrets that become known thanks to the nature. In particular, the wind, presented as initiated by a divine power, emerges suddenly and rises clouds of dust, takes the lid off the secret and make it possible for Latef to realize that Baran is a woman, which constitutes the conflict of the film. A very heavy rain emerges quickly eradicating the footprint left by Baran, to narrate the Latef's giving up on Baran and dedicating himself to the divine love, and therefore the conflict of the film is resolved by favor of nature.

As mentioned above, the director's next film, *The Song of Sparrows,* is also one of the most remarkable works of the director in terms of the participation of nature in the narrative in connection with the fact that the place of the story is a rural zone. As can be seen in Table 7, the nature is mostly depicted within the frame of animals, water, plants and the identification relations established by the characters with these elements.

Table-7: Nature-Related Sign Systems in *The Song of Sparrows*					
Sign			**Signified**		**Contribution to the Narrative**
Existence-Object	**Presentation**		**Obvious Meaning**	**Metaphorical Meaning**	
Water	Dirty water; Mud	Negative	Not allowing life	The concealment of truth; The complexity of the soul; Immatureness of the character	The reason for the emergence of side-conflicts
	Clean water	Positive	The beauty of nature; Cleaning; The enrichment of life	Purification of the soul; Compassion; Abundance; Developing a holistic view; Matureness of the character	Intermediacy in the transformation of the character
Air	Wind	Negative	Tension	Warning about negative developments	Creating the atmosphere: tension, violence
Animals	Birds	Positive	Natural beauties; Human-nature interaction / cooperation	innocence; Human-nature identity; Holism / unity in existence	Introducing the environment; Construction of characters; Contribution to maturation of characters
	Fishes	Positive	"	innocence; Human-nature identity; Holism / unity in existence Divine warnings	Introducing the environment; Construction of characters; Contribution to maturation of characters
Plants	Trees; Flowers; Vegetables; Fruits	Positive	"	Abundance; innocence; Human-nature identity; Holism / unity in existence	Introducing the environment; Construction of characters

The film tells the story of Karim's struggle to maintain his family and the world of children who try to find a solution to support their families suffering from poverty through a cooperation with nature. Karim loses his job because one of the ostrichs he is responsible for escaped from the ostrich farm he works for. In the film, nature is the mediator of the basic conflict of narrative, the tensions in relationships between the characters, cooperation and the solution.

Karim's dismissal due to the escaping of the ostrich transforms his struggle against poverty into a much more challenging effort. In this context, nature as the cause of the conflict is used as the basic element that organizes the relationships between the characters throughout the film within the frame of both Karim's efforts to find the lost ostrich and the children's efforts to help their father in eliminating the economic troubles caused by the basic conflict. Children aim to clean an old water cistern filled with dirty water and mud to feed fishes in there, and work in cooperation with nature to attain this aim. Children want to buy fishes with the money they earn by carrying saplings, growing vegetables, and selling flowers, and they are shown intertwined with nature throughout the film.

Along with the children who are seen in collaboration with nature and approaching it lovingly, nature also takes its place in the narrative representing innocence, abundance, goodness, and compassion to a great extent. The collaboration of children with nature and the marking of nature with innocence and abundance are constructed through specific lighting techniques for birds, plants, flowers, and fishes, slow motions, close shots, and dramatic sound utilization techniques. Such a choice of visual aesthetics enables the audience to create strong identification relationships with the characters and the nature they are connected with.

The identification of nature and film characters and their marking with values such as innocence, childhood and compassion are also seen in Majidi's film *Beyond the Clouds*. As can be seen in Table 8, the nature that is reflected in the film in the form of water, animals, soil, and especially light is represented to a more limited extent in the film due to the fact that the subject of the film occurs in a city with complex streets and old buildings, in which poverty and crimes are quite common. On the other hand, these elements take part in the narrative with metaphorical emphasizes and in supernatural forms, rather than being a part of the natural life.

Table-8: Nature-Related Sign Systems in *Beyond the Clouds*					
Sign			**Signified**		**Contribution to the Narrative**
Existence-Object	**Presentation**		**Obvious Meaning**	**Metaphorical Meaning**	
Water	Thunderclap; Heavy rain	Negative presentation – Positive result; Extraordinary	Difficulty of living conditions; The combative nature of nature; Tension	The complexity of the soul; Warning to correct the mistake	Interaction between characters
Animals	Pigeon	Positive; Extraordinary	Human - nature interaction / cooperation	The innocent aspect of the soul; Spiritual purification; Childlike purity; The secret behind the visible; The beauty of hidden knowledge; Human-nature identity; Divine warnings for taking the action	Interaction between characters; Spiritual maturation of the character
Soil	Mud	Negative	Swamp on the margin of the city	Adverse conditions caused by misconduct; A warning for the purification of the soul	Contribution to the maturation of the character, and his/her distancing from the city and crime
Light	Sunlight	Positive; Extraordinary	Visual Aesthetics	Divine references; Process of maturation of the soul	Character separation; Mystical atmosphere
	Shadows reflecting on the curtains or the wall	Positive	Visual Aesthetics	Traditional narratives; The secret behind the curtain; The deceptiveness of the reality that appears; Message to change the viewpoint	Epic narrative; conflict resolution getting more difficult

One day, Amir, an orphaned teenager who is smuggling drugs, takes shelter in his elder sister Tara to escape from the police, the last person of his family, whom he has not seen for a long time. However, Tara, who tried to survive in difficult conditions, was put in prison for killing his boss who tried to rape her. These events, which make the struggle for life even more difficult for the siblings, will enable the goodness inside them to rise to the surface and make it possible for them to reorganize their lives based on this goodness they almost forgot because of challenging life conditions. Elements of nature are used in association with their hidden, childlike innocence and goodness or as the factors that direct them to discover these aspects of themselves. At this point, the links the characters establish with animals like pigeons or mices make them identical with the values such as goodwill, goodness, and innocence.

As in some other films of the director, nature elements such as thunder, heavy rain, mud, and moonlight are used in the film *Beyond the Clouds* as conscious beings that allow the characters to change their behavior to become a good person. For example, rain plays a very important role in terms of its contribution to regulating interpersonal relations. Heavy rains together with thunders and lightning enable Amir's returning to his innocence and good self again from which he became distant in city life and the start of his close relationship with Akshi's family, who will make an important contribution to him in evolving to a good person avoiding crime. Amir cannot decide on whether accepting the women, who take shelter in the courtyard of Tara's house, to home and lies down his bed. Then it starts raining and he let them into the house feeling uncomfortable for leaving them under the rain. This behavior will lead to a long lasting common life and the maturation of the Amir in his relationship with his guests during this period to become a good person again. Thus, nature carries a constructive function in terms of the spiritual journeys of the characters as well as directing the story flow.

Majidi also uses the wind from the very beginning of the scene where the film's basic conflict will emerge as the sign that something extraordinary will happen. The wind blows as Tara's boss, Akshi, takes him to a spacious and secluded area to speak, where sheets are laid. While the camera shows the characters and their large area from an upper angle, the shaking of the sheets and shadows and the sound of the wind that is heard at a very high level arouses the feeling of a break in the story flow. The intensity of the wind and the volume of its sound gradually increases, as the tension of the dialogues between the characters increases and the relationship evolves into a physical struggle.

In brief, nature takes part in both *Beyond the Clouds* and the other films of Majidi as an extraordinary narrative tool with its objective appearance, its hidden contributions to the story flow and the metaphorical meanings it implies. The director's

use of nature becomes more apparent from his second full-length film. While nature appears less with its physical features, its metaphorical meanings are more highlighted in the films where the story takes place in cities. In the films in which Iran's rural life becomes prominent, nature becomes one of the basic tools that directs the story both in its literal meaning and in accordance with the philosophical debates, and constructs the relationships between the characters, as well as presenting the spatial context.

3. Nature as a Metaphor of Meaning

Cyrus Ali Zargar (2016) points out that the meaning is based on allegories and uncertainties in Majid Majidi's films. Indeed, the stories of all his films after *Pedar* involves doors opening to metaphysical area in various ways. The characters who face the difficult life conditions of Iran and have to cope with these difficulties in order to maintain their daily lives, go through several hoops within the frame of a neo-Platonist existence understanding. Defining the meaning of existence within the frame of Koran and Sufism, the director constructs the actions of the characters in line with a search for meaning. In this context, nature also gains meaning far beyond being places that form the context for realistic stories.

Nature is reflected in Majidi's cinema as a surface involving or covering the essence of the existence, an integrity full of compassion and mercy, which can be discovered by touching and feeling, and a guide in the process of constructing people as a perfect entity. In the *Color of Heaven,* Mohammed touches the knowledge inside the existence with his fingertips with utmost attention. He seeks this sacred knowledge in stones, water, the coolness of the wind, bird calls, the ear of crops, leaves, flowers, or in short, in the functioning of the universe. The essence of Majidi's cinema is the definition of the existence summarized by Mohammed's words as "I will touch everything with my hands until I find the God and, when I find him, I'll tell him everything including all the secrets of my heart".

All people, like all creatures, are part of God's existence in Sufi thought, one of the main sources that the director takes as reference. This idea understands the universe as a kind of mirror of the existence of God. Mevlana Celaleddin Rumî summarizes this idea with the words, "everything that exists in the cosmos is nothing more than the manifestation of beloved" (Rumî, 2002a: 16).

This idea is discussed by Ibn al-Arabi (2002), one of the pioneers of Sufism, discusses through the mirror metaphor and summarized by Mevlana Celaleddin Rumî as "everything that exists in the cosmos is nothing more than the manifestation of beloved" (Rumî, 2002a: 16). According to Ibn al-Arabi, one of the pioneers of Sufism, all of the beings that are visible are the mirrors which the names of God come into existence in and have the same essence as them (2002). In this approach, which is also called Vahdet-i Vücud, it is thought that human beings can reach the knowledge of his/her existence and of God by getting the bottom of his own and discovering the knowledge hidden within human beings. This quest aiming to discover the real knowledge and summarized by Yunus Emre as "Who knows himself knows his Lord" (Demirli, 2006: 42), is designed as reaching the knowledge of the invisible –genuine existence- from the visible world. Within the scope of this approach which refers to the concept of "*intermediate realm*" (berzah) that emphasizes the impassable distance between the subjects and the creator, Majidi depicts the reality as a phenomenon hidden behind the veils, curtains, and doors or within the visible world. This approach is the continuation of Plato's views of the universes of ideas and phenomena that evaluate the universe of phenomenu as deceptive reflections of real ideas. In the film *Baran*, the knowledge that the construction worker, who was introduced as Rahmat, is actually a woman is concealed through the veils. In the film *Willow Tree*, in order to emphasize that the actual knowledge is hidden within the visible world, the walnut tree is often emphasized through the Murtaza character, for whom doubts are raised as to whether or not he really exists. Murtaza constantly eats walnut, serves it to Yusuf or talks about walnut trees. The walnut, which hides a delicious secret under the green shell and the hard shell inside it, represents the humane assets surrounding the human and the world, as referred in Masnawi (Rumi, 2002b), both in visible form and in metaphorical meaning attributed to them in accordance with the secret it hides inside. In the film *Song of Sparrows,* the bird nest, which contributed to the Karim's transformation into a merciful person, is hidden within a water cistern that appears to be an old and unworkable structure but full of clean water on which there are sunlight gleams entering through the window.

Reaching the knowledge of the truth that the director often identified with nature is possible only if the veils that hide it are lifted at least temporarily, or if the shadow or the reflection of the hidden truth casts on a surface in various forms. In this context, the nature presented as a miracle that contains the knowledge of truth plays a decisive role in revealing this valuable knowledge. The reveal of the knowledge hidden behind the veil of mystery takes place in a mystic atmosphere containing various extraordinary things and through the elements of nature such as wind, light, or shadow. For example, Latef discovers the real identity of Baran and Yusuf finds Murtaza's letter with the help of the wind. The curtains, ashes, pieces of paper that are blown by the wind reveal the truth behind the things and change the story flow.

In the film *Beyond the Clouds*, Amir discovers the pigeons living in a secret room of her sister's house, by hearing their voices. A room that entirely belongs to the nature behind the door within the ordinary order of the house is used as an element to surprise for both Amir and the audience. This room which is disconnected with the nature and in the margin of a city with complex, dense buildings is full of pigeons and shown as an environment which belongs to the nature with pigeons maintaining their natural life. This is another extraordinariness that emerges within the frame of the relationships established with the nature in Majidi's films. This room is hidden behind the door and is shown only in connected with Amir in the film. Majidi uses this room to symbolize the essence and childish aspect of his spirit in contrast with the city life of the character which is full of crimes. Features such as innocence, honesty, and virtue which are attributed to children by Majidi in all his films become secrets hidden in a small room waiting for to be uncovered. Amir continue to carry these secrets inside him possibly without being aware of them. The character should move away from his struggle in city life to a kind of seclusion in order to rediscover these secrets about his own reality and build a new life based on hidden virtues. Escaping from the police, getting injured, taking shelter in his sister's house are a form of seclusion of Sufis to get away from the earthly life, get the bottom of their spirit and go beyond the visible reality. In fact, the character, who attains a

certain tranquility within the house where he takes shelter in, enters into a process of discovering the room full of pigeons and the goodness within him.

As can be seen in this example, in the films of Majidi, it is emphasized that in order to discover the knowledge about the truth hidden in nature, the characters must reach a certain degree of spiritual maturity as well as unveiling the secret. Within this understanding coming from the human definition of Sufism, not every person will have the same competence in the perception of real existence and the depth of his existence in the mirror of God. The decisive factor in this respect is the way in which man takes to reach his/her existence and God, in other words, the degree of maturation. In the words of Ögke, "the greater one's degree of predispose and capability, the greater his degree of reflecting the share and manifestation from divine knowledge" (2009: 84). Spiritual maturation in Sufi thought, which enables to comprehend the knowledge beyond the visible, is realized with the impoverishment in the context of the accumulation of human beings and being purified from material assets, which Mevlana conceived as "spiritual poverty" (Pitman, 2002). Such an experience of impoverishment develops in Majidi's films with the establishment of a bond of love with other people and nature and a tendency to understand and approach the nature with compassion.

In almost all the films of Majid Majidi as of *Pedar*, the spiritual maturity, which appears in the context of building an abovementioned kind of relationship with nature, is a virtue that women and children carry from the very beginning. Women and especially children are shown innocent and in peaceful relations with nature in many of these films. For example, the woman/child figure, which stands out in *Baran* with her innocence and compassion, establishes friendly relations with nature. Baran feeds and spends time with the pigeons that are often shown in the same frame with her. She is pure, innocent, and timid like the pigeons in the context of the analogy established between her and pigeons. The character also overlaps with a small ivy sapling to explain her loneliness and the resolution to cope with the difficulties she faces as a refugee in Iran and as a woman at the construction site. As a sign referring to the narrative of humane and divine love that is the main theme of the film, the director uses the ivy sapling, which Baran puts just before the misty mirror in which the reflection of femininity emerged and shows great interest to make it bush out in these challenging conditions. Through the identity established between Baran and the ivy sapling, it is emphasized that the character is the bearer of the word *love*, which is associated with ivy in Arabic (Uludağ, 1991: 11) and is described as the condition for the soul to mature in Sufism. Thus, the elements of nature together with the woman are marked as creatures that deserve to be loved, involve a deep compassion and beauty in it, and provide the spirit directed at it with a spiritual enrichment.

In other films of Majidi, there are connections and analogies related to the different characters, similar to those established between Baran and nature. Ali and Zehra in the *Children of Heaven*, Hossein and Haneyeh in the *Song of Sparrows,* and Amir and little girl in *Beyond the Clouds* are identified with fishes, sparrows and especially the pigeons which are associated with innocence. These characters are often shown feeding these animals and approaching them with love. The main aim of children in the *Song of Sparrows* is to raise fish and they have to fight poverty, their fathers and bad luck to realize this aim.

In the *Color of Heaven*, children are often seen in a flower-filled green areas, running among bird calls. Children are also innocent, sincere and compassionate like nature. While Mohammed, who was unaffected by the dirt of earthly images, has such a maturity, other characters, especially his father are far from such a maturity. In a scene, for example, as Mohammed walks with his grandmother through the countryside, he hears the sound of woodpeckers and asks his grandmother what those birds say. His granny says that woodpeckers are looking for a tree to nest themselves. Mohammed claims that the birds speak, and by calculating the rhythms of the bird with his fingers, he begins to read the sounds of birds as if they are letters and numbers. In different parts of the film, he continues to read the sound of the birds, the wind echoing in trees, the sound of the water, sands and pebbles as if they were words written in braille alphabet. Here, while the orientations of Muhammad and his grandmother towards nature show an approach towards understanding it, they are different from each other in essence. As the grandmother approaches the nature at face value and as a formation sustaining its own order, Mohammed aims to discover the knowledge within the beings and their voices in nature. Mohammed's endeavor refers to a statement in Koran which is also emphasized in the name of the film. The Surah Al-Baqara describes the paint of God in the 138th verse, and it is advisable for the believers to be painted with God's paint. At this point, Mohammed's quest for nature refers to a life paradigm aimed at discovering the paint of God and being integrated with it and thus reaching unity in existence, which is indicated by the light that appears in Muhammed's fingers at the end of the film.

Mohammed's ability to discover the secrets hidden by nature in parallel with his inner maturity is also applies to the grandmother, who maintained her innocence in family life designed by Majidi as a part of the authentic rural life and a small heaven. The old woman boils the flowers she collects with her grandchildren and extract colorful dyes that are the secrets of the beauty of traditional Iran carpets. The grandmother is aware of another aspect of ancient knowledge concealed by nature. In this sense, While Mohammed is the mediator of the connections established with Islamic references and Sufism, a continuation relationship between the film and the ancient Iranian culture is formed through the grandmother.

In Majidi's films, the spiritual maturity attributed to women and children and the tendency to establish a peaceful relationship with nature turn into a relationship based on conflict and struggle when it comes to adult male characters. In this context, the director creates a contrast between nature and culture. While the characters belonging to the realm of nature, away from the realm of modern life, are the carriers of innocent and stronger virtues, adult males who participate more in the public sphere and earthly relationships are depicted as the characters caring about earthly accumulations. In this context, Majidi describes the interaction with earthly space in the form of the alienation of the human soul to its innocent nature. The inquination of these characters is portrayed as a process which leads to a loss of consciousness about the meaning of life and existence and thus alienate the characters to the nature they are part of. On the other hand, the spiritual

maturation processes of these characters are also realized through the relationships they establish with nature, and the transformation of the characters also transforms the relations they have with nature.

In the *Color of Heaven*, Hashem is deprived of the spiritual maturity qualities of Mohammad, or the traditional wisdom represented by his grandmother. He establishes a conflictual relationship with nature as part of this state of unconsciousness. The terrible voices heard by the character are used as elements that embody this relationship. There is an ambiguity about whether these voices, heard in when the evil in Hashem appears, represents the combative aspect of nature, a divine sound indicating that bad things will happen, or an allegoric expression of the tension that the character carries in his soul. However, no matter what the source of the sound is, Hashem does not take heed of the warnings that he is making a wrong choice or should take action, because he is living behind a curtain that prevents him from seeing the truth in the meaning mentioned in verse 7 of Surah Al-Baqara.

Karim in the *Song of Sparrows* is in a state of blindness similar to Hashem in the *Color of Heaven*. Although Karim is not as malevolent as Hashem, he carries an earthly ambition related to the desire to make material savings, which is similar to that of Hashem's in the context of another woman. The character adopts a bully approach towards nature and his children because of this ambition, which causes the character to be in some kind of blindness with respect to the wisdom that Majidi introduces in the axis of being at peace with nature and loving the destiny and emerges in the form of small greedinesses. The director makes the character come out of this dilemma by making him fall ill because of an accident and witness that his children, wife and neighbors prettified the life in cooperation with the nature. Karim is enriched spiritually after losing his job and health and undergoes a transformation related to his earthly ambitions and authoritarianism. He tends towards better understanding other characters and nature and establishing a peaceful life strategy with them. In this process in which he realizes beauties of birds, water and plants within various mystical themes, he begins to help the children whom he often scolded and tried to beat, and feels the frustrations and pains they experience in his own soul.

In *Baran*, Latef, who lives in a similar greed like Karim, is tamed and transformed into a mature person within the framework of a mystic love story involving a humane love specific to East culture and metaphorical meanings related to this love. Latef reaches the degree of maturity which is identified with love both in Eastern narratives and in Sufi tradition, mainly by Mevlana, and visualized through fire as a metaphor and a dominant visual element. Latef's process of maturation, which proceeds with his love to Baran, turns into a reality as he spends all his money for his love, gives up all earthly ambitions within the framework of being fascinated by the love of his lover and dedicates his identity and therefore his existence to the life of his love. His approach that involves indifference or even conflict to the nature becomes a kind of cooperation based on sensitivity and love. The character, who previously threw stones at the pigeons eating the bait, is now often displayed while feeding them and staring at them lovingly. He is even displayed while watering a plant for the first time. In the last scene of the film, the last point Latef reached in his process of maturation parallel to the relationships with nature is described in cooperation with nature again. Latef cleans Baran's mired shoes and put them on the ground for her to put on. Majidi shows Baran while putting on her shoes on a small bridge made of tree branches over a flowing stream with a pleasant noise. At the right of the frame are the fruits and vegetables collected by Latef and Baran from the ground, and at the left are the shoes given by the Latef and the flow of water at the bottom. Baran, whose name means spring rain that bring abundance, is the reason that brings together the soil, water and the abundance (fruits) arising from the unification of them in this last scene. Latef will also get his share from this abundance. Just like the rain quickly wipes away the trace left by beloved in the mud, his humane love coming from the soil will be quickly wiped away together with its physical features. But just like the abundance that the rain left in soil, the mark that Baran left in Latef will also be permanent. A great happiness and peace is reflected in the face of Latef, who reaches a level of maturity that enables him to realize this gain.

In *Beyond the Clouds*, Amir moves away from crime and gravitates towards a life in peace with other beings within the scope of the relationship he built with pigeons and little girls. Amir is guided in this process by the pigeons that live in a secret room of Tara's house and the moon that Amir stares at night.

Yusuf, who goes through a similar maturation process in the movie *Willow Tree*, reaches a close level of maturity by losing his family, relatives, credibility and perhaps most importantly his arrogance. Nature also witnesses or participates in Yusuf's maturation process in various ways. Nature takes part as a being that transforms the story flow and the meaning in its different forms such as rain, wind, fire, soil, water, ants, birds, and plants in the scenes in which Yusuf's secret (his photograph with Peri) becomes known, he learns that Peri is with another man, he burns all papers and books he used to gain all his experience about life, he finds the letter from Murtaza in the ashes covering the garden, he cries out at the terrible night he lost his vision, he wishes a new start regretting for this cry out, and he hopes that he will be given another chance.

A further reflection of the emphasis on nature in Majidi's narratives is that in many of the scenes in which children are shown in school, information is given regarding the knowledge of nature and its flawless functioning. In the *Children of Heaven*, in the *Color of Heaven*, the functioning of the universe, birds, turtles, and fruits are mentioned in the lessons. For example, in the school of the blind people that Mohammed goes, the teacher wants the children to write: "The sun is born into our world. As it rises, it warms the world during the day. Sunny days are warm and bright". It is so meaningful that the children write these sentences on paper in Braille alphabet, touching the paper with their fingertips in a rhythmic way. Children imprint the meaning of nature onto the paper with their bodies, so to speak, and internalize it. After the teacher asks them to check their writing, while fingers that comprehend the knowledge by touching are shown in close shot, the children are heard reading the sentences in whisper. Reading the sentences is shown through a close shot to fingers which are highlighted distinctively. The fingers of the two hands cooperate closely with each other. All the fingers moving forward and back together on the letters are used to process and reread the information in a perfect harmony. This harmony reflects

the idea that nature's functioning is based on compatibility as reflected in the sentences. In Majidi's films, human beings are portrayed in this harmony and as a part of this great cooperation.

Majid Majidi establishes the obvious and metaphorical meanings of nature in a poetic cinema aesthetics. The mental states of the characters, their joys, their innocence, their spiritual dilemmas, their pangs of love, their desperation, etc. are narrated with cinematographic preferences such as close shots, slow motions, subjective cameras, and high-angle shots in cooperation with the elements of nature such as birds, fishes, snow, rain, small ponds, pools, trees in rows, animals, and sounds. Deep meanings that rise to the surface in a poetic presentation of nature reveal the reflections of the words of Sadi, Hafiz and Mevlana in the cinema. Thus, as Sheibani (2010) emphasizes, Majidi builds his cinema upon the legacy of deep-rooted Iranian poetry. The director is influenced by these poets not only in terms of vocabulary. He borrows the secrets of building an enthusiastic cinema that can establish its own language in terms of the meaning he attributed to the word/image. This poetic tie that Majidi established with nature and the world he implied with it permeates to all cinematic elements, mainly the names of his films that construct meaning. It can be said that the film names such as *Bacheha-ye Aseman* (Children of Heaven), *Rang-e Khoda* (God's paint), *Beed-e Majnoon* (a madness beyond Mecnun), *Baran* (The rain that brings abundance), *Avaze Gonjeshk-ha* (*Song of Sparrows*), and *Beyond the Clouds* reflects the role attributed to the nature within this meaning construction as well as the poetic references they make to the metaphysical realm. This role given to nature transforms Majidi's films into layered structures that produce deep meanings through meaning shifts, metaphors, and implications.

Conclusion

Majid Majidi, one of the most important directors of the new Iranian cinema, brings realistic human stories from everyday life to the cinema like many other Iranian directors. These stories, which are frequently occurs in rural areas of Iran or in the edge of the cities, are covered with the participation of the story setting in the narrative in a distinct way. In this approach, nature in forms of fire, soil, water, air, animals, plants, lights, shadows, and sounds take place in the narrative to direct it in images, sound track and the side meanings. While the stories in the rural area present lives intertwined with nature, nature takes place in the narrative on a more limited level in the films in the subject cities. However, although the nature in subjective meaning is represented in the narrative at different levels, nature preserves its existence as a means of generating a strong meaning no matter the story occurs in rural area or in city within the frame of the relationship that the certain characters established with the elements of nature and the metaphorical meanings created through it.

One of the views of nature in Majid Majidi's films is the portrayal of nature as a context presenting the story environment. In films such as *Pedar*, *The Color of Heaven* and the *Song of Sparrows*, the authentic rural life of Iran is shown intertwined with nature. The characters often shown in the countryside, between flowers, crops, and birds are like a part of the nature. In these films, the close relationships of the characters with nature are also seen in the films of Children of Heaven, Willow Tree, *Baran*, Beyond the Clouds even though the stories occur in cities. In these films, especially children spend time in small gardens of the houses. The children who are shown feeding birds, caring for the plants, and in a close relationship with nature in many scenes play a role in making sense of the nature and small gardens as the reflections of the Heaven.

Nature, which is used throughout the films as a means of creating an atmosphere related to the story environment reveals in this respect that the nature is present in various forms intensely in daily life in Iran. In this respect, Majidi makes similar cinematic choices with other Iranian directors influenced by the movement of Italian Neo Realism. However, the main element that makes Majidi's films unique is the use of nature's images and voices as an element that construct or direct the meaning in important sections of the story as well as reflecting the environment or introducing the beauty and authenticity of Iran. In these films, nature is used either as a basic tool for building the atmosphere that dominates the scene or a perpetrator that leads to a development which will redirect and build the narrative in important scenes involving conflicts, tensions, depressions, desperations, pangs of conscience, mistakes, and final encounters. Nature takes place in the narrative as an entity that redirects the story flow in different forms such as the river causing the death of Mohammad, the heavy rain causing his grandmother to get sick and die, or the footprint that is the only thing Baran left to Latef about his love. At this point, nature sometimes leads to the emergence of the coincidences that are frequently used in Majidi's cinema, and sometimes it is used as divine signs.

The director, who bases his films on Sufism and Shiite theologies, makes sense of nature in this perspective and uses nature to construct the allegories that refer to the metaphysical realm in the search for meaning progressing in the background of his stories. In this context, birds, fishes, plants, etc. contributes to reflecting the spiritual maturity levels of the characters and establishing a bond of identification between them and the audience. Specifically, fishes, pigeons and bird calls are identified with certain characters and contribute to the formation of the implications related to the metaphysical realm. The relations between the characters and the nature and the implications related to the metaphysical realm describe the universe as a perfect system containing miracles and position the human as part of this system.

Acting from the thesis that there is knowledge and love of God, which is the true being within the human being, the director suggests that all beings should be approached with love and with respect to the right to life. The characters, especially women and children, who approach nature with love, curiosity and compassion are treated in the same way by the nature, and they are rewarded with its beauty, wisdom, and abundance. The characters who are caught in rebellion, selfishness and earthly ambitions are warned by nature or face with the combative aspects of it. Especially adult male characters who are more involved in modern life are warned about the wrong attitudes and choices they exhibit, and they are warned by using the instruments of nature and directed by nature to realize the destruction they face because of their preferences, to make conscientious inquiries and to go through an inner transformation. As a matter of fact, the characters of Majidi progress to a more competent position than they originally were in the story line. The point they reach is a certain

achievement even in a spiritual maturation level in their ordinary life. Such a maturation experience is presented as a process that allows the characters to discover the divine knowledge of the unity of the being hidden in nature and the love of their own destiny.

In summary, in the films of Majid Majidi, nature in the forms of scientific courses, fountains, lakes, streams, rains, heavy or compassionate wind, soil, animals, plants, lights, and shadows is portrayed as a force that witnesses, mediates or directs the construction of the characters and their relations with each other, with the universe and the divine power hidden in the functioning of the universe.

While the search for meaning that extends to the metaphysical realm intertwines with realistic narrative and metaphysical implications, the meaning shifts and uncertainties that take place through the nature between these two levels provide both the narrative and the nature with a vague appearance, which includes various extraordinary features.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Sinemanın doğa ile arasındaki ilişki çoğunlukla doğanın, öykünün geçtiği bağlamı sunması ekseninde kurulmaktadır. Özellikle gerçekçi sinemada doğaya ait unsurlar ile film karakterleri arasında etkileşimler, mücadeleler, işbirlikleri kurulurken bu ilişkiler daha çok karakterlerin doğaya yönelimi ya da doğanın olağan akışı içerisinde kendi gerçekliklerini inşa etme mücadeleleri biçiminde işlemektedir. Bu noktada Kracauer'in tanımladığı anlamda "buluntu hikayeler"in (Kracauer, 2015) sinema perdesine aktarılması ya da otantik bir yaşamın gerçekçi bir üslupla dramatikleştirilmesi doğayı anlatının merkezine çekerken doğa, mücadelenin mekânı ya da nesnesi olma özelliğiyle filmlerdeki yerini almaktadır.

Bu çalışma Yeni İran Sinemasının önemli yönetmenlerinden olan Majid Majidi'nin, filmlerinde doğayı yukarıda sözü edilen görünümlerinin yanında, anlamın üretilmesine katkı sağlayan bilinçli bir varlıkmış gibi işleyerek, sinema ve doğa arasında yeni bir ilişki biçimi ortaya koyduğu iddiasına dayanmaktadır. Buradan hareketle Yeni Gerçekçi İtalyan sinemasından etkilenen ve İran'ın egzotik doğasını, şehirlerdeki doğaya ait unsurları belirgin anlatı öğeleri olarak kullanan Yeni İran Sinemasının doğanın kullanılması anlamında belki de en dikkat çekici örneklerini veren Majid Majidi'nin filmleri, doğanın anlatı içerisinde üstlendiği işlevler ve doğayla ilişkilendirilen metaforik anlamlar açısından incelenmektedir.

Majidi'nin dünya çapında tanınmaya başladığı ve doğayı anlatılarına daha yoğun bir biçimde taşıdığı 1992 sonrası dönemde çektiği filmlerin tamamı araştırmanın kapsamına alınmıştır. Ancak yönetmenin 2015 tarihli Hz. Muhammed: Allah'ın Elçisi filmi, konusunun dini metinlere ve anlatılara dayanması ve bu eksende doğanın da kendi gerçekliğinin ötesinde çeşitli olağanüstülükler içerisinde kullanılmış olması nedeniyle çalışmanın örnekleminin dışında tutulmuştur. Bu çerçevede yönetmenin Baduk (1992), Baba (Pedar, 1996), Cennet'in Çocukları (Bacheha-ye Aseman, 1999), Cennet'in Rengi (Rang-e Khoda, 1999), Baran (2001), Söğüt Ağacı (Beed-e Majnoon, 2005), Serçelerin Şarkısı (Avaze Gonjeshk-ha, 2008) ve Bulutların Ötesinde (Beyond The Clouds, 2017) filmlerinin analizi yapılmıştır.

Örneklemi oluşturan filmlerde yer bulan doğaya ait unsurların filmin atmosferine, öykünün akışına, karakterlerin içsel yolculuklarına yaptığı katkıları araştıran çalışmada, yönetmenin alegorilere dayanan anlatımı çerçevesinde bu unsurların imlediği görünen ve metaforik anlamların neler olabileceği, göstergebilimsel analizle belirlenmeye çalışmıştır. Bilindiği üzere Charles Sanders Pierce ve ardından da Ferdinand de Saussure tarafından geliştirilen göstergebilim, temelde dilin yapısına yoğunlaşsa da bu alanda çalışan Louis Hjelmjlev, Roland Barthes, Christian Metz gibi yazarlar bu kuramı görüntülerin de analiz edilmesine olanak verecek biçimde geliştirmişlerdir. Genel Dilbilim Dersleri adlı eserinde göstergebilimi, göstergelerin hangi yasalar çerçevesinde geliştiğini, ürettikleri anlamların nasıl bir yapı içerisinde kurulduğunu açıklayan bir yöntem olarak ortaya koyan Saussure'ün (2001:46), göstergeyi gösteren ve gösterilen şeklinde temel bir ayrım üzerine kuran yaklaşımı, bu yöntemi görüntüleri analiz etmek üzere kullanan çalışmalarda da referans alınmaktadır. Göstergebilim yöntemini, gösterge sistemi içerisinde üretilen yan anlamların ve metaforik anlamların da analiz edilebilmesine olanak verecek biçimde geliştiren Barthes'ın yaklaşımında (2009) gösterge sisteminin, içerisine çağrışımların, mitlerin, metaforların da dahil edildiği ve anlamın nasıl üretildiğini de kapsayan bir yapı olduğu fikri öne çıkmaktadır.

Göstergebilimi sinema alanına uyarlayan Christian Metz, Peter Wollen gibi yazarlar ise sinemada anlamın nasıl üretildiğine ve filmin izleyici üzerinde bıraktığı izlenimin nasıl inşa edildiği problemine yoğunlaşmaktadırlar. Saussure'ün görüşlerinden hareket eden Metz, sinemayı bir dile benzetmekte ve sinemanın kendine özgü maddi koşulları içerisinde anlamı üreten mekanizmayı ortaya çıkarmaya çalışmaktadır. Metz'in sinemanın "semiyotiği" adını verdiği (Andrew, 2010: 322) bu yaklaşım filmin anlamı nasıl kurduğu sorusuna dayanmakta ve filmin anlam kalıplarının araştırılmasına yönelmektedir. Bu çerçevede filmde yer alan görüntüleri, yazıları, grafikleri, konuşmaları, ses efektlerini, müziği kapsayan bu yapı anlamın üretildiği mekanizmanın unsurlarını oluşturmaktadır (Andrew, 2010: 326). Pierce'den hareket eden ve Metz'in görüşlerini sınırlı bulan Wollen ise sinemada anlamın, Pierce'in önerdiği görüntü, belirti ve simgesel gösterge sistemlerinin bir arada kullanılarak estetik bir anlatım oluşturulmasıyla inşa edildiği görüşündedir (Wollen (2004: 127). Bu çerçevede filmin estetik yetkinliğine bağlı olarak perdeye yansıyan kodlar aracılığıyla yan anlamlar üretilebilmektedir. Büker'in de vurguladığı üzere göstergebilimsel çözümleme, kültürel bağlamla ilişkili olarak yaratılan anlamları, örtük bir biçimde sunulan kodları deşifre ederek (Büker, 1985: 42) gösterilen ya da ima edilen anlamları ortaya çıkarmaya çalışmaktadır.

Bu görüşlerden hareketle bu çalışmada da filmlerde doğayla ilişkili olarak ortaya çıkan temsiller, anlamı üreten sinemasal kodlar, gösterge sistemlerinin işaret ettiği görünen ve metaforik anlamları içeren katmanlı bir yaklaşım içerisinde analiz edilmektedir. Bu noktada özellikle filmlerin bağlamını oluşturan kültürel arka plan ve yönetmenin sinemasına yansıyan zihin yapısı, anlamı kuran temel belirleyiciler olarak dikkate alınmaktadır. Nitekim Majidi filmlerinde İslam'ın yorumlanma biçimlerinden olan Şii düşüncesinin ve Sufizm'in varlığı kavramsallaştırma biçimlerinin, özellikle de 13. Yüzyıl Sufî şairi Mevlana Celaleddin Rumî'nin görüşlerine baskın bir tema olarak yer vermektedir. İran şiirinin ve anlatı geleneğinin dolaylı anlatım özelliklerini kullanmasına bağlantılı olarak, doğaya ilişkin ortaya koyduğu temsiller de katmanlı bir yapı içerisinde inşa edilmektedir.

Bu yaklaşım içerisinde doğanın hem görünen biçimiyle hem de doğaya ait unsurların işaret ettiği metafizik göndermeler çerçevesinde filmde üretilen anlama ve öykünün ilerleyişine yaptığı katkıları çözümlenmek üzere bir tablo hazırlanmış ve örneklemi oluşturan bütün filmlere uygulanmıştır. Bu çerçevede Majidi'nin filmlerinde doğanın, ateş, toprak, su hava, hayvanlar, bitkiler, ışık, gölgeler, sesler vb. biçimleriyle görüntülerde, ses kuşağında ve oluşturulan yan anlamlar düzeyinde anlatılara yön verecek boyutta yer bulduğu görülmüştür. Yönetmenin uzun metrajlı ilk filmi olan Baduk'ta doğanın anlatıya katılımı daha sınırlı düzeyde gerçekleşirken, Pedar filminden itibaren doğaya ait unsurların çok daha belirgin biçimde kullanıldığı tespit edilmiştir. Konusu kırsal alanda geçen filmler, doğayla iç içe yaşamlar sunarken, konusu şehirlerde geçen filmlerde doğa biraz daha sınırlı düzeyde anlatıdaki yerini almaktadır. Bununla birlikte doğanın nesnel anlamıyla anlatıdaki temsil düzeyi farklılaşırken, bazı karakterlerin doğaya ait unsurlarla kurduğu ilişkiler ve doğa aracılığıyla oluşturulan

metaforik anlamlar çerçevesinde, konu kırsal alanda da geçse, şehirde geçiyor olsa da doğa güçlü bir anlam üretme aracı olarak varlığını korumaktadır. Bu noktada doğaya ait unsurlar yalnızca atmosfer oluşturmanın, filmin akışına yön veren rastlantıları, çatışmaları ya da çözümleri üreten ya da bu tür olayların gerçekleştiği sahnelere estetik bir sinematografi aracı olarak katkıda bulunmanın ötesinde metafizik alana ilişkin göndermelerde bulunan araçlar olarak da kullanıldığı görülmektedir. Yönetmenin köklü İran anlatılarından, şiirinden ve Sufi öğretiden beslenen sinema yaklaşımı içerisinde doğanın, varlığın ve yaşamın anlamına ilişkin görünen öyküyle birlikte ilerleyen felsefi tartışmaların yürütülmesinde de başat rol üstlendiği bu yönüyle Majidi'nin sinema ve doğa arasındaki ilişkide kendine özgü bir yaklaşım inşa ettiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.