

Persian translation of this paper entitled:  
تحلیل وجوه فرهنگ عامه در نقاشی‌های حسینعلی ذابحی  
is also published in this issue of journal.

## Different Aspects of Popular Culture in Hossin Ali Zabehi's Paintings

Farideh Afarin\*

### Abstract

The present paper has allocated to analysis of the different aspects of popular culture in Zabehi's paintings according to some social and cultural related contents like utopia, Carnival, and Grotesque. Relying on descriptive-analytical way, the main object of article, is to show how the popular culture emancipate from domination of ruling culture in the works of the artist. The paper aim at highlighting the formal characteristics of works to achieve two levels of explicit and implicit significations, in order to illustrate two kinds of culture: one is related to popular and another is produced by them. At the level of explicit signification, we rely on general characteristics of the artist's paintings like deleting outlines and deformation of the objects in still lives. Also, applying the expressive colors can make distinguishable types of social characters according to their clothing and their gestures corresponding to their linguistic unusual titles of tableaus. In addition to it, the size of tableaus and artist's action is the place of breaking the binary oppositions like popular and dominant culture. analysing the Implicit level leads to extract the profound themes with concentration on general characteristics and regarding the subject of artist's paintings generally. by examining the character's clothes, we can imagine ceremonies such as carnivals that individuals have equal opportunities in a classless utopia. The fast brushstrokes, with dry and physically colors relying on monstrous forces and color-sensing, display the features that resist to the forces of representative/objective rules of artistic works. This resistance makes painting able to have a potential energy that motivates, distorts and deforms the stable and immutable dimension of figures and forms of still lives. This aspect parallelly along with the implied fear of deformed and dried-up still lives, shows the grotesque space. All of the above mentioned features, based on the style of expressionism, have depicted paintings out of the representational/objective domination and direct emphasis on the obvious attributes of popular classes. These measures present the opportunities for realizing the ignored energies of popular culture. as a result these works by formal description and interpretive analysis of two levels of signification display two aspects of popular culture, first which is produced by concentration on their creative works, practices, rituals and ceremonies. The second, stems from their behaviors, habits and lifestyles. Thus, in contrast to the imitative and objective art, these works are aesthetic/subjective ones because of their superiority over the dominant forms of artistic experiences.

### Keywords

Carnival, Grotesque, Utopia, Popular culture, Zabehi's paintings.

.....  
\* . Assistant Professor, Art Studies Department, Art Faculty, Semnan University. F.afarin@semnan.ac.ir

## Introduction

Hossein Ali Zabehi was born in Tehran in 1925. He graduated in painting in 1968 from Tehran fine arts academy. He began to paint at the faculty of Fine Arts (beaux-arts) under the supervision of a French painter in 1971, and graduated in M. A. in 1975. He has a background of teaching at conservatory, Daneshvari, university of art and architecture of Open University. According to critics' ideas, his style is influenced by Emil Nolde, George Rouault, and Chaïm Soutine. Zabehi doesn't expect that living creatures stand frozen and motionless for hours as models because he even paints his still lives without any objective models.

The absence of objective models let him put the French scenes, costumes and gestures together with Iranian ones. We obviously observe the French atmosphere and Tehran's downtown spaces in his paintings. Aspects of carnivals, puppetry scenes and social ceremonies in spite of their amusements keep the various people far from their contradictions and conflicts. They are revelers of folklore's creativity and emancipation of pressure of dominant cultures. In this article, we will explain and analysis two levels of significations by describing formal characteristics and content analysis of zabehi's paintings. We explain precisely his style, his color palettes, the strokes, the types of colors and lines, outlines, objects, forms and spaces and so on. Then we interpret some contents by reliance on Kayzer, Bakhtin and Bloch's ideas to achieve different aspects of expressing an idea in artist's different exhibitions with emphasis on popular culture.

## Theoretical Foundation

This section includes three parts. In the first part we introduce three distinguished aspects of popular culture. The second part is allocated to the theoretical discussion related to the carnival, Grotesque and utopia. The third section presents two theoretical arguments about expressionism as a modern movement.

A) Sociological researchers display two tendencies

towards popular culture: Culturalism (Stuart Hall) and constructivists. The first, praises the popular culture and considers it as the representation of their values, beliefs of social classes. Also, it pays attention to it as the fulfillment of authentic people which is the main source of giving birth to the hero. The second one, considers it as the realm of class conflict to get hegemony, as a product of pure Bourgeoisie's ideology and as a realm of pure ruin (Bennett, 2009: 55).

Simon Frith<sup>1</sup>, English music sociologist, presents three definitions for popular culture. First is about the produced culture for peoples' consumption. The second is culture which is produced by concentration on their creative works, practices, rituals and ceremonies. The last but not the least, is the culture which is stem from their behaviors, habits and lifestyles ( Frith, 2004: 430-428). The examples for second and third parts are Popular fictions, lully, popular songs, puppetry, coffeeshouse' paintings and Imam Hossein's tease which are the ways of the eruption of creativity and potential of popular culture. There will be moments, opportunities and spaces which provide the emancipated situation of dominant rules. They bring about the possibility of creation. It seemed that the subjects of Zabehi's paintings include second and third parts. Popular behaviors, practices, habites, gestures, costumes and ceremonies are the common subjects of his paintings. B) With the concentration on the positive view towards culturalism and separation between types of popular culture we are able to extract analytical basics of the research. In order to make clear modern dimensions of grotesque, we rely on German and Russian researchers' ideas: Wolfgang Johansen Kayzer<sup>2</sup> and Mikhail Bakhtin<sup>3</sup>. According to Wolfgang Kayser's ideas, modern theory about grotesque is expanded through the emphasis on disastrous aspects in literature and art.

The start point of kayzer's works is a recalling of devilish forces of Gotique world. He tried to promote the issue of "grotesque" up to the serious aesthetic category. He interpreted it as metaphysical concept

and consider its origin in the scattered and fragmental images of the world. (Makaryk, 2014 : 240-249)

Bakhtin searched the roots of carnivals in medieval ages, when they were programmized against the boring institutionalized authority of the church, monarchy, and government systematic rules. The peasant festivals of medieval ages held in the mian squares of the city which acquired less formal behaviors relied on peoples` free touches and relationship. The classification of people according to their class, possessions, professions, races, families and positions were ignored during certain dayes of the festivals. Along with refusal of the social orders and classifications, the rejection of culture and tradition`s seriousness, in street celebrations, carnival, and beside other forms of popular culture like oral and folkloric literature, children anecdotes, popular songs, there will appear an imagined utopia (Ahmadi, 2013: 105) Utopia is derived from, Greek words, Eu, and Topos that means “nowhere” an allusion to a good place like paradise (More, 2006: 16), as theological argument is coined by Sir Thomas More, English Catholic humanistic writer and politician in 15th century as a comprehensive model system for controlling a society against suggested protestant and Lutheran`s society. Karl Popper<sup>4</sup>, an Austrian thinker, along with positive, prolific and optimistic aspects of Utopias, mentioned us their weak points like Totalarism, Humanism and Secularism. He believed that Plato as a first constitutioner of hierarchal society is a fascist indeedly. Also, the main problem is that we weren`t entered into the Plato`s Republic, but entered to Romulus Augustulus`s “piggery” (Midgley, 2015: 47- 48). Karl Marx proposed a communist & classless society with equal opportunity and contribution of all people in public possession of production tools which acquired less control of the state (Ahmadi, 2014: 150-153) and pessimistically resulted in proletarians` dictatorship.

- George Lukacs<sup>5</sup>, a Hungary philosopher was a Fan of critical Realism because of deep perception of the literary writers and characters of their works about their own time and place. He also described

the perplexity of petty-bourgeois` involvement in capitalist society. Ernst Bloch<sup>6</sup> German Philosopher in the article entitled “Discussion about Expressionism” considered the relation between Avant-guard Art and Capitalism with emphasis on expressionism. Bloch praised expressionism because it provided the suitable forms for the dismantled situation of industrial city life (Bloch, 2012: 22-37). At last, relying on for and against`s ideas about Expressionism (in literature) as a modern movement, we explain the artist`s style in detail.

### Literature Review

Contemporary Iranian Art: The New Perspective, (2013) by Hamid Keshmirshekan is a comprehensive research about interior and exterior contemporary Iranian artists and their careers with definitive subjects. 90 Years of Innovation in Iranian Visual Arts by Javad Mojabi introduced the various modern and contemporary artists along with their careers and works. These sources give researchers useful and scientific information about contemporary artists.

In relation to contents of our focus, like grotesque, there is MA thesis like Grotesque in Bahman Mohases` works By Pegah Taheri which discussed the role of the body in grotesque from Bakhtin`s point of view. Vahid Hakim has written an article in Herfeh Honarmand entitled social aspects and contents of zabehi`s paintings. Our different objects and aims will present different aspects of Zabehis` paintings.

### Research Method

The method of research is analytical –descriptive type. Data gathering is based on the library sources and digital documents and internet data.

### Research Findings

The findings of the current study are explained under four headlines: 1) social character of figures, 2) Carnival and utopia 3) Grotesque in space and themes of paintings, 4) artist style. We arguably consider that utopia means equal opportunity for public participation in gaining equal opportunity in status as

a result of utopian transient carnival. The grotesque means paradoxical instances and horrendous moments and spaces of subverting the social roles and classes in the carnival and folkloric ceremonies, by mentioning the formal and content characteristics of Hussein Ali Zabehe's works in his recent exhibitions in the year 2016 and 2017, as well as 2009 and 2010 (about a decade). Accordingly, the audience is seeing and observing the path to perfection of this prolific artist over a decade.

● **Social character of figures**

the best and quickest way to understand the social character of zabehe's figures is to refer to non-normative language used in Titles which motivate the standard language. they confront Zabehe's works with different potentiality. Regarding this titles makes every figure appear differently. In this study, consequently, the important aesthetic roles of titles have been regarded (Guter, 2016: 151). The rate of correspondence of titles to the social character of figures is so important to lead the viewer to explicit

signification. As a result, titles are like conjunctive chains between implicit and explicit levels. They are displaying behaviors, moods, habits, and attributes, amusements and peoples' professions. Most of the people whether men or women even the artist in his autoportraits, are displayed in celebration's clothes, dresses plus costumes, but if we weren't able to distinguish peoples' social status, titles help us to pay attention to their social character. Lodeh (zany) is a woman putting the hat and wearing clothes with pleating on collars, laughing gently (Fig. 8). Gambling looser putting on a hat wearing tie and smoking while looking curiously around (Fig. 9). Women's names as title, lead us to the social character of figures, for example, Fati Molanroje, Kobra kaleandaz, Malose Golebesar, in addition to this, titles like Homeless singer (Fig. 7), Servant, Children Work (Fig. 10), Model, café Woman (Fig. 12) show peoples' professions. The Clown of the Circus, Hajjifroz, Puppetry (Fig. 1&2) as titles are related to their culture. What we said, all show the social character of people (Hakim, 2014: 133).



Fig. 1. Doll factory, 2009, Zabehe, paint & oil on canvas. Source: <http://festiveart.com/iranian-master-artists/hosseini-ali-zabehe/>



Fig. 2. Puppetry, 2010, Zabehe, paint & oil on canvas. Source: <http://www.maryamharandi.com/gallery/?hosseinali-zabehe>

There is an imaginary dialogic relationship between artist and his subjects. This is because of artist's emphasis on their clothes, embellishments, makes up as if they are the participant in a carnival or

celebration. There is an intersubjective relationship between them. But unifying the poles of artist and audience is not a prolific measure. According to Bakhtin, there is no gain no glory in unifying "Other"

in “I”. This make conformity. In Seeing, Knowing and understanding like this, “he” repeats the tragic dimensions of my life. Let him stand outside of me because it makes him able to see differently from my point of view (Todorov, 2014: 168) it seemed that there is a bilateral giving and taking between artist and his painting’s subjects without any unifying. Artist makes imaginary dialogue with his subjects and invites them to his carnival which its attribute is separation from normative rules.

### ● Carnival and Utopia

Carnival is rooted in religious theme. For forty days, Christians were prevented from eating meat, fatty foods and eggs until the resurrection of Christ. These days were called greasy day along with the widespread parade. It dates back to Pre-Christian festivals and ceremonies which is rooted in the mythological collective rituals and is far from ceremonies which confirm dominant power. In this regard, apart from the religious theme of the carnival, looking at Zabehi’s works, one can say that he has painted various types of subjects to show a general celebration and emphasizes their characteristic features. We claim that zabehi’s paintings in an exhibition wholly imply carnival or celebration theme which is different from formal ritual.

With citation to Shakespeare’s works, there will be a critical discourse from clowns as a resistance to dominant culture through his critical action, behavior, and caustic speech. Inspired by James Ensor<sup>7</sup>, and Georges Henri Rouault<sup>8</sup> the Clown, masks, and puppetry are the fixed subjects of his works. Because of these reasons, Zabehi called himself, and depict his autoportraits as the clown (Etehad & Zabehi , 2015 : 7 ) (Fig. 6). Maybe instead of the hierarchal platonic utopic definition, it’s better to concentrate on Karl Marx’s ideas which are Regarding a multitude of equal possibility and opportunity in possession of production tools.

There is a meaningful relationship between carnival and utopia since the carnival is the disruptive cause of social classes and positions for moments,

consequently, it constructs a temporary classless utopic society with the accentuation of the nature of informal people. Similar to Hieronymus Bosch’s middle panel of The Garden of Earthly Delights. Bakhtin distinguished in the carnival, utopic ideals like Equality, Fraternity, and Freedom (Makaryk, 2011: 250). We know that in every utopia potentially there will be a dystopia, Pictorial signs in Zabehi’s paintings show them to us. Through this, Artist expressed absurdity of being. (Thomson, 2011: 30)

According to Vahid Hakim, we can consider dominant aspects of social characters which awakened and agitated against the disasters caused by the ideologies of this century” (Hakim, 2014, 103). The meaning of Ideology does not represent the “reality” but reverse it (Ahmadi, 2014: 29-30). Folkloric aspects And modes, like ceremony, customs, and art of this people, apart from being entangled in the ideological hurts, (that means false consciousness), can be considered as a way to overcome dominant culture, its injected ideology and its rules. Folkloric aspects and modes can be taken into account as reaction and resistance to its pressure. This resistance makes the things and objects and people in tableaus have extra potential energy, in this way, accumulated energy of them will subvert the order of seats and positions in a carnival. It also disrupts the networks of the outlines, boundaries, and forms in the paintings.

### ● Grotesque in Space and the Theme of Paintings

The researchers attributed grotesques’ ancestry to Western culture and, at least, to the early years of Christianity, especially in Roman culture. Grotesque has been derived from discovered paintings from the Titus Pool and the ruins of the Golden Nero Palace, which dates back to the year 68 A.D, has appeared in language. (Adames & Yates, 2010: 24)

When in painting, the image of humans and plants and animals was trodden in strange ways, grotesque methods were created. The images of animals consisted of animal bodies, bird wings and demi-like fishtail and curly, Corrugated Strapping patterns which

showed vegetable life. They called the walls that were painted in this way, with Grotosco and the name of Lagrotosca. The word “grotesque” was introduced into French and used in English for old paintings and its prevalence in the 19th century. (Ibid: 16-17)

The grotesque is called to an accompanied ridiculous affair with a terrible, abusive, and incongruent, exaggerated sense of polytheism, and generally the contradiction of the unresolved contradictory heterogeneous elements in paintings is a response to grotesque. (Ibid: 32) it goes back to three areas: the process of creating the work, the technique, and the work itself and its acceptance.

Here, with the accompaniment of the ridiculous and horrible, we first focused on the artwork itself. The grotesque is depicted with distorted objects, deformed faces and wrinkled still lifes (Fig. 3, 4). In the second step, by describing the artist’s style, we show this feature. Therefore, grotesque is seeing the familiar world from the strange, ridiculous or scary point of view, or simultaneously brings

together both of these qualities. The Zabehi’s works create a carnival with grotesque characters, which, on the other hand, are nicer and, on the other hand, ridiculous, and sometimes somewhat cheerful. Also, each portraiture is trapped in a small and decorative frame, and each person is reminded of a carnival in conjunction with other portraits in an exhibition overall, and brings an ideal world in its absence for some time. Moreover, these people seem to have restrained the brutal force in one way and at any moment may lose their tie. Bakhtin considered the origin of Grotesque, in novel of Rabelais, entitled Gargantown and Pentagrel<sup>9</sup>, in Carnival and Folklore. Hence, in this novel, “popular Culture is the root of the the Grotesque idea” (Bakhtin, 2015: 241), he explicitly answers the question: What to be needed to reestablish a social life which civil and dominant culture has destroyed it? (Adams & Yates, 2000: 43) The answer is: the revival of the carnival and its grotesque origin, which can be the answer and choice of our artist.



Fig. 3. Still life, 2009, Zabehi, paint & oil on canvas. Source: <http://www.maryamharandi.com/gallery/?hosseinali-zabehi>



Fig. 4. Red Table and Dance Object, Zabehi, 2017, paint & oil on canvas. Source: <http://www.maryamharandi.com/gallery/?hosseinali-zabehi>

Grotesque represents a paradoxical moment, that is, the moment is between what the conflict of social classes and what it will be, the equality of classes in a society that classifies the class division as a supposition. The subverting moment is the time of happening of grotesque. The order of the ordinary

world collapses and the inequalities come together, and this controversial coming together is tempting. The artworks that are supposed to serve the dominant culture and created for his enjoyment are dedicated to the subjects of the popular class, the canvas that is intended to go to the large houses, deliberately do not

suit to it. The size of painting boards is moderately small which seemed like close-up for drawing audience's more attention along with concentration on fewer details. maybe this small size with their decorative and charming frames is a way to draw buyer's attention for their payment but as same as a painterly praxis of artist become controllable and distinguishable. As it is evident in these works, the characters are dressed in festival, ceremonial or carnival costumes. In the real carnival, people from different classes share their position and a new order arises, and this is the moment of change that creates the grotesque space. It is a paradoxical moment that displays everything in a different color. Consequently, in a society in which people play their social roles, for a moment, this order collapses, and anymore the class position and possession is not a valued criterion. But due to the devastation, it seems to be a relation between dystopia and utopia.

Paradox has appeared otherwise. The clothes of characters are proper to festivals and ceremonies, show the experience of participation in the carnival. Character's gestures with abstraction in details quickly imply the types of social characters. Dried up fruits, crooked utensils and dishes (Fig. 3,4) in canvases show relinquishment especially with considering the titles like Red Table and Dance of Objects which intensify the paradoxical atmosphere. But, the correspondence between two fields, language in the titles, and the pictorial traits of paintings can lead to final concordance. Since Zabehi calls himself a "clown", he shows the origin of folk carnival root in the Grotesque.

#### ● Artist's style

There is a conflict between the forces of dominant artistic rules and the hidden forces of colors that have not yet absorbed in the dominant rules, that is the domination of order of the outlines and the rules of perspective which appear in the forms of the composition of objects. it will transform into internal conflict in different manifestations of Zabehi's works. Zabehi prevents from the emphasis on the

borderlines, light-weight lighting, depth-oriented perspective, the volumetric device with relying on the disorderd strokes and paintbrush, which leads to expressionism. Thick and dry Colors swirl around each other in an intricate amalgam of ambivalent sensations, mixed messages, and unsettling suggestions until to form the final composition. Colors are based on the sensation. unsettling brushstrokes go beyond the formal flow of realistic painting's formation, and thus the theme of Zabehi's works is based on expressionism. "Expression occurs when one thinks about his subjective activity and understands it through the power of imagination in a way that can show it to someone else. In expressionism, neither the artist nor the audience needs anything to the real experience of such emotions"(Townsend, 2014: 122). In these works, colors don't represent the reality of things but express the shadow of reality, whereas people are not shown in terms of membership in their class. the sense of relinquishment and freedom in the artist's works is belongs to the new stage of people's growth and vitality. The paintings don't display and manifest the direct features of peoples' class, they are inspired by the emotions that their attributes motivate. The colors are sometimes dry and more often physical, which is the status of the forces' conflict inspired by the emotions that these attributes implied. It can be said the violence occurs in the class conflict will appear in forms of fading outlines and expressive colors.

Beyond the physical body of tableaus, the presence of irresistible colors' forces and its conflict with the dominant rules govern the artist's brushstrokes while it is deforming the form of objects or peoples.

In Zabehi's works, this harsh and primitive nature of colors' forces signifies and replaces human nature. This rough monstrosity is a primitive color force that builds characters and, at last, leads to the relegation of stereotypes, and clichés, not only in portraits but also in still lives. The origin of "still lives" date back to the 17th and 18th centuries in the Republic of the Netherlands, a commercial and Protestant country. In this country still lives considered as the replacement for the direct display of the glamor of peoples'

clothes and property, (Pooke & Newall, 2015: 110). To a large extent, to avoid the people's interest to luxury, they would have been used still lives, but due to the emphasis on flowers, expensive foods and fruits, and with reference to the luxury of bourgeois life, this task would not be fully fulfilled. Zabehi's deformed portraits, plentiful and worn fruits (Fig. 4), along with a message about the shortness of their lifetime, and referring to James Ensor's horrendous still lives, will appear to be a different kind of image. The objects, the pots, and fruits and vegetables reveals the image without any function and any stereotyped metaphor. Their theme makes a viewer confront extra-beauty that implies the fear of "thing in itself". Not so much the color of the fruits and the wrinkles of the fruits, the movements of the vessels representing the peoples' life, and not the humor of the figures show the enjoyment and pleasure, but somehow represents the forces' conflict. Of course, all these "things do not imply the force, but they enforce it" (Mashayekhi, 2016: 99)

The force of the color resist the mimetic/objective rules, yet this contradiction characterizes the person and the still lives. These paintings are more aesthetic than imitative/objective works. They express the artist's feelings and, in addition, enforce the resistance to the force of the dominant rules. In other words, artworks based on imitative/objective rules created their autonomy on the order that aligned their boundaries and hierarchy with rules of domination. But "aesthetic art reverses its heterogeneity towards forms of domination" (Ranciere, 2014: 123). The pure and primitive forces of colors, apart from belongings to objective determinations, are in conflict with prevailing rules of representation. They become paradoxes in paintings itself. Therefore, as a final result, it is possible to say that painting is not a composition of objective determinations, but is the composition of the conflicting forces.

## Discussion

Data analysis identifies two aspects of the popular

culture. One is culture produced by the people and another is belong to them. The first concern is the exploration of the attributes, gestures and characters of people to highlight the implicit signification. The latter is the culture belongs to the people and relates to their activities, such as ceremonies, celebrations, and their amusements like puppetry, which continue to exist in order to show their creative potentiality. In order to have a better examination of this aspect of popular culture, the first part of the article was devoted to the discussion of the figures' social character. In this section, by describing the colorization, the type of lines and forms and communicating between them, we identify the types of clothes, manners, gestures, and characters of the figures. To a high extent, the introduction of the characters will be formed according to the titles of the paintings. Analysis of this section, in these works highlights and clarifies themes such as carnival and utopia, as well as grotesque (which its meaning is paradoxical and terrifying), relying on the level of implicit signification in Sections 2 and 3. At the end of the discussion of Grotesque, we presented the second category of popular culture. In the final part of the third section, in addition to make provision the Substrate for two categories of popular culture, the necessary materials for argument about the artist's style are provided.

In sum, our movement starts at the level of implicit signification in Section number one and results in the level of explicit signification in Section number two and three. Parallely, by movement from the study of the formal traits to content analysis, we move from the explanation of the culture produced by the people to the culture related to them. Also, by combining the features of the works in a single soul at the end of the article, we describe the style and artful action of the artist. By relying on the artist's style, we are able to analyze howness of passing through the dominant culture and cultivate an aesthetic art in opposition to the realistic/ objective art. Through these steps, it has been concluded that in spite of artist's attention to the subjects of this class, he does not intend to inspire sympathy or compassion for them. His attempt is to focus on manner and gesture of the people and their

amusement to show that the culture produced by these people has the power to defy and resist to the dominant culture. In order to achieve this goal, Zabehi chooses “expressionism” to realize his actions and passions for approximation to different aspects of popular culture Fig. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 ; (Table 1).



Fig. 5. Circus, Zabehi, paint & oil on canvas. Source:<http://festiveart.com/iranian-master-artists/hosseini-ali-zabehi/>



Fig. 6. I as clown, 2010, Zabehi, paint & oil on canvas. Source:<http://www.maryamharandi.com/gallery/?hossein-ali-zabehi>



Fig. 7. Homeless singer, 2017, Zabehi, paint & oil on canvas. Source: author.



Fig. 8. Cuddly, 2015-2016, Zabehi, paint & oil on canvas. Source: author.



Fig. 9. The loser of gambler, 2017, Zabehi, paint & oil on canvas. Source: author.

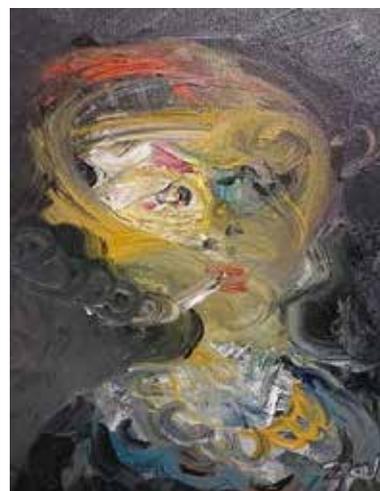


Fig. 10. Baby work, 2016-2017, paint & oil on canvas. Source: author.



Fig. 11. The small size of tables, 2017, zabehi, paint & oil on canvas. Source: author.

The culture produced by the people on the basis of their lifestyles (gestures, behaviours, habits, personality, dressing )	Culture belongs to the people (puppetry, clown, circus)
	
cuddly	I “ as clown
	
loser of gambling	doll factory
	
artist	puppetry
	
children work	still life with dried up fruits
	
model	homeless singer

Table 1. Two categories of popular culture in Zabehi’s paintings. Source: author.

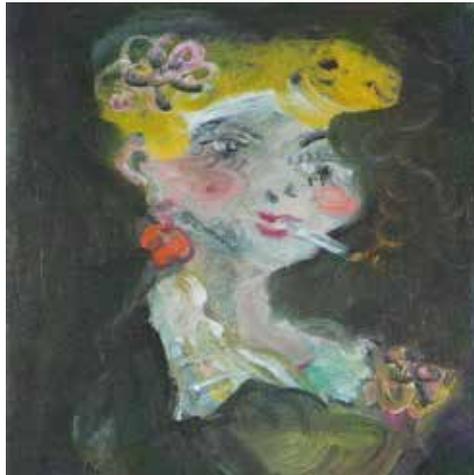


Fig. 12. Café woman, 2016, zabehe, paint & oil on canvas. Source: author.

## Conclusion

Zabehe's paintings both in the size and style are to show the conflicts of dominant rules and popular culture. In the case studies of this article, titles are chosen in a language which is different from standard language according to the common names of the popular class. They are breaking the rules of the dominant and formal language. The artist, uses non-normative titles, relies on the character of the figures, emphasizes on produced popular culture. Relying on the themes like the carnival that leads to popular liberation from the forces and pressures of dominant culture, it will appear temporary utopia, in which all people, are equal, and abandoned from the prevailing rules of the dominant culture. Carnival provides an opportunity for creativity and breaking boundaries and hierarchical values and brings together different classes and the binary oppositions of this kind. It transformed whole hierarchical and external differences into invisible inner contradictory forces in the utopia. In these paintings with quick brushstrokes, dry and physically thick colors there will be a resistance to the mimetic/objective rules, and this makes painting to have extra energy which deforms the whole forms in a composition. There is a conflict between forces of colors, between colors and lines, forms with representative/objective realistic rules. All things in one exhibition or all of artist's exhibitions, resulting in the overall grotesque and paradoxical space of his works. Through these steps, we conclude that despite artist's attention to the subjects of popular class, he did not intend to incite our sympathy or compassion towards them, and has sought to concentrate on their gestures and moods, habits, behaviors. All of them imply peoples' social character and show the culture produced by them which have the power to defy the dominant culture. In order to achieve the final aim, we introduce artist's style "expressionism" to describe realization of his actions and passions for approximating to the different aspects of popular culture.

## Endnotes

1. Simon Webster Frith OBE (born 1946) is a British social musicologist, and former rock critic, who specializes in popular music culture. He is Tovey Chair of Music at the University of Edinburgh.
2. He was born 24 December 1906 in Berlin; died 23 January 1960 in Göttingen. He was German Germanist and scholar of literature.
3. Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin ( 16 November -1895 – 7 March 1975) was a Russian philosopher, literary critic, semiotician and scholar who worked on literary theory, ethics, and the philosophy of language.
4. Sir Karl Raimund Popper (28 July 1902 – 17 September 1994) was an Austrian-British philosopher and professor. He is generally regarded as one of the 20th century's greatest philosophers of science.
5. Georg (György) Lukács (1885–1971) was a literary theorist and philosopher who is widely viewed as one of the founders of "Western Marxism". Lukács is best known for his pre-World War II writings in literary theory, aesthetic theory, and Marxist philosophy. Today, his most widely read works are

the Theory of the Novel of 1916 and History and Class Consciousness of 1923.

6. Ernst Bloch (July 8, 1885 – August 4, 1977) was a German Marxist philosopher. Bloch was influenced by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx, as well as by apocalyptic and religious thinkers such as Thomas Müntzer, Paracelsus, and Jacob Boehme. He made the friendship with György Lukács, Bertolt Brecht, Kurt Weill, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno. Bloch's work focuses on the thesis that in a humanistic world where oppression and exploitation have been eliminated there will always be a truly revolutionary force.

7. James Ensor (13 April 1860 – 19 November 1949) was a pioneer of the Expressionist and Surrealist art movements and influenced artists as diverse as Paul Klee and Alfred Kubin.

8. Georges Henri Rouault (b.27 May 1871, Paris – 13 February 1958) was a French painter, draughtsman, and printer, whose work is often related to Fauvism and Expressionism with its jewel-like tones and bold graphic lines. Alongside Henri Matisse, André Derain, Rouault culled from his spiritual fervor and knowledge of medieval stained glass to produce resonating portraits, landscapes, religious scenes, and still lives.

9. The fifth-volume novel of the 16th century, written by the French author François Rabelais, is devoted to the adventures of two giants in a state of exuberance, using satirical words, and somewhat erratic words. The first volume is allocated to Garagantua and the next four volumes to Pantagruel's character, Guarantunum's son. Inspired by the personality of Pantagruel's Rabelais, the term "Pantagruelism" means the ability to be happy, wise, and kind." Therefore, the essence of Pantagruelism is the ability to happily and wisely celebrate ". (Bakhtin, 2015: 257)

## Reference list

- Adames, J. L. & Wilsom, Y. (2010). *The Grotesque in Art and Literature: Theological Reflection*. Translated by Rasti, A. Tehran: Ghatreh press.
- Ahmadi, B. (2013). *The Text- Structure and Textual Interpretation*. Tehran: Markaz press.
- Ahmadi, B. (2014). *A Dictionary of Marx's Philosophical Terms*. Tehran: Markaz press.
- Bakhtin, M. (2015). *The Dialogic Imagination*. Translated by Poorazar, R. Tehran: Markaz press
- Bennett, T. (2009). Popular Culture and the Turn to Gramsci. In *About Cultural Studies*. Translated by Mohammadi, J. Tehran: Cheshmeh press.
- Bloch, E. (2012). On expressionism. In *Aesthetics and Politics: Critical Aesthetic Words by Debates*. Edited by Jameson, F. Translated by Mortazavi, H. Tehran: Jarf press.
- Etehad, A. & Zabehi, H. (2015). Painting Is not Just the Imitation of Objectivity. *Iran news paper*, (5939): 7.
- Frith, S. (2004). Popular Culture. In *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*. Edited by Payne, M. Tehran: Markaz Press.
- Guter, E. (2014). *Aesthetics A-Z*. Translated by Abolghassemi, M. Tehran: Mahi.
- Hakim, V. (2014). Pulpation of Image and the Amaze of Objects. *Herfeh Honarmand*, 12 (51): 102-104.
- Makaryk, I. R. (2014). *Encyclopedia of contemporary literary theory (approaches, scholars, Terms)*. Translated by Mohajer, M & Nabavi, M. Tehran: Agah publishing house.
- Mashayekhi, A. (2016). *Reflection on Foucault's methodology's genealogy*. Tehran: Naahid Press.
- Midgley, M. (2015). *Utopias, Dolphins and Computers: Problems in Philosophical Plumbing*. Translated by Mohammadamini, M. Tehran: Farhange Nashre No.
- More, T. (2006). *Utopia*. Translated by Ashori, D. & Afshari, N. Tehran: Kharazmi Press.
- Pooke, G. & Newall, D. (2015). *Art history: The Basics*. Translated by Azari, H. Tehran: Herfeh Nevisandeh press.
- Rancière, J. (2014). *Aesthetics and its Discontents*. Translated by Farhad AkbarZadeh. Tehran: Omid saba press.
- Todorov, T. (2014). *Mikhail Bakhtin: the dialogical principle*. Translated by Karimi, D. Tehran: Markaz press.
- Thomson, P. (2011). *The Grotesque (Critical Idiom)*. Translated by Taheri, F. Tehran: Markaz press.
- Townsend, D. (2014). *Historical Dictionary of Aesthetics*. Translated by Majidi, F. Tehran: Matn publisher.

### COPYRIGHTS

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with publication rights granted to the Bagh-e Nazar Journal. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



### HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Afarin, F. (2018). Different Aspects of Popular Culture in Hossin Ali Zabehi's Paintings. *Bagh- e Nazar*, 15 (59):73-84.

DOI: 10.22034/bagh.2018.60568

URL: [http://www.bagh-sj.com/article\\_60568.html](http://www.bagh-sj.com/article_60568.html)

