Emilia Nercissians

LANGUAGE AS ACTION: ANALYZING PERFORMATIVES IN A CORPUS OF COMMENTARIES/ MONOLINGUALS' AND BILINGUALS NARRATIVES: FURTHER ANALYSIS OF A CORPUS

The main inspiration for the analysis presented in this doublet has stemmed from the requirement to present one of the two proposed contributions, in which two very different corpora were to be investigated (or, more correctly put, revisited) with rather different motivations. It came to light that there were common themes, which could more clearly be elaborated via examination of both cases. The central idea for both studies has been the mining of what can be construed as the difference between monolingual and bilingual modes of language use. That concern already carries the investigator beyond the confines of mainstream linguistics drawing upon ethnography of speaking, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and similar neighboring disciplines. A starting point is to abandon considering language as means of expressing logical propositions that can be true or false. Rather, following the traditions of speech act, communicative action, and ecological communication theories, linguistic utterances and expressions are first and foremost considered as sociocultural and environmental actions. Like other actions, they are not primarily communicating meanings, but are responding to drives, in pursuit of intensions, reacting to circumstances, and trying to exert control and influence the world in which they are constantly engaged. The emphasis thus shifts from conveying and ascribing meaning to sense making. The analysis carried out in this research, therefore, will not be confined to the level of locutions. Consideration of illocutions and perlocutions, rather, will pose the focal problematic. In previous studies (Nercissians, 2003), strategies of contextualization and identification were primary thematic for explication. Various aspects of those processes have been subjects of consecutive investigations that have already been reported, in each case associated with corresponding theoretical development. The present work intends to go further, where a return to mainstream linguistic will be within sight.

The so called "triple C" model for language use, elaborated more than a decade ago by the author (Nercissians, 1996, 1998), has motivated several studies about the communicative, cognitive, and cultural aspects of language use, especially in bilingual and multilingual settings, in conjunction with various projects and dissertations of colleagues and students. However, in more recent investigations (Nercissians, 2005), attention has shifted away from comparison of competences between language use in each sphere towards elicitation of motivations and intentional stances that give rise to those behaviors. When looked from the viewpoint of language as action, vernacular languages and cultures, it can be argued, encompass ideologies, modes of perception, and implicit knowledge that are often neglected in mainstream sociolinguistics. With the language come the knowledge, and historically shaped modes of perceptualization and conceptualization, which as a result of sociolinguistic exclusion are lost to the determent of all sides, as a result of not being leveraged and utilized.

On the other hand, there are many commonalities, universal attributes, and shared background assumptions, similarity of experiences, among members of different ethnicities living in a common polity that allows not only mutual understandability through similar interpretations, but also collaborative sense making and construction of shared cosmovisions, which escape the attention of those researchers who do not problematize what was taken for granted and never expressed linguistically. [Common references are cited at the end of the second contribution]

I. MONOLINGUALS' AND BILINGUALS NARRATIVES: FURTHER ANALYSIS OF A CORPUS

The corpora of verbal narratives chosen for further critical analysis was initially collected in conjunction with a thesis project carried out under the author's supervision in order to compare the linguistic competences of monolingual and bilingual schoolgirls. The study, despite careful selection of comparison metrics and experimental design, did not reveal significant differences substantiating any theoretical stance on bilingual communicative and cognitive abilities in educational linguistics. In contrast, a subsequent analysis of the same corpora, although having been collected for a different purpose, showed marked difference with respect to verbal explicitness verses context- embeddedness of the chosen codes by the subjects belonging to monolingual and bilingual groups asked to narrate a story illustrated by four consequent images (Nercissians, 1996, 1998). It was also argued that the difference need not be interpreted, as suggested by several well known theories on language acquisition and use of the working class, ethnocultural minorities, children, and primitives, in terms of educational and linguistic disadvantage and differential capabilities. An alternative interpretation was developed according to which contextualization strategies were viewed in terms of identity- oriented and solidarity-stressing linguistic behavior especially adopted by communities characterized by closeknit networks making reference to their common background. At the same time, contextualized narration can also be viewed as creative strategy for compensating for lexical and other limitations experienced by second language learners (Nercissians, 1998, 2000, 2003). The further analysis presented here intends to go beyond those premises and show the inadequacy of the very exophora- endophora distinction drawn by functionalist linguistics. The anaphoric relation in a narration can refer not to the exact and literal referent in some other part of the narration, but to the mental representation of the hearer(s). The question of discourse representation is also important. The narrative expresses the narrator's specific representation of the world, which is integrated with her more general world model. Hearers then are expected to build their own representation of what has been communicated by the narrator. To minimize possible mismatches, narrators are typically expected to take into consideration the developing representations of the audience especially, in one sided discourses like narrations, those features of their propensities they can depend upon, so that hearers are able to use in trying to identify intended referents. Analysis of the corpora shows that exophoric cannot always be the same as explicit. Decontextualized narratives can thus be conceptualized as discourses that are merely recontextualized to take into account the formality conventions of the dominant culture (Young, 1981). Alternatively, less formally organized minorities have, in addition to the exophoric and inter- narrative regularity features that can help hearers in interpreting intended meanings in

particular narrative fragments, important extra- narrative means in the form of socio- cultural knowledge and situational cues that can serve as reinforcement. Further steps are taken towards providing explanations beyond the confines of interest of pure linguistics through referral to speech act theory, discourse analysis, artificial intelligence, knowledge management, and poststructuralist textual analysis. The focus of attention is shifted towards the intentional and representative aspects of narration. A two dimensional model elaborated in the past studies of the author is restated in this new light. The extended model is then used for analyzing the differences between the monolingual and bilingual corpora from a critical standpoint.

THE NARRATIVES

The corpora under investigation was obtained by asking second grade schoolgirls in Educational zone eight in Tehran, where there is sizeable concentration of the Iranian Armenian community to narrate the story depicted in the four images shown in Fig. 1. The respondents were divided into two: monolingual (majority) and bilingual (minority) groups. The initial intention for collecting the data was to compare the linguistic competences of the two groups; therefore, no attempt had been made to select images that could facilitate other studies as well.

ANALYSIS

Initial investigations conducted in partial fulfillment of a thesis under the author's supervision revealed the Iranian Armenian community under investigation had linguistic competences in all components comparable with those of monolinguals. However, later research carried by the author showed that there were clear differences between the language use patterns of the two groups. Here are two typical examples of how the story was narrated by two respondents.
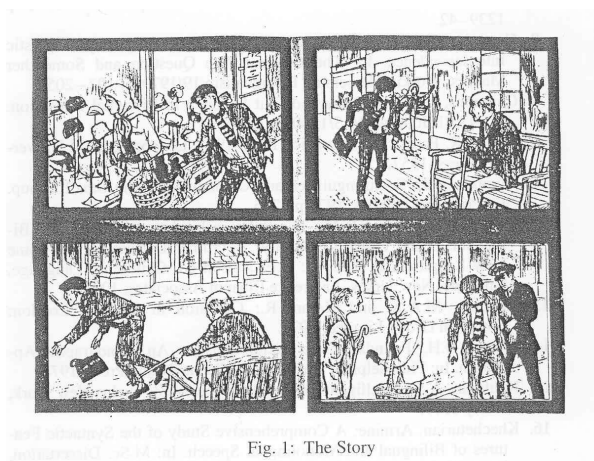

Fig. 1: The Story

"This lady has come across this store. She is watching the hats; and this man took that from her bag. And here, the woman found out that this man has taken her (hand)bag from her bag. And then the woman runs after him. And this man too, when sitting here, holds

his walking stick between that thief's feet. Then the bag falls from his hands. Here the police comes and catches him. And that man hands her bag. This woman thanks that man.

"A thief took a woman's bag and ran. A man was sitting on a chair. That man was able to detect that this is thief. A police came and arrested the thief; and the bag returned to the woman".

The examples show a very distinct divide between narrative strategies of the two groups. Half of the twenty two respondents from the group of monolinguals had narrated the story without any reference to the images, while only two, out of twenty two respondents in the bilingual group had used the "decontextualized" code and the rest had context embedded narratives. This can give rise to various language deficit or disadvantage theories. Context embedded codes may support high communicative competence, but low cognitive competence theories. It may also indicate tendancy towards use of restricted codes. Generally, context embeddedness has been said to mark primitiveness and immature communication. In discourse analysis, that narrative style can be interpreted as failure to follow the introduction then follow-up routines marking textuality and coherence. Models and analysis proposed by the author, however, furnished alternative deductions. Context embedded forms of narratives could also indicate more or less deliberate and conscious solidarity enhancing strategies on the one hand, and intelligent means of compensation for lexical or other linguistic difficulties on the other. Bilingual speakers, it is argued, are capable of using more limited linguistic repertoire without showing any communicative disadvantage, because they have compensatory measures through leveraging context more often. This line of argument carries us beyond the limits defined by the dominant functionalist paradigm prevailing in sociolinguistics towards more interactionist, constuctivist, and dialectic stances. Now it can be further argued that majority and minority subcultures do not converge in two dimensional status- solidarity plane. Identity oriented and solidarity stressing attitudes is to be encountered more often in minority settings, while majority attitudes often attach more significance to status and prestige dimension. Social creativity motivates bilinguals who belong to some ethnolinguistic minority towards stressing, enhancing, as well as leveraging the common identity and discounting the requirements of formal discourse. Consciousness towards higher prestige and social status, on the other hand, inclines majority group members, who have the dominant subculture, towards higher levels of abstraction and formality. Returning to the discourse technique of using indefinite clause when introducing someone or something, and definite clause as the person or thing or concept is being tracked throughout the story, the question might be asked whether not using that technique could necessarily be interpreted as linguistic deficit in conceptualization of indefinite categories, or at least utilization of discourse formalities for enhancing cohesion. A more critical analyst could hardly fail to observe that the narrators were given the task of telling the story from a set of only four images, the cohesion of which could itself be a subject of analysis. In effect, the subjects were asked to retell a story that has already been narrated pictorially. So their discourse genre could be considered as commentary rather than narration. Anaphoric references would thus not necessarily be a failure to observe the discourse formalities, if a consciousness of their lack in the original unfolding of the story were there. How much are the subjects conscious of the existing of diverse subcultures that could support differential interpretations of the story as told by the images, so that they would rather leverage what they assumed common background that existed outside of the text and the stories (the story narrated by them, as well as the story

narrated by the images)? And, one cannot fail to eventually pose the question: is telling the story the whole purpose of the speech act? Are there not many other things that need be said (done) during the discourse? One here can hardly fail to appreciate the notable commonality of stances. For example, none of the narrators have tried to tell the story from the thief's viewpoint (e.g. the thief being in dire need, all the people- the old man, the police, and the woman- acting so as to prevent his satisfying the need by transgressing property relations). Surely, it is not merely the images' use of the usual techniques of textuality that has excluded alternative interpretations (e.g. the woman's son wanted to buy something his mother disapproved of, but the old man and the police would not let him). The story, irrespective of the subculture of its narrator or addressee, both uses and reinforces dominant cultural elements like "women are week and need be protected", "property is right and should not be transgressed", "police serve people", "old men are respectable and wise", "there are many bad men around that are young and agile so that one always has to be on guard" etc. It is only within this network of common dominant ethical presuppositions, social norms, and behavioral patterns (running for escaping) that subcultural elements are allowed to show themselves. For example, a comparison reveals that minority narrators had more tendency towards descriptive generalizations (e.g description of what the woman is busy doing in front of the store, what the thief tells the police as he is being arrested, where the thief is taken afterwards, how the old man was alerted to the situation). This also demonstrates their higher level of consciousness of the need to interpret the discrete set of pictures. For example, making sense of the fact that the old man interferes and stops the free running of the young man would be very problematic, unless it is made clear that not only has the young man broken an important ethical norm, but also the fact is known to the old man as well. The bilingual narrators resolved that problem by telling that the old man had heard the woman's request for help, or had seen the act of stealing. In the case where the monolingual narrator had also appreciated the need for an explanation, she had sufficed to mention that the old man had detected that the running man was a thief (not bothering to narrate how). Another fine point to be mentioned is the part of the story narrating the old man's action. The author has elaborated elsewhere (Nercissians, 2003), how bilingual narrators have used contextualization strategies in order to compensate for their not using the word "walking stick". But further elicitation can also lead to the deduction that the contextualization strategy also helps in avoiding the use of possessive dexis. (For example, instead of saying "the old man extended his walking stick", it can be said that "the old man extended the wooden stick"). In all cases of the monolinguals' narrations the terms walking stick or hand stick has been mentioned together with a possessive pronoun. On the other hand, not only have the bilingual narrators often used contextualization for describing what was being extended, inhibiting the free run of the young man, but also in all but one case no possessive definite marker has been used for identifying that thing (stick).

CONCLUSIONS

In this analysis, it has been attempted to elucidate differential strategies adopted by majority and minority schoolgirls when narrating a story beyond what has been conjectured by the author in previous studies. Every step presents further critique of pathological views towards language use patterns. Instead of looking for grammars and

norms of correct use patterns and deviation from those norms indicating incompetence, dysfunctional behavior, and cognitive deficit, the researcher should try to explain why people leverage different strategies in selecting their actions. The key point here is to view language as an action that is more than communicating a mental state or a logical proposition. Language use also encompasses expression of viewpoints, attempts towards forging social bonds and links, and most of all endeavors seeking to reach certain goals. Of course, not all actions of ours are deliberate or volitive or intentional, accessible to our consciousness or awareness. We do not select actions for no reason even if we do it subconsciously. Stories tell not only what has happened, but also the associated value attachments that reflect the historical experiences of sociocultural groups. It is not merely the semantic aspects that need to be investigated but the semiotic and signifying moments too are in need of explication. Minorities, it is argued, tend to use specific procedures of contextualization that can help them take advantage of, stress and express alignment with, and in final analysis reinforce and reproduce common backgrounds. The more closeknit social networks they possess, the less dominant position the occupy in the greater polity, the more they will be likely to utilize this strategy. They are more conscious of prevailing sociocultural and sociolinguistic diversities and use discourse strategies that are more anaphoric. Their language use is geared towards identity stressing and solidarity enhancing discourse technologies. For example, they often take advantage of sympathetic circularity through use of expressions like "she does thus" or "he does that thing". The language use patterns of the dominant group members, on the other hand, are often discernable as prestige and status seeking actions; not to be designated as decontextualized, but formal.

There are three further aspects that need be mentioned. The first is the notion of spatial deixis. The notions of text deixis and discourse deixis has been studied extensively. Shingo Imai (2003)Imai presents a comparative investigation of how space surrounding the speaker is demarcated via different languages. However, a microsociolinguistic and microethnopragmatic research has very different needs than pure linguistic research. Can it be that minority group members find it more useful to leverage "anchors" than majority group members irrespective of the language they use? Second is the concept of argument ellipsis, which is the subject of the research conducted by Shigeko Nariyama (2000) for Japanese. It elucidates the linguistic mechanisms with which to identify the referents of the ellipted arguments. And the third construct is designated as linguistically specific features of discourse, which according to Alida Anderson (2006) is an important facet of the competence children acquire in early childhood, which enables them to convey information and use language appropriately in different discourse situations. It can be argued that the less sociocultural distance there is between interlocutors, the more exophoric and internarrative regularity features and shared knowledge items and situational cues will tend to be leveraged to direct hearers/readers toward certain interpretations of the text.

II. LANGUAGE AS ACTION: ANALYZING PERFORMATIVES IN A CORPUS OF COMMENTARIES

The multilingual corpus revisited for further analysis consists of commentaries expressed via Armenian, Farsi (Persian), as well as several other languages; even via drawings and cartoons in a few cases, in 1993 by visitors of an art exhibition showing the paintings of S. Parajanov. The exhibition was held by authorities representing the Parajanov museum in Armenia, following invitation by Iranian authorities in movie industry, which, at that time, was in the process of policy shifts towards further liberalization (Nercissians, 1995, 2000). The theoretical frameworks for the analysis are elaborated in the first part of this paper. A focal point is to go beyond mere consideration of sentences and linguistic elements as constructs and premises used for encompassing truth values. Extending the models developed via speech act theory and communicative action approach, the commentaries are considered as intentional acts representing, in addition to content statements, communicative, cognitive and cultural goals and values. The conceptualization of text poses another question. Textual corpus involves more than written aspect of the language. Firstly, it must have textuality as problematized by functionalist linguistics. But more importantly, especially due to the action- oriented approach adopted in this paper, texts are not only writerly, but also readerly. The productivity aspect of the text is important for poststructural analysis (Young, 1981). Rather than being the product of communicative effort, it is the very theatre of production where the producer and reader of the text meet. Even the written and fixed text starts working whenever it is taken and subjected to doxa. It is, therefore, the purpose of the analysis presented in this paper to go beyond criticism in traditional as well as structuralist senses: trying to reveal the latent intention, to express what has not been stated, but by rereading what has been stated. The text incorporates many voices that need to be untangled. In the continuation of the paper the commentaries of the corpus under investigation are examined. An important aspect is the analysis of intertextuality, which refers to the ways texts derive their meaning from other texts. In addition to the expressed locutions, illocutions and perlocutions are also carefully taken into consideration. Among the internal procedures used for controlling each discourse are the concepts of major narratives and communities of discourse. Of particular interest in our study, is the elaboration of the commentaries in terms of an extended two dimensional model representing status and solidarity orientations. Finally, another most important component of our analysis of what is actually said in commentaries is the critical examination of what is never said. It is concluded that commentaries can be studied in an ethnomethodological sense as technologies people use to overcome the instability of commonsense knowledge creating shared meanings anew in each new encounter.

THE COMMENTARIES

The corpus under study consists of the comments written by the participants in an art exhibition displaying the works of Sergey Parajanov. The exhibition of the paintings took place in Tehran in 1993 by individuals that were involved in the movie industry and the Parajanov museum. The event, one of the first organized jointly by Institutions affiliated with

Iranian and Armenian states after the downfall of Soviet Union, brought the promise of more intense cultural relations between the two countries and a movement away from the cold war that had exerted severe limitations, both politically and culturally. The fact that Parajanov is considered as a major figure in Soviet dissident movement, and that his art style is also far from being simple and conventional is also significant. Among the participants, many were from the Iranian Armenian community; a community that had good reasons to resent the cold war tensions. Irrespective of which side they sympathized with, most Iranian Armenians would have welcomed closer ties with Armenia. Some even had relatives in that country to whom they could not even pay visit without undue difficulties, especially before the regime change in Iran (which happened before the independence of Armenia). The corpus is multilingual because participants were free to write in any language. There were also many non- Iranian participants, showing that the event was of international significance; and many commentaries have been written in English as well as other languages not spoken by the different ethnicities living in Iran as their vernacular tongues. Names also suggest that there were many foreign visitors. Finally, some participants had chosen non linguistic means (like drawing) to express themselves. Since the entries were results of voluntary action, the fact that someone had decided to express herself in the commentary book presupposed high level of motivation, although at least one writer had mentioned that his commentary has been written due to the "insistence of friends". Following the line of reasoning introduced in the companion paper, we start by considering the writing (or drawing) of comments as actions rather than mere linguistic sentences. So our attention is drawn to the intentional stances of the commentary writers rather than the meanings of what they have commented (Nercissians, 1996, 1998, 2003, 2005). They have entered their comments because they have felt a need to express themselves; and perhaps to offer their interpretations of the works exhibited. In trying to elaborate on the intended meanings or even, like we endeavor to do, the intensional stances of Parajanov himself, commentaries ought to "say for the first time what had, nonetheless, already been said, and tirelessly repeat what had, , however, never been said".

ANALYSIS

One of the most important things in discourse analysis is to discuss not only what has been said, but also, and more importantly, what has not been said. The most important thing that strikes the reader is the large scale absence of what one would expect would constitute the main theme of commentaries: analysis of artistic expression and style of Parajanov. Of course most writers have written one or two short sentences on the beauty or excellence of his work, but have immediately shifted to discussions on how good it is to have such events organized, what they think constitutes the essence of Armenian or Oriental thinking, how they have seen others make do with simple things to produce works of art, etc. One commentary, for example, only mentions "long live the Armenian". Clearly, despite the fact that all those secondary topics could also be considered as discussions of various aspects of Parajanov's work, one can safely conclude that most commentary writers have used the occasion to express opinions that they would also express in any other occasion and in radically dissimilar settings. Another striking element in commentaries is the high frequency of calls for further explanation of Parajanov's work and criticism of the organizers' work because of their failure to provide

further explications. This is especially evident in those commentaries that can be inferred to have been written by Armenian participants either because they have chosen to write in Armenian or their names indicate their ethnic origin. It should be noted that in Iran (as perhaps in other countries too), artists especially resent being asked to explain their works. Ironically, this request is frequently made in artistic gatherings. Artists think their works are already the expression of their thoughts and the call for explanation amounts to the declaration of their failure to do the explanation through their works. One important aspect of the commentaries that has been analyzed by the author in past works is the collective construction of identity (Nercissians, 1999, 2003a). The use of pronouns, especially the first person plural "we" is very indicative. Examples like "we are anticipating more works of his…" or "we are proud of…" abound. More generally, the use of deictic expressions (the so called shifters or indexical expressions) can be viewed as performing important communicative functions as identification in terms of relations to the ongoing interactive context in which the discourse takes place. Examples are "I hope in the near future we will have such artists (end of comment)", or "It's good to see these exhibitions, I think they should be advertised more often so others can enjoy them". In some cases boundaries are made only to point out the need to bridge them. For example "we should thank our Armenian friends…" and "today, watching these artistic works as a compatriot, I am glad that I see artistic appreciation in the peoples' eyes" mark distances that need to be bridged. Again, in those cases where the Armenian origin of the commentary writer is easy to infer, one cannot escape noting how ethnic pride is emphasized (even with literally writing "we are proud of…" in several occasions) in so many entries. Also, in cases where the non Armenian origin of the writer could be inferred, one could read sentences like "… he, in my opinion, is the analogous of a complete human; same as there is in the poems of Hafez the great Iranian poet. I congratulate the people of Armenia and to all humanity for having such a genious…".

To proceed further, let us concentrate on two specific motivations that can be shown to be present in many commentaries. The first one is the attempt to use the occasion to emphasize the importance and to explicate the positive aspects of a common identity. That common identity can be the Armenian identity, the Irano Caucasian identity, the identity of the non Western, or sometimes other identities like the identity of people who appreciate art, the identity of political dissidents etc. That the occasion is only an excuse for this identity construction venture is in many cases not veiled. The second motivation, also evident in many commentaries, is to declare the writer's art loving attribute. Generally, appreciation of art is considered a matter of prestige in many developing countries like Iran. It can be a demonstration of affluence (the fact that one can allocate time for pursuit of intellectual fulfillment) and knowledge. However, the demonstration can often not be matched with real exhibition of mastery. Commenting on general themes like the beauty of Parajanov's work, his ability to use simple things to produce works of art, etc. relieves the commentary writer from the need to demonstrate his knowledge by commenting on the specific artistic virtues and stylistic distinctions of the art works, while maintaining the pretence that the commentary writer, unlike most other people who are not appreciative of works of art, is very interested and knowledgeable. The

commentary can then proceed with other general statements to become lengthier than other writings without necessarily being more informative or more expressive or even more directive (like asking for better lighting, more suitable frames, etc. like some commentary writers have done).

CONCLUSIONS

Discussion of commentaries is an important step towards investigation of ideological effects prevalent in a polity. The corpus represents an ensemble of discursive pieces, provoked or induced by primary works that exhibit cosmovisions, attitudes, illusions, wishes, as well as technologies for collective construction of those elements by their writers. More than any other discursive genre, they are actions having, in addition to locutions, specific illocutions and perlocutions. Original artworks of Parajanov, likewise are his commentaries encompassing the same ideological elements, and so is any analysis of the corpus of commentaries. Considering the status and solidarity dimensions elaborated in previous works, the two: demonstration of appreciation for art, and collective identity construction performatives of several commentaries can be categorized as special cases that can locate the commentaries in the two dimensional plane. It then becomes an obvious theme of investigation to see whether the comments, when so placed in accord to their perceived strengths along the two dimensions, cluster with respect to the ethnic origin or selected language (and more generally mode of expression) of their writers. Initial observations confirm that indeed there is an evident clustering. While both motivations can be said to be present, though with differential strengths, in almost all entries, identity oriented motivations are stronger in the case of Iranian Armenian writers while prestige based approaches can be seen most often in commentaries that have been written in Farsi (Persian). In both cases, psychoanalytic factors are clearly present. It is the perception of the lack or at least the absence of common cognition, most of all, which has been the main driving force for the endeavor to construct. It is being sought, through discursive methods, to reassure oneself of a positively valued place against what is conceptualized as the cultural and political dominance or economic and social pragmatism. The commentaries show that the majority of the visitors, who have taken time to write their thoughts in the book, were not professional drawers or art critics. They were, rather, members of Iranian Armenian community, who availed themselves of the opportunity to participate in the event that had to do with the Armenian part of their collective identity, members of the Iranian community at large, who wanted to participate in what promised to be intellectually rewarding, and tourists, who wanted to see something of the culture of this distant part of the world that was less conventional. One can understand how the feeling of being present in an important event, which on the one hand is detaching them for a short while from their daily social and economic activities, and on the other hand, makes them think about different cultures and their reflection in Parajanov's artwork, furnishes a setting in which their conscious and unconscious ideas and concerns seek a route towards expression.

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