



# Lower that window

Let some air in.  
I'll buy you an ice cream if you want.

Today, we have time.

Sorry, but it takes half an hour to get to the pool from here.

You'll be there at 9:45 and wait 15 minutes out in the sun.

We're late, get going.

So what?

You listen to everyone but you refuse to listen to your own mother.

Because you're going to lecture me again.

I lecture you?

Yes.  
When you're big you'll be like this.  
you'll do like this.  
you'll do like that.

You're like your father.  
He shut me away, destroyed me.  
He wanted me only for himself.

Not so loud.

I'll say what I have to say.

Not so loud.  
I won't listen to you.

You're obstinate.  
You're full of rage.  
You want revenge.  
You're angry like that because you refuse reality.  
You want me to feel guilty.

The car is considered a public space and therefore the outfits of all the women depicted in the car have to comply with the public modesty laws in Iran. Because they are enclosed in the car, however, they are given privacy for what is exchanged verbally. (Devin Orgeron: Road Movies, NY 2008)



As soon as I get in the car she starts again.

Last night, going through my Facebook inbox, I found really old messages exchanged with my friend Kourosh, dated from 2008. This was a short time after he had left to study in Italy. Kourosh was advising me to leave Switzerland as well; for a while, a country which he felt had become too overwhelming for him. Kourosh was born and raised in Lausanne, Iranian according to his face and his parents, and Swiss according to his red passport. Switzerland was his home, but he felt he needed to leave. For good or for a while, it was not so clear yet. But after he graduated, he moved to Iran to join the family business of luxury goods. Now aged 33, it has been five years since he made Tehran his new home. When I talked to him the other day, through Facetime, he answered my very first question in a convincing way: «Yes, I'm really happy and definitely see myself settling here.»

Considered from a distant point of view, you might wonder why a guy who grew up in one of the wealthiest and safest countries in the world would rather reside in a place where a morality police (the «Basij») chase any «non Islamic» signs in the streets, forcing every woman to wear a veil in public or forbidding groups of young people to hang around outside. Yet, Kourosh did not raise a single complaint about the presumed loss of freedom. «The police is less present than before. It is generally known in what specific times of the year, early summer for example, they will give a little bit of scare.» People simply learn how to deal with it, and for their other needs as well. Facebook banned? Alright, just get a proxy to get your IP address mixed up to pretend you are logged on from China. Wanting some booze? A simple call and you will get it delivered directly at home. And this is not only in the privileged milieu. «Everybody does it, you might simply question the quality of the alcohol», jokes Kourosh.

Kourosh has always been very laid-back and easy-going, not so much into politics. Does that make him an especially good candidate to accept living in a country led by what seems a brute Islamic regime repressing basic rights? «Honestly, here I never ever feel threatened.»

Kourosh's older brother Bahman doesn't feel completely the same: «The fear factor is always present». Bahman, who works in the luxury business as well, constantly has the idea of moving to Iran in the back of his mind. Instead, his job offered him a position in Paris, where he moved two years ago, letting him postpone the time for «the big questions», in other words, to decide where to settle. The election of the seemingly more open-minded Hassan Rohani and the recent negotiations with USA made him hopeful that «Iran could be «normalized» through the eyes of the world», and he could find his place there. Yet, according to him, «it did not go as planned» and for his own sake, Bahman «would not move somewhere, unless it is with a clear project».

Bahman studied International relations in Geneva and you could certainly define him as political. Just check his Facebook profile, that he renamed Bahman Irani in 2009. The year when thousands of Iranians went down the streets of Tehran to raise their voice during the government election. What is now known as the Green Movement grew bigger in reaction to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's reelection and got violently repressed. More than a hundred people were killed, thousands injured. Deeply moved, Bahman got involved, organizing demonstrations of solidarity in Lausanne. What about being an activist in Iran? «I was always too impressed by the intellectual speeches of the students and did not feel I would master the language well enough.» And, mostly, an easy answer to a simple question he had asked himself: «Was I ready to die for a cause?»

Still, Bahman often goes back to Iran to visit his family, as his parents settled back there like Kourosh. «Yes I feel good in the safe and wealthy Switzerland, where people freak out when the train is one minute late. But I also can find my satisfaction in a country ruled by a dictatorship, where freedom of speech is completely repressed, where Internet does not work, where crossing the street is dangerous. Anyway, I feel home and I respect this country, even if people might call it rubbish.»

Many Iranians who grew up abroad like Bahman and Kourosh, or who left Iran to study are facing the question of whether they shall return. «Our parents had to escape their country after the fall of the Shah, when all their belongings were confiscated», explains Bahman. They did not really choose to settle in Switzerland and though «our parents adapted and became swiss in a citizen way, they, especially our Dad, has always been and will remain Iranian. He would have trouble defining his identity as swiss». In other joking words: «He would love a good Vaud sausage but will never go singing with the Cossonay choral on Thursday night!» Some of the exiles would never set a foot in Iran again, because of the regime. «Those who decide to settle back are well aware that it is far from perfect, but they are ready to find their way there, despite the troubles.»

And this, not only because Iran is their homeland, but also because, as Bahman perceives it: «Western world seems saturated, not letting any space for self-fulfillment». Not mentioning the various political turmols. «Is United Kingdom conveying such a perfect model when a Tony Blair decides to bomb Iraq? What about Switzerland who votes against minarets, in other words, against its population of Muslim confession?»

Yet, growing up in Switzerland, you might have get used to a certain freedom of speech and movement, which is clearly not the case in Iran. How to deal with that? Kourosh's answer struck me: «Here, I am doing everything I would do in Switzerland. Even more. Of course, as long as you have a job and you can afford it».

In Lausanne, where Bahman and Kourosh grew up, they would meet their friends on weekends, go out in bars and clubs. In Tehran instead, Kourosh and his friends meet in each other's places, sometimes transforming family houses into a night-club, gathering more than a hundred of people. «This is where boys and girls have a chance to get to know each other as well. Or they go on countryside houses. Kourosh speaks of course from his point of view of well-off Iranian, who grew up abroad, which is the case for most of his group of friends there. Thus, they are evolving in a circle where their Western way of life can naturally be pursued.

For the more popular class, young people find other strategies. No houses to meet? No worries, cars become their social space. Like the «Dor-dor» («turn turn») strategy for example, as Kourosh explains it to me. «There are specific roads in Tehran and other cities where you will find cars filled with groups of boys or groups of girls and they turn around for hours chasing each other. Boys would drive with open windows and girls with their windows shut. If guys see a car they like, they approach and if the girls open the window, it means they like them too and they start to chat, joke and possibly exchange their numbers. Then, they all start again with other cars. «I never did it myself, says Kourosh, but it happened that I got stuck into a traffic jam because of the cars stopped to interact».

But people from the various classes can also enjoy more typical western hipster activity. «The new trend is to go on gallery hopping on Friday, along with nice restaurants and coffee-shops around», says Kourosh. They are established in the fancy neighbourhood of Shemiran, in the north part of Tehran. «I know at least twenty galleries there». One of Kourosh's friends who grew up in Paris opened 3 or 4 art galleries in the area.

«Art is particularly present in Iran, and I really started to get into the art world since I am here. You are nearly naturally obliged to get interested in the arts in Iran, the history, the architecture, but also the nature. In Switzerland, I feel we get used to unnecessary things. In Iran, people start from a young age to do camping, enjoy outdoors. They love to do picnics in parks, inside or outside of town.» In Tehran there is for example the Park-e Mellat (park of the Nation), an equivalent of Central Park. Bahman jokes: «The regime loves to celebrate the martyrs of Shia Islam, it gives many days off to Tehranis, and a lot of them enjoy going to Caspian Sea.»

There, I was struck. Not to discover that Iranians were not confined to enjoy their free time indoor, but to wonder why Kourosh had never managed to do these kinds of things in Switzerland, which was his home as well after all, and a country certainly offering its share of outdoor activities.

Bahman would maybe explain this paradox. «In Switzerland, I challenge myself more, and I am always self-conscious towards the norms I try to adjust with. Yes I am Swiss, I feel Swiss, I talk like a Swiss, but somehow, the image people are sending me of myself is the one of a stranger.» There though, you have to picture a young man of 34, looking more European than Iranian, and in my opinion completely fitting the cosmopolitan environment we both grew up in. Yet, it was what Bahman had been sensed in Switzerland.

«Sometimes when I am in Iran, I could be driving around to visit the country, and feeling free like nowhere else in the world.»

Although Bahman and Kourosh had been born and raised in Switzerland, no matter how much they would appreciate it and make it their home, the process of naturalization would probably never equal this natural feeling of contempt they seemed to be experiencing in Iran. No matter the lack of freedom the Iranian society officially had to face, camping on the land where your ancestors set foot, might feel more satisfying than a night out in the Alps, no matter how green the grass is and democratic the country. For how long then?

Bahman and Kourosh's parents, according to Bahman, never really managed to integrate in Switzerland and they always had the plan to eventually settle back in Iran. Yet they are lucky enough to manage travelling back and forth, able to escape once in a while the suffocation either felt in Iran or Switzerland. Thus, probably getting the best of both worlds. As for Kourosh, who often comes to Switzerland for work.

If Kourosh seems genuinely happy and determined to remain in Tehran, I wonder where Bahman will eventually decide to settle, whether it would be Switzerland or Iran. Or somewhere else, where he could maybe experience another kind of freedom, a more individually shaped one, emancipated from the norms of either adaptation or origins.

(Friends of Kourosh advised him to remain as discrete as possible, therefore both Kourosh and Bahman real names and some places have been modified.)

And this, not only because Iran is their homeland, but also because, as Bahman perceives it: «Western world seems saturated, not letting any space for self-fulfillment». Not mentioning the various political turmols. «Is United Kingdom conveying such a perfect model when a Tony Blair decides to bomb Iraq? What about Switzerland who votes against minarets, in other words, against its population of Muslim confession?»

Yet, growing up in Switzerland, you might have get used to a certain freedom of speech and movement, which is clearly not the case in Iran. How to deal with that? Kourosh's answer struck me: «Here, I am doing everything I would do in Switzerland. Even more. Of course, as long as you have a job and you can afford it».

Public space is central to the everyday life of the city; it is the space of spontaneous socialization and exposure to alterity. The «space of appearance», as Hannah Arendt puts it, «where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist [...] to make their appearance explicitly». Public space is characterized by co-presence, its «efficiency is based on the interaction between those who, provisionally, inhabit it» (Lévy, 2013). Public space is often taken to be the corporeal space of the city; the pedestrian realm, where the interaction is mostly about the body management and «flâneur» is the main figure.

In Tehran, however, the strolling around is replaced by car cruising for its protective shell and the private character, which is relatively liberating from restrictions on appearance. Simply one cannot walk in the streets of Tehran with the same outfit and makeup that one can easily drive there. The car functions also as a visibility device. Contrary to what Conley (2012) writes about usual passengers that treat the car as invisibility cloaks and forget that they are in public (he makes the classic example of drivers picking their nose), these young car cruisers of Tehran are deliberately putting on a performance for an audience outside their vehicle.

The pausability is limited in car travel and the opportunities for social interaction are significantly reduced. In addition, at higher speeds, the sociological function of the eye, as described by Simmel in 1908, fundamental to pedestrian cooperative movements, becomes less effective and less feasible. In our example, though, the dor-dor participants know very well the importance of what Simmel calls the mutual glance; they are there to see and to be seen, in their cars and through their cars. Therefore they make a fundamental change in the nature of their automobile and turn it into a slow motion.

The traffic jam created by their very presence imposes a slow rhythm, but even when the traffic is quite fluid they drive voluntarily slowly. The slowness provides the opportunity for mutual visibility and momentary glance in which one person catches another's eye to indicate a shared assessment of the situation and to form a temporary bond.

Dor-Dor – now becoming the official term for the discussed activity, as it is being used by authorities in the media and news to condemn it, creates a sort of transitory public space, based on strong interactions among its actors. However, the degree of its public-ness could be under question, since a very specific group of people, specific age range, and economical class, occupy quite intrusively the urban space and impose their rules and order. A sort of privatization of public space, as it is when a group of skateboarders appropriate momentarily the urban space and render it inaccessible (or dangerous) for others.

In the following lines, I draw on a counterexample, in the city of Tehran, where the private car becomes the protagonist of a «social occasion» with «focused face-to-face» interaction. This new type of public space despite its car-based character goes beyond «sheer and mere co-presence» (Goffman, 1971) and becomes a space of encounter and socialization in a city that noticeably suffers the lack of such spaces.

This uneasily classifiable «social occasion» depicts a desire for being in public space, «space of appearance», while at the same time avoiding its restrictions.

1. Translated from an article on Javan (literal meaning: Youth). a conservative quotidien journal published in Tehran.

From: «Tehran's Youth Gallivant About a Little Western Town», The EpochTimes, 2010.

It is a normal Thursday night about seven o'clock. Niavaran Boulevard is immersed in a locked traffic jam. Different types of cars, SUVs and convertibles pass on both sides of the boulevard. Looking closely you realize you have just seen the same cars roaming up and down the same street for several times. Car windows are down and the drivers and the passengers are engaged in passionate conversations with the car driving next to them. Apparently, no one is disturbed by this self-generated traffic jam. Time passes, the traffic gets more compact and the «Dor-Dor» more intense.»

From «The heroes of the vain vicious loops». Javan newspaper, 2012.¹

As we can say from the two testimonies above, one from a foreigner tourist spending a week in Tehran and the other, extract of an article in Javan, a local newspaper, «Dor-Dor» is an urban social activity. Affluent young adults jam-pack in boulevards of north Tehran and drive up and down the distance between the two U-turns, often until the police blockade the U-turn. Made up and dressed up at a certain hour in a certain street, collectively agreed upon without pre-existing communities or explicit decision makings but by practice, being there and finding others, to see and to be seen. It is perhaps comparable in some aspects to «El Paseo»;

In Iran, the relation between power/authority and public space has undergone many transformations and changes. For a long time, the authority of the monarchy-state over the people, the old over the young, men over women, parents over children, etc., was certain and indisputable. This authority/power had a class-defined appearance in the whole society and had found a geographical form and definition. Tehran, as the administrative, economical, cultural and educational center had a certain resoluteness and authority over the rest of the country, and within Tehran itself, the northern and the rich neighborhoods had the same privilege over the deprived southern neighborhoods. Tehran was two separate cities with two different societies and cultures. Some invisible but quite thick walls separated different cultural, social and economical spaces of the city, controlling and regulating the entry of the people to different spaces. Thus, the kind and the quality of presence of the people in public spaces of the city had recognizable signs of class distinction throughout the society.

The impact that the Islamic Revolution had on the social and urban structure of Tehran and other large cities of Iran is undeniable in all respects. One of the first manifestations of the Revolution was the alteration of «public space» to «a space for the public». As the protests began, Tehrani citizens appropriated their whole city and breached the class and space bars. «Engelab Avenue» (Revolution Avenue, the new name for what was formerly called Shah Reza Avenue), the location of Tehran University and many bookstores, as a symbolic axis that divided the city into two northern and southern halves also considered the symbolic space of the new middle class, became the first space of encounter and then the meeting of different social classes. The beginning of the Revolution was at the same time the beginning of the death of the old authority and the birth of a new one which, despite its freshness, was based on tradition and religion. The new authority, which was essentially different from the one in the Shah's time, became increasingly powerful in the society during the Iran-Iraq war.

What made the new authority distinct from the previous one was indeed its lack of locality concerning geography, space and class. The new authority, having been formed on the basis of religious and revolutionary bans, indeed had no particular and classifiable social position as it had in the past, and thus it could emerge in all social classes and urban places and spaces. So, what changed the look of the city in the public spaces at the beginning of the Revolution was the replacement of the type of authority. The new authority quickly found an objective crystallization and showed itself in the new appearance and norms of the society. Despite their undeniable role in the Revolution, women, earlier than others, came under the new patriarchal authority with its revolutionary attributes, and the kind and quality of their presence in public spaces underwent an essential change. Soon, the new form and nature of the presence of women in public spaces became a norm of the Islamic society. Thereafter, not only the appearance of the people, but also their behavior in public spaces were under new rules which, this time, were based on traditional, religious and revolutionary thoughts. The new social norms, as the controlling power of the new sovereignty, gained prevalence in public spaces and determined new patterns for the presence of women and men in the city.

Thus, in the social spaces of Iran, the quality of people's presence in public spaces came into a close relation with power, a relation that was typically new. This relation, after the Islamic Revolution, came about mainly in regard to the gender and the age of the people. Consequently, women and young people were more distinctly influenced by the new authority. However, because of the complexity of the social relations in Iranian society, the authority, despite its initial power and force, was subjected to continual change that was primarily caused by the phenomenon of simultaneity in different spaces and times. The simultaneities occurred due to the sovereignty of the traditional authority in a society that had an intense tendency toward globalization and adaptation to the patterns of the developed and modern world, and thus they appeared mainly in the large and modern spaces of the cities, especially in Tehran. For years (particularly before Mr. Khatami was elected as president in 1997), large squares of Tehran such as the Vanaq or Vali-Asr squares, in certain moments (e.g. at occasions when revolutionary guards decided to control the public spaces for religious, social, cultural or security reasons), were capable of suddenly transforming into large enclosed spaces under the traditional rules and regulations of enclosed interior/exterior spaces (Andarun/Biruni), despite being spatially open and extensive and belonging to today's world. A large and crowded square of the city would suddenly transform into a place in which any appearance, behavior and presence had to follow a pattern consisting of bans and permissions. Such conflicting simultaneities in urban spaces were able to intensively change the function and even the identity of the place and space for a certain time, creating more complexity and more contradiction within the society. Therefore, what seems interesting in the urban society of Tehran in these years is the transience and temporary aspect of place/space, which causes different places to find variable meanings in different situations, without having a functional identity throughout time.

The temporary nature and the multiple aspects of space and time often pertain to places that have more modern characteristics, because traditional neighborhoods almost always have a recognized and particular identity and function. In such neighborhoods women and young people are controlled by the inhabitants who have a continuous presence and follow certain behavioral and external codes, whereas in more crowded and modern neighborhoods, because of the extensiveness of the spaces and anonymity of the people, there is no possibility of cultural and social control for the inhabitants.



Stills from Abbas Kiarostami's «Ta'me Guiass» from 1997

Das erste Merkmal heterotopischer Räume ist, dass diese Räume stets «mehrere reale Räume, mehrere Orte, die eigentlich nicht miteinander verträglich sind, an einem einzigen Ort» (Foucault) verbinden. So ist das Auto in «Ta'me Guiass» nicht nur Fortbewegungsmittel, sondern auch Raum für Identitätsverhandlung, Subjektwahrnehmung und Krise, aber auch ein Raum für Dialoge, Gespräche und Austausch. Ein weiteres Merkmal heterotopischer Räume ist das Ihnen eigene «System der Öffnung und Abschließung»: In ein Auto kann man einsteigen und auch wieder aussteigen, es ist ein heterotopischer Raum, den man bewusst betreten und auch weder verlassen kann. (Alena Strohmaier P.9)

So, the emergence of the simultaneity phenomenon relates for the most part to the social, cultural and economic structure of the urban places and spaces. For many, the transient and temporary characteristic of space and place is a sign of the establishment of modernity in the society, because in that case, social relations, like space, would be in a «becoming» mode rather than a «being» one. These two traits, which appear in postmodern thoughts as the temporary nature of the identity, are also applicable to the society and spaces in Tehran. But here, the temporary nature and change of function of the place, like the identity of people in public spaces, relates to the tough transition stage of the revolution and the simultaneity of certain stages: application of behavioral patterns and Islamic/traditional dress code in a city formed on the basis of a modern and up-to-date lifestyle. This experience gains a special significance in regard to the manner of women's presence in social spaces and somehow becomes a constant transition from tradition to modernity/postmodernity, from the interior space (*andaruni*) to the vast space of the global city. But in the particular case of Tehran, the reverse course is even more interesting: the sudden and temporary change of the boundless space of the global city into the enclosed space of the old interiors.

**Dislocating the Enclosed Space of the Interior**  
Enclosure of women's space and the rule of «interior» codes are still prevalent in many old neighborhoods and traditional families. In most of the old neighborhoods, the alleys and blind alleys are located along the houses and somehow provide a space for transition from the enclosed space of home to the vast space of the city. In such neighborhoods, the neighbors, relatives and inhabitants themselves are in charge of controlling behavior, manner of presence, and even the manner of socialization of the women and young people. Therefore, if we perceive the traditional neighborhood as a kind of interior (*Andaruni*), then we can assume the vast space of the city as the exterior (*Biruni*), i.e., the free space, the masculine space, a space for work, a space for anonymity. Local control is almost impossible in such large urban centers where anonymity and multitude of the people bring freedom for the quality of being and of the presence of people. However, despite such freedom in vast urban spaces, at certain times, in Iran, public or semi-public spaces – streets, parks, and crowded squares of the capital – can also suddenly change into closed interior spaces with intertwined networks of enclosed spaces, bringing about bans and different codes of behavior and appearance for «the quality of being and of presence» of women and young people, limiting and «enclosing» temporarily the free and open space of the city for them. After the Revolution, this caused the concept of *Andaruni* (the interior as the controlled space and not the feminine space) to be reconstructed in different forms in the daily life of Iranian women. The prevalence of new ways of life and the generalization of urban culture alongside the rule of the Islamic morality caused the enclosed and controlled spaces such as the interiors (homes) to lose their particular local concept and gain the ability to move through space and time without any obligation to have a particular local position or physical border. With the increasing entry of women into the urban spaces and public spheres, which contradicted the traditional viewpoints that disapproved extensive presence of women in public domain, the interior and controlled space also acquired the capability of shifting from home to neighborhood and then to the large urban spaces. That capability not only materialized in the public spaces of the cities but also somehow influenced the manner and the form of the presence of women in the city environment. In the first decade after the Revolution, the prevalence of black color in women's hijab (whether compulsory or optional) suggested most clearly the definition of the transportable *andaruni*. In the same way as the tall walls of old neighborhoods along the alleys are stretched repeatedly and monotonously to protect the identity of the home and the interior (the woman's place), so the remarkable homogeneity of the presence of black-covered women in public spaces of the city protected them from the sight, recognition and even imagination of the passers-by. So, the important functions of hijab were de-escalation of visibility of women, establishment of homogeneity, concealment of diversity and difference, and direction of the society toward unity. The invisibility of women under the black chadors or hijab is, on the one hand, aimed at establishment of a social unity model as well as evasion from diversity in Islamic traditional society, and, on the other hand, the dislocation and the mobility of women's interior and enclosed space. Such dislocation of the enclosed space is quite similar to the mechanism that Michel Foucault mentions, in another way, as the swarming of disciplinary mechanisms in eighteenth-century France. «While, on the one hand, the disciplinary establishments increase, their mechanisms have a certain tendency to become «de-institutionalized», to emerge from the closed fortresses in which they once functioned and to circulate in a «free» state; the massive, compact disciplines are broken down into flexible methods of control, which may be transferred and adapted.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, in Iran, the dislocation of the interior means delocalization of the discipline of the enclosed interior, spreading it into the large urban society. Application of the disciplinary mechanisms for homogeneity of people's presence – particularly women's presence – in public spaces was, until recently, one of the strongest visual experiences of foreign tourists or Iranians who were revisiting their country after a long time. They were immediately impressed by the lack of color and the saturation of the urban spaces with the black color of the women's coverings. After the Revolution, particularly in the last decade, with the increased presence of women and young girls in educational and professional fields, which were often under the control of traditional attitudes, black and thoroughly dark clothing were recognized as women's formal apparel. In this way, with the increased and at times uninvited presence

of women in the urban spaces, places that were previously exclusive to men found new definitions which destabilized the masculine order, rules and regulations. So, to prevent the atmosphere from feminization, it required that women's physical presence be controlled as much as possible. Therefore, to re-establish the masculine order and the Islamic morality in the city, application of a new discipline quite different from the one that governed public spaces in the Shah's time was needed.

Such a discipline had to be applied primarily to the bodies and appearance of people, especially women, to establish the new order in the society and to control the people. For that purpose, the body had to be turned into a «fence» to prevent any manifestations and desires of the individual so that he/she becomes a prototypical image with his/her manner and appearance conforming to the accepted prototype of the Islamic society. The motto «Hijab is immunity not limitation», renders the whole meaning of hijab in its new form. It indicates that on the one hand hijab, like a protective fence and a high wall, would secure and protect women against «strangers», on the other hand it would make their presence possible in the space of the global city – here, a masculine, traditional and religious one. Foucault puts disciplinary enclosure and homogeneity of places (here, bodies) another way: «Discipline sometimes requires enclosure, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself. It is the protected space of disciplinary monotony.<sup>3</sup> In Iran, application of discipline, which would enclose women in open urban spaces, was performed first through generalization of hijab and then was followed by limitation of choice of colors, to increase even more the discipline and the homogeneity of visual spaces.<sup>4</sup>

Even today, despite the variety in models and colors of women's clothing in urban spaces, black is still the dominant color in official environments. In fact, the black color of women's clothing is the best apparatus for the homogenization of the environment and omission of the «otherness» [of women] in masculine spaces. However, black is not only an imposed color in masculine (official) environments, rather, many women wear it in urban spaces as a strategy for concealing themselves from the others' looks and to increase their quiet but active presence in masculine society. Thus, in a short time, the superficial homogenization policy, which was applied to the society as the best apparatus for controlling of Islamic morals and the quality of people's presence, particularly women, paradoxically increased women's presence in different domains of the society and various public spaces.

Since diversity and difference in a society that tends toward homogeneity would attract others' attention and would expose one's individuality and exclude one from the others, in order to have a more extensive presence in the public and often masculine spaces of the city, women had to have an absent presence in the society, a presence that could not be seen or felt. Women's tendency toward being invisible in public spaces indicates, more than any other thing, their feeling of insecurity in the city and their awareness of the violation of «interior» rules. In the Islamic morality-based society, for many girls and young women, being seen is considered as being subjected to judgment by others, and at-tracting dangers.

Thus, visibility in Iranian urban spaces finds dual and contradictory meanings. If, in Western societies, visibility of people brings about public security in urban spaces, for many Iranian women and young people it is equal to insecurity and being subjected to constant control by others. This controlling look is the same apparatus that Foucault refers to, in his account of the architecture of the «all-seeing» prison, Bentham's Panopticon, as the controlling instrument of a huge prison with only one jailer.<sup>5</sup> The «all-seeing» prisons have a special architecture (which was later used in schools, training centers, hospitals and asylums) that would enable the supervisor to simultaneously observe all the occupants from a central tower without being seen. Thus, the visibility of an individual and his awareness of the existence of authority and the possible presence of an observer result in his/her constant obligation to comply with the discipline. Foucault mentions the correlation between the insecurity and visibility of the individual in his account of the effect of the panoptic architecture on the inmates:

«Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary... Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and verifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so.<sup>6</sup>

In the space of large Iranian cities, women live with the same feeling of continual but secret control. Therefore, the experience of wearing black is in fact the paradoxical experience of a quality of freedom along with acceptance of enclosure and discipline. To be disciplined and similar to others allows the individual to be less subjected to others' sight and consequently free in his/her territory. But, on the other hand, the dominance of the black color and the similarity of the appearance of women, as well as the lack of a visible socio-cultural identity, tend to distort the identity boundaries and cause a lot of social problems. Prototyping and similarities had therefore caused new tensions and distorted many social

definitions and signs that were intended for the readability of the society. Because of the fading of the identity signs in urban spaces, many moral deviations, particularly those of women, went unseen due to the invisibility. The lack of diverse outward models and instead, the mere presence of a dual dress pattern (*chador/manteau + scarf*) – which nevertheless have an important socio-cultural meaning – along with the lack of freedom of choice in clothing due to family, social, cultural, place and time requirements, all caused women to change their appearances quite easily on certain occasions to adapt to the environment, acquiring a defined identity which would facilitate and justify their presence in that particular place. For some, the unchallenged power of the rule of «appearance» in public spaces gradually became a means of dissimulation of the identity or changing it on required occasions. In public spaces, the new identity strategy causes that «the individual to adopt different identity strategies in his/her different social relations and, in fact, to deny his/her real capability (identity) in public spaces».<sup>7</sup>

Dissimulation of identity in urban spaces is, on the other hand, indicative of the feeling of insecurity in the society. But the insecurity that women feel in Iranian public spaces is not exactly of the same nature as in the Western societies, rather it originates from the moral and traditional roots peculiar to patriarchal societies. Such a feeling of insecurity, although much diminished in recent years – unfortunately being replaced with the kind of feeling of insecurity prevailing in large urban societies of the West – has not yet much affected the manner of presence of women in the cities in particular places and times.

**The Role of Time in the Enclosure of Space**  
«The degree to which we can move between countries, or walk about the streets at night, or venture out of hotels in foreign cities, is not just influenced by «capital». Survey after survey has shown how women's mobility, for instance, is restricted – in a thousand different ways, from physical violence to being ogled at or made to feel quite simply «out of place» – not by capital but by men.<sup>8</sup>

The moral conventions and norms prevailing in Iranian urban spaces have caused our public spaces to have relatively high security compared to many European countries. The rate of homicide, crime and rape is still much lower in Tehran than most large European and American cities. But, culturally, there is no corresponding security in our female and male mindset. For many Iranian women, their solitary presence in the streets and public spaces late at night would not cause a real danger, rather, it would unconsciously be considered as a violation of the interior rules, one that deserves punishment. In other words, for women, fear of presence in public spaces, out of prescribed time and place, is due to the constancy of the rules of traditional thought in the streets, rather than the physical, financial or sexual insecurity that exist in Western public spaces. Furthermore, the alteration of outward and moral definitions has often caused the recognizability of right and wrong to be based on taste, expedience and culture, which can easily endanger the security and citizenship of women and even men. In Iran, there are still few women who dare to walk alone or without a male relative even in crowded streets and safe neighborhoods late at night while it is quite usual for women in European cities – at least in safe neighborhoods and crowded streets. The reality is that here, thousand-year-old subjective patterns are still governing the spaces of our cities.

The weighty cultural value of night has increased even more after the Revolution and has limited substantially the mobility of women. Traditional prejudices have caused any solitary presence of women, with any appearance, at night to be considered as a violation of the norms of the masculine territory. The presence of a woman in many public spaces late at night would be bearable only in two ways: in the street with a man who is considered to be a close male relative according to Islamic morals, or in the enclosed space of a car if she is alone. In other words, a large city like Tehran where thousands of women drive in its streets and frequent its different spaces in daylight without any feeling of fear or annoyance, would change, with the fall of night, into an enclosed space in which their presence would be considered as a negative act according to the interior rules.

**Exit from the Andaruni (the Interior)**  
Iranian women, in urban spaces, have to cope with a complex pattern that is an odd mixture of modern life and restrictive traditional/cultural imagery. Limitations and cultural prescriptions against women in social spaces and public spheres have prevented them from fully benefiting from their situation, so that they tend to exclude themselves as «others» and deny their needs as far as possible. Although this is being diminished nowadays, civil behavior and the manner of presence of women in the city indicate that difference or otherness (among women, young people, and all those who do not conform to the prescribed patterns) is not yet accepted easily in Iranian society. This is particularly evident in the case of Afghan refugees and gypsies in Tehran. That is to say, from long ago, in the eyes of the public, those two groups have been and still are responsible for most of the offenses in the urban space. Perhaps the cause of this prejudice could be sought in their difference of appearance and, consequently, their visibility compared to other citizens. For a better understanding of women's position in the public spaces of society from the official and traditional point of view, we can consider, as an example, the traditional place of women in public religious lectures and even in conferences or in university classes. After the Islamic Revolution, in most of the gatherings, women and men sit separately. In most cases men take the best center and front seats while women sit at the rear rows, edges and places with almost no visibility. In the same

way, in some of the university classes women sit at the rear, men sit in front. The interesting point is the positive reaction of many women to this arrangement as a tacit and agreed upon principle. That is because marginality is equal to invisibility and, consequently, to retaining security/freedom in the public spaces.

Marginality of women and the tendency toward excluding them (compulsory and optional) from public sphere for different reasons (and even at times with physical and sexual violence) is not a phenomenon peculiar to Iran. In Western societies too, women are still seeking their civil rights and still have a more or less marginal position in public, political, economic and social domains. However, the difference between the Iranian society and Western societies is that in Iran, although women, more than ever – and in cases like higher education, at the same pace as Western women – have entered public spheres, the preventive walls, restrictions and marginality are still quite clearly, visibly and persistently there.<sup>9</sup> Whereas in the West, many women have stood against such marginality and the order of society is increasingly tending toward admittance of the differences.

Therefore, today, to enter visibly the public sphere, Iranian women are trying in different ways and by emphasizing their «being» and «being women», to show their presentness. The breaking of custom by young girls concerning their appearance, the acquisition of political power by women in ministries, parliament, universities where they endorse their otherness and the necessity of revision of the attitudes toward women, or the presence of Shirin Ebadi without Islamic hijab in the Nobel Prize ceremony, all indicate that Iranian women are determined to find their real position in the society and different public spheres in Iran and in the world. If, over a period of time, the «absent presence» and the invisibility of women resulted in their quiet but constant gains of power in different socio-political and cultural fields, today, more than ever, the public sphere and public spaces belongs to all citizens: women, men, children and old people with their differences. In the era of the globalization and of the dominance of the Internet, the time of «fenced cities» and enclosed interior spaces of *andaruni*, is over.

**Masserat Amir-Ebrahimi is an Urban Sociologist and Ph.D. in Geography of Development**

This article was first published in: *Pages* magazine issue 1, «Public & Private» Published by *Pages*, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 2004.

1. Andaruni (Interior space) can be signified by different and numerous definitions and functions. Sometimes it may refer to feminine spaces where the creation of space is due to social organization and feminine order. Sometimes it may refer to the interior of the house that is the private space of the family, usually, which places the whole movements, the way of being, and even eating, dressing and social relations of woman under the control of the «Lord» of the house. Architecturally, Iranian/Islamic old and traditional houses consisted of two parts: Biruni and Andaruni (exterior and interior). The interior (*andaruni*) was a private space allocated to women where no strangers were entitled to enter. But the exterior (*biruni*), which included the public spaces of the house such as the courtyard and dressing room, was the masculine part where women's entry required observation of Islamic dress and moral codes.

2. Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (Penguin Books Ltd, 1977), 211.

3. Ibid., 141.

4. Many thinkers have used Foucault's Discipline and Punish in their studies on the control of people in different spaces. Among them is the following article in which the writer describes how the idea and the prevailing method of control in all-prisoners are used in today's modern society and public spaces. In the case of Western countries, particularly in the US, people are controlled by an invisible power through exploitation of the information gathered from people's social insurance cards or credit cards. See: Matt Hannah, «Imperfect Panopticism: Envisioning the Construction of Normal Lives» in U. Strohmayer and G. Benko, eds., Space and Social Theory (Blackwell, 1997).

5. Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, p. 201.

6. Chador, as a traditional overall garment, hides the woman from head to toe. It is usually traditional women's choice (regardless of their financial status). Although in government offices and from the government's point of view, chador is a prior preference, women working in governmental administration, education and other public sectors and married women's (a large scarf that completely covers head and shoulders down to the chest) as an alternative. But modern women and women who work in the private sector have chosen manteau and scarf as a kind of modern hijab. Since Khatami's election as president, more and more modern women and young girls have tended toward various colors and latest fashions and thus diversified the space of the city while maintaining the general concept of hijab.

7. Mojtaba Sadria, «The Action of Wound, a Poly-form on Identity», *FarhangTose-e* (April 2001, Tehran), p. 27.

8. Doreen Massey, Space, Place and Gender, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1994, p. 148.

9. The number of female students who entered Iran universities since 1998 amounts to more than 50% of the whole student population. In the current year it was 63% of the total entry to Iranian universities.

Tiefe Trauer bewegt dieser Tage internationale Filmemacher, Fans und Filmwissenschaftler: Abbas Kiarostami, der Mann mit der Sonnenbrille, ist von uns gegangen. Vielleicht ist er aber auch gefahren. Mit einem Auto, wie zahlreiche Figuren in seinen Filmen. Das Auto ist eines der bevorzugten Motive in seinem filmischen Schaffen, man denke dabei an Herrn Badi, ein Helfer für seine Selbstmordabsichten (*Ta'me gulass*, 1997), oder die Filmemacher, die auf den Serpentinen einer kargen Berglandschaft nach dem Weg suchen (*Bad ma-ra khah bord*, 1999) oder die junge Frau, die sich durch den wahnwitzigen Verkehr der Großstadt Teheran manövriert und dabei ihre Scheidung handelt (Dah, 2002). All diesen Filmen ist laut Filmwissenschaftler Pedram Sodough gemeinsam: «Wesentliche Details offenbaren sich unterwegs in einem Wagen, in Gesprächen, die von Suchenden an einem fremden Ort geführt werden, ungewiss, ob ihr Weg der richtige ist.»

Auto und Film – Film und Auto sind Erfindungen des späten 19. Jahrhunderts und als solche von Anbeginn eng miteinander verknüpft. Bereits 1896 drehen die Brüder Lumière «Voitures Automobiles», und in Folge war das Auto als filmisches Motiv nicht mehr wegzudenken. Die frühe Filmtheorie beschäftigte sich ebenfalls sehr bald mit der Darstellung des Autos im Film: Die 1920er und 1930er Jahre verorteten das Auto als Ausdrucksbewegung in der ästhetischen Filmtheorie, wohingegen die 1940er und 1950er Jahre dem Thema Auto und Film keine größere Beachtung mehr schenkten. Medientheoretische Ansätze wie die des Dispositivs in den 1960er Jahren kehrten den Zusammenhang zwischen Auto und Film wieder heraus und verschärften das Auto mit Genretheorien wie dem des Roadmovie (vgl. dazu auch Andreas Wagenknecht).

Es gibt zwei gängige Definitionen des Roadmovie: Die erste definiert das Genre über das Auto selbst: «Road Movies are, by definition, movies about cars, trucks, motorcycles, or some other motorizing self-descendant of the nineteenth-century train» (so der Professor Timothy Corrigan); die zweite definiert es über die Bewegung: «Road Movies: Straßendramen/Wegfilme/Reisefilme. Filme über Unterwegs-Sein – über Gehen, Fahren, Flanieren, Räsen, Rennen, Schleudern, moving on the road» (Grob/Klein). In der ersten Definition kommt dem Auto die Funktion als Ausstattungslement zu. Es ist als Motiv darin funktional, bringt die Protagonisten von A nach B, bleibt auch mal liegen und bewegt sich gar nicht, ist neu und glänzend oder alt und schäbig. Aus dieser Funktionalität wird das Auto in den Filmen von Abbas Kiarostami jedoch herausgelöst und eröffnet dadurch einen neuen Raum. Die Filmwissenschaftlerin Amelie Soyka schreibt: «[Es] soll die Bedeutung des Autos für das Road Movie bezüglich seiner Eigenschaften als Raum selbst und als Mittel der Raum erfahrung kenntlich gemacht werden. Denn diese beiden Charakteristika zeichnen das Auto aus und bündeln sich in dem Phänomen der Gleichzeitigkeit von Bewegungslosigkeit (des Autos) und Herausgelöstheit und eröffnen dadurch einen neuen Raum. Die Soyka, argumentiert wie ein Erwachsener, beschimpft seine Mutterstellenweise aber auch und lässt seinen Emotionen freien Lauf. Auch seine Mutter erhebt die Stimme zunehmend und verliert die Fassung. Der Junge wird körperlich immer unruhiger, springt auf seinem Sitz hin und her, krallt sich an seiner Mutter nicht zuhören; er weiß was kommt, sie habe dieses Gespräch anscheinend schon öfter geführt: Die Scheidung der Eltern, der neue Mann an der Seite seiner Mutter, seine Anschuldigungen, ihre Rechtfertigungen. Ami hält sich die Ohren zu, argumentiert wie ein Erwachsener, beschimpft seine Mutterstellenweise aber auch und lässt seinen Emotionen freien Lauf. Auch seine Mutter erhebt die Stimme zunehmend und verliert die Fassung. Der Junge wird körperlich immer unruhiger, springt auf seinem Sitz hin und her, krallt sich an seiner Mutter nicht zuhören; er weiß was kommt, sie habe dieses Gespräch anscheinend schon öfter geführt: Die Scheidung der Eltern, der neue Mann an der Seite seiner Mutter, seine Anschuldigungen, ihre Rechtfertigungen. Ami hält sich die Ohren zu, argumentiert wie ein Erwachsener, beschimpft seine Mutterstellenweise aber auch und lässt seinen Emotionen freien Lauf. Auch seine Mutter erhebt die Stimme zunehmend und verliert die Fassung. Der Junge wird körperlich immer unruhiger, springt auf seinem Sitz hin und her, krallt sich an seiner Mutter nicht zuhören; er weiß was kommt, sie habe dieses Gespräch anscheinend schon öfter geführt: Die Scheidung der Eltern, der neue Mann an der Seite seiner Mutter, seine Anschuldigungen, ihre Rechtfertigungen. Ami hält sich die Ohren zu, argumentiert wie ein Erwachsener, beschimpft seine Mutterstellenweise aber auch und lässt seinen Emotionen freien Lauf. Auch seine Mutter erhebt die Stimme zunehmend und verliert die Fassung. Der Junge wird körperlich immer unruhiger, springt auf seinem Sitz hin und her, krallt sich an seiner Mutter nicht zuhören; er weiß was kommt, sie habe dieses Gespräch anscheinend schon öfter geführt: Die Scheidung der Eltern, der neue Mann an der Seite seiner Mutter, seine Anschuldigungen, ihre Rechtfertigungen. Ami hält sich die Ohren zu, argumentiert wie ein Erwachsener, beschimpft seine Mutterstellenweise aber auch und lässt seinen Emotionen freien Lauf. Auch seine Mutter erhebt die Stimme zunehmend und verliert die Fassung. Der Junge wird körperlich immer unruhiger, springt auf seinem Sitz hin und her, krallt sich an seiner Mutter nicht zuhören; er weiß was kommt, sie habe dieses Gespräch anscheinend schon öfter geführt: Die Scheidung der Eltern, der neue Mann an der Seite seiner Mutter, seine Anschuldigungen, ihre Rechtfertigungen. Ami hält sich die Ohren zu, argumentiert wie ein Erwachsener, beschimpft seine Mutterstellenweise aber auch und lässt seinen Emotionen freien Lauf. Auch seine Mutter erhebt die Stimme zunehmend und verliert die Fassung. Der Junge wird körperlich immer unruhiger, springt auf seinem Sitz hin und her, krallt sich an seiner Mutter nicht zuhören; er weiß was kommt, sie habe dieses Gespräch anscheinend schon ö



Silks from Abbas Kiarostami's «Nemaye Nazlik» from 1990 (Pages 1, 3 & 10)



Architecturally, Iranian/Islamic old and traditional houses consisted of two parts: Biruni and Andaruni (exterior and interior). The interior (andaruni) was a private space allocated to women where no strangers were entitled to enter. But the exterior (biruni), which included the public spaces of the house such as the courtyard and drawing room, was the masculine part where women's entry required observation of Islamic dress and moral codes. (Ebrahimi P. 5)

Say it all at home. You talk as soon as we're in the car.

There's Mortaza at home.  
There's no privacy.

As soon as I get in the car you start again.

Two sentences and I'll shut up. Two sentences and I'll never speak again.  
I feel fulfilled now like a flowing river. I was a stagnant pond. My brain was devastated.

That makes three sentences and they're all rubbish.  
I'll never listen to your lies again.

Why lies?

I won't listen to you anymore.  
You're just telling me again that you were right to divorce.

You may think it's wrong.  
But it's good for me and I'm happy.

You only thought of yourself.

If you love yourself you can love someone else. But if not...

Enough.

In the past, I craved my parents' love. I'd beg them for a little love.

You want me to be yours.

You're just like your father...

You want to prove that you were right to divorce.  
You lied at the trial. You accused my father of being a drug-addict.

The rotten laws in this society of ours give no rights to women.  
To get a divorce a woman has to say that her husband's on drugs!

Dialogue excerpts from Abbas Kiarostami's «Dah» from 2002

Don't  
shout in  
the street

Um den Kinozuschauer ganz und gar in die dargebotene Geschichte eintauchen zu lassen, wollen die meisten Filme jeglichen Hinweis auf ihre Gemachtheit verstecken. Manche Regisseure versuchen aber, die Entstehungsbedingungen der Filme in den Filmen selbst zu reflektieren. So macht Jean-Luc Godard die Willkür mancher Schnitte deutlich oder tritt gelegentlich selbst vor die Kamera. Abbas Kiarostami löst am Ende von «Ta'm e guilass» / «Der Geschmack der Kirsche» (1997) die filmische Fiktion auf und zeigt den Zuschauern das gesamte Set mit Schauspielern und Tonleuten. Das Genre des Road Movie bricht den Erzählraum des Films nicht so entschieden auf. Im Road Movie wird die Beziehung von Bild und Geschichte nur ein wenig gelockert. Die HeldenInnen dieser Filme reisen durch Naturlandschaften, die durch die Montage gleichzeitig zu inneren Landschaften werden. Die Natur ist als solche wahrnehmbar, zugleich spiegelt sie das Seelenleben der Protagonisten wider. Während Mr. Badii in der «Der Geschmack der Kirsche» einen Totengräber sucht, der ihn nach seinem Suizid beerdigen soll, rollt sein Geländewagen durch eine staubige, wüstenartige Berglandschaft. Als durch die Begegnung mit einem Tierpräparator ein hoffnungsvoller Ton anklängt, fahren die beiden Männer durch einen lichtdurchfluteten, gelb-rot-golden leuchtenden Wald. Das Road Movie entsteht aus dem amerikanischen Genrefilm und bricht dessen geschlossene Mythologien auf, um eine konkretere und aktuellere gesellschaftliche Verortung der Filme zu ermöglichen. Der europäische Autorenfilm deckt eine medientechnische Parallele zwischen dem Autofahren und dem Filmemachen auf. So erweist sich das Road Movie als das filmischste aller Filmgenres. In diesem Text versuche ich, das Autofahren in den Werken von Jafer Panahi und Abbas Kiarostami in der Geschichte des Road Movies zu verorten.

#### Eine zweite Chance

Die genrebildende Bewegung des Road Movies besteht darin, die Stadt hinter sich zu lassen und durch die unbesiedelte Landschaft zu reisen. Dabei ist das Road Movie zunächst ein US-amerikanisches Filmgenre. Vielleicht ist die Natur in Europa von zu starken und zu vielen politischen und kulturellen Grenzen durchzogen. Eine Reise kann dort nicht lang genug dauern, um eine nachhaltig loslösende Wirkung zu haben. In Europa scheint es unmöglich zu sein, den Reisenden auf drastische Weise mit sich selbst zu konfrontieren.

Der Western gilt als Vorläufer des Road Movie. In zahllosen Western müssen einsame Helden und gelegentlich auch HeldenInnen durch das kaum zu überblickende Territorium der Vereinigten Staaten reiten. Das durch den Genozid an den Ureinwohnern kaum bevölkerte Land ist wie eine Bühne, auf der sich jeder begegnen kann. Der Stummfilmwestern erzählt den Kampf um Ressourcen und um das Überleben. John Fords «Stagecoach» (1939) wird oft als frühes Road Movie charakterisiert. Der Film spielt in einer Postkutsche, hinter der sich das Monument Valley als Fords Signature Landschaft erhebt. Mit diesem Film setzte das Western-Revival der 1940er Jahre ein. Nun geht es um mehr als um Ressourcen. Die einzelnen Stakeholder handeln die Bedingungen der Besiedlung der USA und die Grenzen und Regeln der neuen Gesellschaft aus. Die Polizei versucht eine Definition von Rechtsstaatlichkeit zu entwickeln, die Bauern spannen ihre Zäune in der grenzenlosen Prärie der Viehbarone, in den Westernstädten kämpft die Moral eines entstehenden Kleinbürgertums gegen den Alkohol und die Erotik des Saloons. In «Stagecoach» ist jeder Insasse der Kutsche durch eigenes oder fremdes Verschulden daran gescheitert, seinen Beitrag zur neuen Gesellschaft zu leisten. So bekommt er oder sie von der Straße eine zweite Chance. John Wayne spielt einen Kleinkriminellen, der im Gefängnis saß, als sein Vater und sein Bruder ermordet wurden. Er muss begreifen, dass es besser ist, die geliebte Frau zu heiraten als Rache zu üben. Der alkoholkranke Arzt muss ein Kind zu Welt bringen und bereit sein, die Mutter vor der Schändung durch die angreifenden Indianer zu bewahren, indem er sie auf ihren Wunsch hin tötet.

Die Postkutsche gewährt eine Veränderung, die daheim unmöglich ist. Ein Road Movie ist der Western aber noch nicht: Ihm fehlt das negative oder offene Ende. Darüber hinaus die Autos und die Straßen. In den Fahrzeugen und dem Verkehrsnetz spiegelt sich die technische Apparatur des Kinos. Der Film befindet sich auf einem vergleichbaren technischen Niveau wie der motorisierte Verkehr. Sie haben einen ähnlichen Effekt auf ihre Nutzer: Das Kino und das Autofahren lassen uns in einen Sitz sinken, machen uns zum Zuschauer. Ferner verwandeln sie Bewegung in ein Bild. So lässt das Road Movie die Landschaft auf der Leinwand vorbeiziehen wie vor der Windschutzscheibe. Der (analoge) Kinematograph stellt aus Einzelbildern die Illusion einer kontinuierlichen Bewegung her. Der Verbrennungsmotor setzt die Abfolge einzelner Explosionen des Kraftstoffs in die fließende Bewegung der Räder um.

#### Real People Die

Der Western ist nur einer der Vorläufer des Road Movie. Tatsächlich beginnt es mit der Weltwirtschaftskrise nach dem Börsencrash von 1929. Ein Heer von Arbeitslosen reiste meistens auf Zügen auf der Suche nach einem Job durch die USA. In «Wild Boys on the Road» (1933) von William Wellman bricht eine Gruppe von Jugendlichen aus Chicago auf. Die jungen Menschen wollen ihren mittellosen Eltern nicht mehr zur Last fallen. Auf einer furchtbaren Reise nach Osten werden sie Opfer kleiner und großer Verbrechen und von einem bösartigen und zynischen Staatsapparat kriminalisiert. Erst in den allerletzten Minuten des Films lässt Wellmann einen leisen Optimismus anklingen. Das hochkulturelle Gegenstück zu «Wild Boys» ist John Fords John-Steinbeck-Verfilmung «Grapes of Wrath» (1940). Ford hebt das Leid der verarmten Menschen genauso wenig durch eine Geschichte auf wie Wellman. Die Krise kann durch keine erzählerische Operation relativiert werden. Vielleicht ist dies der Keim von Modernität, der die offene Form des Road Movies ermöglicht.

Bezeichnenderweise sind auch einige der einflussreichen Road Movies der Nachkriegszeit in der Zeit der Wirtschaftskrise angesiedelt. 1967 stieß «Bonnie & Clyde» die Tür zum New American Cinema auf. Bonnie ist eine Kaugummi kauchende Kellnerin, sie lernt Clyde kennen, als er versucht, den Wagen ihrer Mutter zu klauen. Beim Ausrauben von Banken stellen sich die beiden ungeschickt an, beim Töten weniger. «In Bonnie & Clyde real people die», schrieb der Filmkritiker Robert Ebert. Die beiden werden weder psychologisiert, noch moralisiert oder politisiert. Sie genießen es, auf den Zeitungsseiten zu erscheinen und die Menschen vom Elend der Depression abzulenken, erklären sie. Clyde fotografiert Bonnie und schickt die Bilder zusammen mit selbst geschriebenen Gedichten an Tageszeitungen. Sie hatten Spaß daran, Celebrities zu werden. Diese mediale Dimension ist für das Road Movie immer von Bedeutung. Die Filmkamera macht kein optisch Unbewusstes (Walter Benjamin) sichtbar, wohl aber ein medial Unbewusstes: Wenn von den Taten des Paares in der Zeitung berichtet wird, befinden sich die beiden bereits an einem anderen, unbekannten, sicheren Ort. Ihr Celebrity Status als raubendes Pärchen ist nur in einer bestimmten, medialen Konstellation möglich: Der tägliche Erscheinungszyklus der Zeitungen gewährt ihnen zugleich Schutz und Sichtbarkeit.

Motorradfilme wie «The Wild One» (1953) mit Marlon Brando oder «Hell's Angels On Wheels» (1967) mit Jack Nicholson sind eher Exploitation-Filme oder Dokumente einer bestimmten Subkultur als Road Movies. Als einem der wenigen Motorradfilme gelingt es «Easy Rider» (1969), das Motorradfahren mit dem gegenkulturellen Aufbruch der sechziger Jahre zu verbinden. Den Film im Kino anzuschauen und wie seine Helden zu kiffen war in den frühen siebziger Jahren ein weiterverbreitetes Ritual. Die Kritikerin Pauline Kael schrieb: «The movie's sentimental paranoia obviously rang true to a large young audience's vision. In the late 60s, it was cool to feel that you couldn't win, that everything was rigged and hopeless. The film was infused with an elegiac sense of American failure.» Kael unterschätzt den Film. Dennis Hopper und Peter Fonda nehmen die US-amerikanische Idee totaler, individueller Freiheit beim Wort, um sich noch mehr dem Rausch der Bewegung als dem Rausch der Drogen hinzugeben. Eine Generation rätselte darüber, was Peter Fonda mit dem Satz «We blew it» am Ende des Films meinte. Erahnt er die eigene Ermordung durch intolerante Hillbillies? Oder begreift er, dass die beiden den Kontakt zur Macht nicht gekappt hatten? Ihren Ausstieg aus der Normalität finanzierten sie schließlich, indem sie Kokain aus Mexiko nach Los Angeles schmuggeln und an den Rolls Royce fahrenden Pop-Produzenten Phil Spector verkaufen.

#### Kino im Kino

Das amerikanische Road Movie entsteht aus dem Scheitern der Fiktionalisierung der Great Depression und aus dem Scheitern des gegenkulturellen Aufbruchs der sechziger Jahre. Das Zeitgeschichtliche wird dabei mit Genrelementen verbunden, etwa des Gangsterfilms. Das europäische Road Movie beginnt als Setzung tonangebender Autorenfilmer. In «Viaggio in Italia» (1954) begreift ein britisches Ehepaar auf einer Bildungsreise durch Italien, dass ihre Beziehung hinfällig ist und trennt sich. Weder findet eine Entgrenzung durch die überwältigende Natur statt, noch wird die Landschaft ein Spiegel des Selbst. Der Verlust der alltäglichen Rituale und das ständige Zusammensein beim Reisen decken die Mangelhaftigkeit der Beziehung auf. In Jean-Luc Godards «Weekend» (1968) arten die Staus auf den französischen Autobahnen in den Sommerferien zu einer Rebellion aus, bei der sich verschiedene Parteien in einem Guerillakrieg bekämpfen und auf grausame Weise massakrieren. Anders als im amerikanischen Film sind keine zentralen Protagonisten nötig, um einen gesellschaftlichen Zustand zu beschreiben. Godard verbindet das Mobilitätsversprechen nicht mit individueller Freiheit, sondern mit Anarchie und Krieg. Den thesenartigen Charakter dieser beiden Filme konnte das europäische Road Movie so gut wie nie abstreifen. Die einzelnen Filme verdichten sich nicht zu einem Genre. Wim Wenders stellte das Road Movie sogar ins Zentrum seiner Arbeit, die Filme blieben aber doch eher Kommentar, erschufen keine eigene kulturelle Form. Wenders orientiert sich dabei noch mehr als die anderen europäischen Auteurs am amerikanischen Road Movie. Die besondere Qualität seiner Filme liegt darin, dass er das Reisen nicht oder nur minimal mit Geschichten auflädt. Die vergleichsweise unbestimmten Figuren bekommen durch die opaken Landschaften einen Resonanzraum. In seinem frühen Film «Summer in the City» spiegeln die winterlichen, in weißes Neonlicht getauchten Einkaufsstraßen in Berlin und München die Melancholie und Einsamkeit des gerade aus dem Gefängnis entlassenen Hans (Hanns Zischler) wider. In «Alice in den Städten» bringen die Werbebotschaften des US-amerikanischen TVs und Radios den Journalisten Philip Winter (Rüdiger Vogler) um den Verstand. Er findet sich wieder, als er mit der neunjährigen Alice (Yella Rottländer) nach dem Haus ihrer Großmutter im Ruhrgebiet sucht, nachdem Alice' Mutter Philip das Kind in New York anvertraute. Alice kann sich weder an die Stadt noch an die Straße erinnern, es gibt lediglich ein Foto des Hauses. Der Film erzählt die Freundschaft zwischen dem Mann und dem Kind, die aus der gemeinsamen Lust am Reisen entsteht. Die eigentümliche Suche nach dem Haus auf dem Foto ist ermüdend und hat doch eine klärende Wirkung auf Philips Verstand. Der Film ist so einzigartig, weil das Gesicht des Kindes die ambivalenten Gefühle zwischen dem Vergnügen an der Bewegung und der Lust auf das Unbekannte auf der einen Seite und die Verlorenheit auf der anderen noch direkter zum Ausdruck bringt als das eines Erwachsenen.

In «Im Lauf der Zeit» (1976) fährt der einsilbige Bruno (wieder Rüdiger Vogler) die Kinos entlang der deutsch-deutschen Grenze ab und wartet und repariert dort die Projektoren. Der Lebensinhalt dieses Mannes besteht fast allein im Kino und im Autofahren. Das Kino hat lediglich sich selbst zum Ge-

genstand. Wenders erreicht da einen Endpunkt, der im Road Movie von Beginn an angelegt ist. So bleibt ihm in seinem späteren Road Movie «Paris, Texas» (1984) nichts anderes übrig, als das auf Entgrenzung angelegte Genre in ein vergleichsweise konventionelles Familiendrama zu integrieren.

#### Der Junge auf dem Filmplakat

Das postmoderne Road Movie der 1980er und 1990er Jahre stellt dem Purismus und der Isolation seiner modernistischen Vorgänger einen überbordenden Reichtum an Figuren und Identitäten entgegen. Der Freiraum der Straße dient dazu, alle möglichen Identitätsentwürfe zu entfalten. Bei «The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert» (1994) reisen zwei Drag Queens und eine Transsexuelle durch Australien, um ihr besonderes Cabaret aufzuführen. Bei «Near Dark» (1987) von Kathryn Bigelow sind Vampire in einem Wohnmobil unterwegs, auf der Suche nach Blut und Liebe. Bei «Thelma & Luise» (1994) geht es um Feminismus, bei «Natural Born Killers» (1994) um Medienkritik bzw. -Satire. Das überraschendste Road Movie dieser Zeit ist «My Own Private Idaho» (1991) von Gus van Sant; Road Movies sind Geschichten unwahrscheinlicher Solidarität, egal wie affirmativ oder kritisch sie sind. Dieser Film aber erzählt das Auseinanderbrechen dieser Solidarität. Der eine Stricher kehrt in die Bürgerlichkeit zurück, der andere geht (wahrscheinlich) zu Grunde. Nicht weniger originell ist David Lynchs «Wild at Heart» (1990). Lynch dekonstruiert die Modernität des Road Movies zweifach. Zum einen ist das Reisen nutzlos, weil man eh überall den Handlagnern der bösen Schwiegermutter begegnet. Zum anderen muss Sailor (Nicholas Cage) begreifen, dass er zum Familienvater gemacht ist und nicht zum Drifter.

Die iranischen Road Movies knüpfen, obwohl sie aus der jetzigen Zeit stammen, an die Filme aus jenen bereits vergangenen Epochen an. Jafer Panahis «Taxi» (2015) spielt fast vollständig in einem Taxi, «Crimson Gold» (2003) auf einem Roller. Weil die Filme in Teheran angesiedelt sind und vom Stadtleben handeln, sind sie keine Road Movies. Eher wird in oder auf den Fahrzeugen der öffentlicher Raum geschaffen, den es in dem Gottesstaat nicht gibt. Das Auto ist ein Schutzraum. Es lässt am Stadtleben teilhaben, schützt aber vor den Blicken der Staatsmacht und ihren Handlagnern, die besonders Frauen in ihre vermeintlich natürlichen Rollen verweisen wollen. So wird das Auto zu einem öffentlichen Raum, in dem sich Menschen temporär von den Machtverhältnissen lösen können.

Jenseits einzelner Verkehrsmittel geht es in den Filmen von Abbas Kiarostami von Anfang an um Distanzen, die zurückgelegt werden müssen. Sein erster langer Film «Mos-safer» / «Der Reisende» (1974) handelt von einem Jungen, der nach Teheran fährt, um ein Fußballspiel zu sehen. Sein zweiter Film erzählt die Geschichte eines Schülers, der seinem im Nachbardorf lebenden Freund dessen Hausaufgabenheft bringen muss, das er versehentlich eingesteckt hat. Dieser Film entstand in Manjil-Rudbar, das 1990 von einem starken Erdbeben heimgesucht wurde. 40.000 Menschen kamen ums Leben. In «Zendegi va digar hitch» / «Und das Leben geht weiter» (1992) versucht der durch einen Schauspieler dargestellte Kiarostami herauszufinden, ob die Laiendarsteller aus seinem letzten Film noch am Leben sind. Wie Philip und Alice in «Alice in den Städten» anhand eines Fotos nach einem Haus fahnden, sucht in diesem Film der Regisseur (Farhad Kheradmand) anhand eines Filmplakats nach den Jungen. Der Regisseur verlässt seinen Wagen selten und hat an der Katastrophe nur als Beobachter Teil: Zahllose Bewohner der Region treten an ihn heran und berichten von ihren furchtbaren Erlebnissen. Gleichzeitig beobachtet er, wie sie ihr Leben wieder aufnehmen. Obwohl der Film viele dokumentarische Elemente enthält, ist es doch kein Dokumentarfilm. Er hat aber auch keine Geschichte. Der Regisseur handelt nicht, er fragt und beobachtet. Die Motivation liegt außerhalb des Erzählraums, in dem früheren Film. Kiarostami erschafft eine besondere Art der Teilhabe, sein Blick ist emphatischer als der eines Dokumentarfilms. Dennoch maßt er sich nicht an, aus dem Unglück eine Geschichte zu entwickeln.

«Ta'm e guilass» / «Der Geschmack der Kirsche» (1997) und «Bad ma ra khahad bord» / «Der Wind wird uns tragen» (1999) sind Kiarostamis gewaltigste Filme. Bei «Der Geschmack der Kirsche» fährt der anfangs erwähnte Badii, (Homayoun Ersghadi) in einem Geländewagen durch eine wüstenartige Berglandschaft. Er hat vor, sich das Leben zu nehmen und sucht einen Menschen, der seine Leiche mit Erde bedeckt, der ihn begräbt, und bietet dafür eine hohe Geldsumme an. Ein junger Soldat stürzt erschreckt weg, als er ihm das Ansinnen erklärt. Ein junger Geistlicher sagt, dass der Selbstmord im Islam verboten ist. Dann trifft Badii einen alten Mann, der in einem Naturkundemuseum das Ausstopen von Tieren lehrt. Er ist bereit Badii zu helfen, weil er die teure Operation seines Kindes bezahlen muss. Geldmangel und Familienprobleme seien meistens die Gründe für Suizid, sagt der Alte. Damit seien sie überraschend banal und lösbar. In der letzten Szene des Films steht Badii vor seinem Grab. Aber plötzlich ist er nicht mehr Badii, sondern der Schauspieler Homayoun Ersghadi und wir sehen auch Kiarostami, die Komparse und das Filmteam. Bei aller Empathie gegenüber dem verzweifelten Mann kann das Road Movie den Verweis auf seine Gemachtheit nicht unterdrücken. Der Wunsch, beerdigt zu werden, erfordert Begegnungen und Beziehungen, die auch wieder eine Lebenszugewandtheit ermöglichen.

Nach «Bad ma ra khahad bord» / «Der Wind wird uns tragen» hat Kiarostami die Arbeit mit der analogen Filmkamera aufgegeben und begonnen, ausschließlich digitale Bilder zu produzieren. Damit ist auch das Road Movie aus seinem Werk verschwunden. Das Road Movie scheint an den 35mm Film gebunden zu sein. Vielleicht entstehen Road Movies heute ganz anders, ohne Filmkamera und ohne die Vision eines Auteurs, sondern durch die unermüdliche Arbeit der Überwachungskameras, die das Geschehen auf den Straßen filmen. Oder in den Smartphones, die die Menschen bei der Fahrt aus dem Fenster halten.