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NON-VISIBILITY AND THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY PRESENCE:
A SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN IRAN

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PhD Dissertation

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NON-VISIBILITY AND THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY PRESENCE:
A SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN IRAN

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Table of Contents

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1. INTRODUCTION
The Non-Visibility of Everyday Presence

This dissertation focuses on the recurrent times, spaces, performances, practices, and behaviours that shape a significant part of everyday lived experience, but remain largely understudied. It is concerned with those unpretentious and embodied modes of spatial inhabitation that are so enmeshed in the habitual routines of the everyday that they ordinarily escape notice and remain unmarked and unexceptional – hence, non-visible. In examining the quotidian social practices, the project seeks to unravel the tactics people use to tackle everyday problems and create possibilities for self-realization and the fulfilment of their needs and desires. This project is therefore concerned primarily with the "transitions and mediations between the repetitive and the creative" (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 239) in everyday life, with "the art of living" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 199).

Everyday creativity in this sense is not only about finding ways to adapt and survive in everyday circumstances, but is also about resisting subjugation under the dominant structures of power that regulate everyday modes of behaviour and interaction. The art of everyday is about appropriation and a ceaseless "struggle against the forces that oppose appropriation" (Sheringham, 2006, p. 149). Resistance in this sense emerges not only from creative uses of everyday times and spaces, but also simply from excessive energies and affects that emanate from bodies and embodied lived experiences (Simonsen, 2005). This project is therefore concerned with apprehending the workings of the insignificant and ordinary practices of the everyday, and teasing out the creative and transformative forces contained in them.

A conflict exists in everyday practices between concerns over anonymity and unmarkedness on the one hand – to run daily errands without being noticed or bothered by strangers or the police – and aspirations for visibility and display on the other hand – to connect to others by making oneself seen, heard, and felt. If invisibility is celebrated as a tactic on the basis of which everyday forms of creativity and resistance escape the totalizing eyes of the power (Certeau, 1988), it is the visibility of non-conformist ways of being and doing that is commonly thought to be necessary for the creation of collective sentiments and the formation of social and political struggles. This project is therefore concerned with the conjunction of

unobtrusiveness and conspicuousness, anonymity and discernibility, visibility and invisibility, in everyday life and urban cultures.

Such a paradox of visibility runs deep in the ideas about urban cultures. The city, on the one hand, is an agglomeration of people who are not known to each other but live next to one another and pass by each other on a daily basis. In this sense, city life is fundamentally about "the being together of strangers" (Young, 1990, pp. 227-237). Urban life in this sense entails a certain level of non-disclosure of strangers to one-another, of people remaining anonymous to each other and making associations only with the groups and people of their choice – where the conditions of being exposed to one another are controlled and mutually agreed upon. To live next to strangers also requires a certain level of downplaying the visible markers of difference, the highlighting of which would risk reinforcing and naturalizing all sorts of meanings and stigmatizations (such as race and ethnicity) based on the differences in bodies and behaviours (Alcoff, 2006, p. 192), and would then lead to different sorts of segregation and division in cities – of strangers being kept separate from each other.

But, on the other hand, the city is crucially a public realm where collective ideas and sentiments are made, voiced, discussed, and judged. It is a space for the gathering of bodies and minds, and a stage where actions are performed, ideas discussed, and identities revealed. The city is therefore a space of disclosure and visibility, a "space of appearance", a stage "where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicitly" (Arendt, 1958, pp. 198-199). The anonymous public interact in the public realm and appear to one another as players and spectators, performers and observers.

The interrelations between everyday life, public presence, visibility, and anonymity are therefore at the centre of my examination of urban living and the possibilities for resistance that run within everyday life. My analysis focuses on the multiple non-visibilities that constitute everyday living in Iran. The context of Iran is particularly significant because of the strong distinctions that are held between its realms of public and private, and orders of visibility and invisibility. Everyday modes of presence in the Iranian public domain, I explain in the following, reflects strong aspirations for non-visibility, non-conspicuousness, and non-vociferousness. The conjunction of aspirations for active presence and invisibility in public, I argue,

results in the creation of liminal conditions of non-visibility. In the following, I will first describe the creative force of everyday life in Iran by focusing on Asef Bayat's (Bayat, 2010) conceptualization of the 'art of presence'. Then, I will further examine the intricate relation between absence and presence, visibility and invisibility, by analysing street photographs of Tehran. My introduction ends with a short description of my case studies in chapters 2-5.

The Art of Everyday Presence

In *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, Asef Bayat (2010) advocates the 'art of presence' as the multiplicity of cunning yet quotidian methods by which ordinary people of the Middle East strive, in their daily lives, to assert their physical, social, and cultural presence despite social constraints. Focusing mainly on Iran and Egypt, Bayat's thesis concerns the ordinary citizens at large, who are structurally dispossessed of institutional means for forcing significant social change. It entails creative ways of circumventing constraints by making use of every possibility available in one's immediate domain, discovering new spaces and generating new conditions within which to make oneself "heard, seen, felt, and realized" (Bayat, 2010, p. 249). Rather than confronting the authorities in demand of immediate change, the art of presence entails covertly deflecting the attention of the disciplinary apparatuses so as to appropriate the everyday circumstances for slightly different ways of being and doing. Under the strictly defined and policed regime of publicness in Iran, Bayat envisions prospects for gradually yet assertively achieving sustained social change in Iran through the mundane practices of the everyday – the art of presence.

The art of presence in Bayat's rendition involves a certain sense of actively participating in the making of personalized segments of time and space in everyday circumstances that are otherwise carefully outlined and policed. Such nonconformist positions require the active citizens' conviction, aptitude, and audacity in their creation and upholding. But to function on the level of the everyday, they also presuppose humbleness, modesty, and ordinariness of attitude and modes of presence. Bayat's concept functions on the level of the ordinary and the familiar, and concerns the immediate domains in which people live, work, and perform in their daily lives. Rather than receding into exterior domains of counter-culture or oppositional politics, the art of presence is crucially about "refusing to exit from the social and political

stage controlled by authoritarian states, moral authority, and neoliberal economies" (Bayat, 2010, p. ix). The power of non-conformist modes of everyday presence lies in the way that, over time, they "may recondition the established political elites and refashion state institutions into their sensibilities" (Bayat, 2010, p. 250). Among the examples of the art of presence that Bayat studies are: the urban poor's politics of informality (squatting and the use of street sidewalks for commerce), women's increasing participation in the traditionally masculine public domains (studying in universities, doing sports, establishing NGO's and public centres) and the urban youth's determination in keeping alternative appearances in public (with deviant hairstyles, clothing, and bodily attributes).

Even though Bayat acknowledges that such politics of presence encompass a wide range of times and spaces, he sees them best shaped and articulated on the street. This is because the street signifies a domain where the everyday use of space is a matter of perpetual contestation between the powers that structure and control it – state, market, and societal ethics – and the ordinary citizens who "in the modern states, are allowed to use it only passively – through walking, driving, watching – or in other ways that the state dictates" (Bayat, 2010, p. 11). Bayat sees potential for contentious modes of presence in the unending dynamism of the busy streets of Tehran and Cairo, in the "the presence of so many people operating in the streets – working, running around, standing, sitting, negotiating, driving, or riding on buses and trams" (2010, p. 12). The everyday street therefore forms a "theatre of contentions" (Bayat, 2010, p. 11), a breeding ground for new visions, feelings, and identities to be performed and shared amongst the anonymous public.

The street, writes Bayat, is "a medium through which strangers or casual passers-by are able to establish latent communication with one another by recognizing their mutual interests and shared sentiments" (2010, p. 12). In short, Bayat believes that

> The street is the chief locus of politics for ordinary people, those who are structurally absent from the centers of institutional power. Simultaneously social and spatial, constant and current, a place of both the familiar and the stranger, and the visible and the vocal, streets represent a complex entity wherein sentiments and outlooks are formed, spread, and expressed in a remarkably unique fashion. (Bayat, 2010, p. 167)

Such a take on the everyday street, as the space where social norms and identities are reproduced – and also contested – on a daily basis, corresponds with a common trope in a vast array of studies and practices that are concerned with the everyday (Ross, 1996). However, Bayat's concept of the everyday street also suggests a convenient visual field of interaction and perception that is open and accessible to eyes and senses, where the implication of visual communications pays little regard to risks of misapprehension, or indeed unintelligibility. This notion seems to disregard the theoretical and methodological complexities of the notion of the everyday as implicative of a vast and shapeless field of enquiry that does not lend itself easily to interpretation, and therefore poses a question as to how it could be approached, interpreted, and studied (Highmore, 2002). "The everyday will necessarily exceed attempts to apprehend it", writes Ben Highmore, firstly because any attempts to capture it by extracting some elements from it would betray and transform "the most characteristic aspect of everyday life: its ceaseless-ness" (2002, p. 21). Furthermore, as everyday practices are embedded in habits, and all that becomes familiar out of daily repetition, attempts for understanding the everyday are hindered by its characteristic invisibility, inconspicuousness, and unobtrusiveness (Highmore, 2002, p. 1). Building upon the transiency and invisibility of the practices of everyday life, Michel de Certeau famously states that they remain ungraspable and perform "below the threshold at which visibility begins" (1988, p. 93). As a result of its clandestinity, taken-for-grantedness and pervasiveness, everyday life could be said to remain "one of the most overlooked and misunderstood aspects of social existence" (Gardiner, 2000, pp. 1-2).

The history of photography shows a great deal of interest in capturing the furtive moments of expressivity in everyday life. Registering the way people act and perform in public, street photographs have provided an invaluable resource for both social and historical analyses. In particular, the tradition of street photography has brought to light the familiar and unfamiliar in the everyday and has therefore contributed significantly to shaping collective understandings and imaginaries of urban public life around the world. In short, street photographs are "telling objects, portraying how individuals perform their identities in public: how they inhabit public spaces and situate themselves in relation to class, cultural, and gender norms" (Hirsch & Spitzer, 2009, p. 14). Street photographs seem particularly appropriate for the study

of the everyday street, because the range of performative practices that go into their production seem to be in concert with the practices they depict. In order to depict the everyday street, the photographers need to immerse themselves in its rhythm, synchronize with its pace, and partake in its ceaseless flow by walking alongside their subjects.

In the following section I want to study the art of presence in Iran by looking at a collection of street photographs of Tehran. By means of this short investigation, I wish to tease out the interrelatedness of the concepts of urban space, everyday life, presence, and visibility. Rather than looking for revealing evidence or candid illustrations of ordinary lives in Iranian cities, my goal is to disclose contradictions inherent to the ideas of everyday life and public presence in Iran, which stem from overlaps and conflicts between the people's, the photographers', and the state's conflicting aspirations for visibility and exposure. I will argue that, far from exposing those moments of assertive presence, these photographs attest to aspirations for absence and invisibility.

Presence and Absence in Photographs of Streets in Tehran

The collection of photographs that I have chosen to present in this chapter (Figures 1.1-7) do not claim to be comprehensive in covering the field of Iranian photography, but they are representative of a common trope in Iranian contemporary photography that is concerned with the city and urban public space at large. Although the street is not strictly the subject matter in many of these photographs, I see in their approach towards the city and the medium of photography a confluence with the tradition of 'street photography' (Jacobs, 2006). These photographs I believe uphold the tradition of street photography, firstly, in favouring street-level and non-topographic views over distant, elevated, or panoramic gazes that characterize the more general field of urban or landscape photography (Jacobs, 2006); and, secondly, they reveal a strong appeal to art and poetry which distinguishes itself clearly from documentary or journalistic photography (Scott, 2007).

In exploring these photographs, I do not wish to question the relevance of the genre of street photography to the study of everyday life in Iran, nor to question its definition and application in the age of digital and smartphone photography. Rather, aligning these photographs with the customs of street photography helps me in discerning their contradictory attitudes towards visibility and presence. One can think

of street photography as crucially concerned with capturing the human condition and the associations people make in their daily lives with space, buildings, tools, animals, and other people around them. However, in the type of street photographs that I discuss in this introductory chapter, one cannot help noticing that what is missing from the view are the people themselves. Not celebrating the city's density, dynamism, chaos, and everyday activity, what is felt most emphatically in these pictures is the emptiness of the spaces and the absence of people.

Figure 1.1. Shahab Fotouhi, *Internal Affairs*, 2007.

Figure 1.2. Ehsan Barati, *The Other City*, 2012-2013.

Figure 1.3. Bahnam Sadeghi, Ekbatan, West of Tehran, 2010.

Figure 1.4. Shahriar Tavakoli, Night.

Figure 1.5. Mohammad Ghazali, *Where the Heads of the Renowned Rest*, 2009-2011.

Figure 1.6. Mohammad Ghazali, *Tehran a Little to the Right*, 2010-2013.

Figure 1.7. Mehran Mohajer, Tehran Undated, 2009.

To be clear, I am not arguing that pictures of Iranian streets that depict people do not exist. In fact, one could also recognize a different trend in photographing the vibrancy of Iranian streets, particularly in reportages on Iran created by professional correspondents or accounts of life in Iran uploaded to the Internet by independent bloggers, where emphasis is put onto either showing the huge crowd of people on the streets or singling out individuals with distinct looks. Rather, what I am trying to point to is that, contrary to such journalistic accounts, the cohesive trend in absenting people from the street that I detect in a great number of twenty-first-century Iranian art photography is indicative of a collective sensibility towards invisibility, and therefore makes different types of social and political statements.

Rather than seeing in these photographs the material elements that fill in the space and shape its contours – such as walls, buildings, urban furniture, trees, vegetation, and asphalt – I notice in them the absence of that which is meticulously avoided. I see the choice of environments, lighting, and aesthetics of these images oriented towards the fulfilment of the photographers' more basic ambitions for the depiction of the absence and inaction. Whereas the typical street photographer carefully waits for the right moment to arrive to make visible, through photography, that particularly fleeting moment of human interaction that constitutes the everyday but remains mostly unnoticed in daily life, in the cases that I have examined the photographers seem to be capturing the moment of effacement, erasure, and disappearance. A very particular process of engaging with the everyday and acquiring its rhythm has gone through the production of these images that works quite strangely

to capture the disappearance of human-subjects and to highlight the non-human. It is as if the photographer has waited patiently for this rare moment of emptiness and tranquillity to appear in a densely populated, busy, and congested city (all the images are from Tehran).

To find their desired emptiness, the photographers have, by and large, sought to find quiet places and times for photographing the city. They have also paid particular attention to their framings, as one could imagine people appearing in the frame had the camera tilted just a little upwards or sideways (particularly in Figures 1.1, 1.2, and 1.5). To crop out people from their frames, they have made crucial choices in positioning the camera to face the façade of the street rather than its length (Figure 1.5), and in closing their frames onto corners (Figures 1.2 and 1.4). Using high contrast black-and-white photography to depict the modern architecture of iconic sites, with broad white walls contrasting the wide black asphalt of the street, has helped in exuding a feeling of desertion and abandonment (Figure 1.3). Sometimes retouching techniques are used to blur the image and to exude a nostalgic aesthetic where the emptiness of space stands out (Figure 1.6). And occasionally, with the use of very long exposure times, the photographers have opted to literally clear off cars and passers-by from the images and reduce their effects of presence to ghostly traces on the streets (Figure 1.7).

Particularly effective in inciting contradictory effects of presence and absence are Mehran Mohajer's square formatted pictures (Figure 1.7), which, in a balanced composition, draw the attention to the materiality of the urban walls and the emptiness of the streets. These pictures are taken with an outmoded pinhole square-format camera, with very long exposure times. Mohajer's idiosyncratic use of such a camera indicates his time spent in stillness on the street, where he has had to take time in setting up the equipment on a tripod and waiting for the duration of the exposure. His own stillness in time and space contrasts with the speed of the street around him, and corresponds to the sense of suspension of time and space that the images exude (the sense of timelessness is also alluded to in the title of the project: *Tehran, undated*). In his photographs, while the light shop windows and the traces of cars and people speak of the flow and action of the lively city, one associates coldness and blankness with seeing the emptied streets and monotone walls that extend into the horizon. Therefore, I believe Mohajer's practice highlights the complex relation between absence and presence, between liveliness and inertia, on the streets of Tehran.

One might say that purely artistic considerations could be held accountable for the emptiness that these photographs depict. In fact, in their treatment of the urban as nature morte, these pictures parallel a great number of contemporary photographs of the city worldwide. As Rosemary Hawker points out, in the history of photography, "a strange binary inversion of the city as trope" can be detected where the familiar dynamism of city life, as depicted in early modernist street photography, gives way to comparatively still and empty street views in more recent decades (2013, p. 343). In the era of the expansion of photography and the proliferation of user-friendly digital photographic devices, such a move could be explained on the basis of "disciplinary relations internal to photography as an art form" (Hawker, 2013, p. 341). To distinguish itself aesthetically from "vernacular representations of the city", art photography in recent decades has largely avoided such widely embraced and artistically acknowledged characteristics of the tradition of street photography that highlight the drama of the street and its chaos (Hawker, 2013, pp. 341-343). In pursuit of new aesthetics that apply to the contemporary everyday street, Hawker states that many street photographers have revamped the idea of staging the performance of the street, whereby they create a detailed choreography of the scenes they aspire to depict, rather than remaining susceptible to its otherwise chaotic and free floating performance (2013, pp. 341-343).

Nevertheless, in spite of their allusions to poetics of stillness and the phantasmagorias of the emptied city, one cannot disregard the wider implication that these pictures pose of the city as a "problematic place", which is, "at the very least, in a state of suspension, and at worst hostile and disabling" (Hawker, 2013, p. 346). The photographs that I present in this chapter refer to an unease of being in space. If staging techniques are applied, this is done to accentuate the uncomfortable emptiness of space and to transmit the awkward intensity of the disappeared subjects. In the absence that besets the city in these photographs, allusions could be made to the wider social, political, and cultural implication of everyday life in Iran. To be precise, these photographs make statements about the inconvenient interdependency of presence in everyday urban living in Iran and conditions of non-visibility.

The absent and ghostly presences that haunt these photographs strike a chord with Masserat Amir-Ebrahimi's conceptualization of Iranian women's modes of being in public as "absent presence" (2006, p. 459). To actively engage in public in Iran, she writes, women "want to or should be invisible but present" (2006, p. 460). In a society

in which for many women and young people "being seen" is considered the same as "being subjected to judgment by others, attracting danger and increasing their feeling of insecurity", Amir-Ebrahimi believes, people get recourse to ways of being in public that "could not be felt or seen" (2006, p. 459). Amir-Ebrahimi relates this feeling of insecurity in being visible in public to the fear of being singled out in a system that does not accept diversity, where being in public feels as "being subjected to constant control by others (moral police, neighbors, community, at work, at university and so forth)" (2006, p. 456).

The origin of the homogenizing processes that so drastically affect the public presence of women in Iran, Amir-Ebrahimi (2006) indicates, dates back to the decade after the revolution of 1979, when the Iranian society was reconstructed to embrace the Islamic ideal of unity (*Vahdat*). In the homogeneous society that followed, men's and women's appearances and ways of being in public were disciplined according to strict patterns of behaviour and codified dress codes, deviations from which were subject to correction and penalization. Examples of such codes of appearance in public are: keeping a distance from, avoiding bodily contact with, and curtailing the intensity of looks between opposite sexes; keeping down female voices and avoiding loud laughter in public; avoiding frivolous behaviours or suggestive bodily movements such as dancing; wearing a compulsory veil which would entail fully covering women's hair and bodies, and avoiding applying extensive make up; keeping a general tendency towards wearing dark-coloured, loose, and unrevealing dresses for both sexes; and avoiding dress codes and hairstyles which would be suggestive of Western styles (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2006, p. 458; Bayat, 2010, pp. 142-3). It is as a reaction to such a state of corporeal control, where the slightest deviations from strictly defined norms are not to be tolerated on the basis of their visible manifestations in space, that people get recourse to strategies of absent presence and look for ways of being actively present while keeping out of sight.

Visibility, then, as is implied in Amir-Ebrahimi's analysis and in the way I am employing it in this dissertation, pertains to modes of marking and registration, "a property that can be used to divide marked and unmarked persons" (Brighenti, 2007, p. 334). Visibility therefore carries force since the disciplinary apparatuses rely on "politics of treatment for visible differences" (Brighenti, 2007, p. 334). As Foucault's influential thesis indicates, in disciplinary society, the visibility of subjects is essential for the hold of power and for the continuation of its mechanisms of subjugation and

objectification: "It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection" (Foucault, 1977, p. 187). Visibility, in other words, fuels the institutions and systems of control in their quest for "subjugation, imposition of conducts, means of control" (Brighenti, 2007, p. 336). Far from embracing the emancipatory promises of recognition and acceptance in otherwise negligent or discriminatory societies that visibility could offer to minority groups and dispossessed identities (as identity politics suggests), I am concerned with the disempowering effects of visibility and the serious repercussions of being identified as 'the other' (Fraser, 2000; Steinbugler, 2005; Stella, 2012). More specifically, I am concerned with the intimidating consequences of the visibility of subjects whose bodies, desires, and ways of being carry negative feelings within the dominant discourse, the public exposure of which would in fact consolidate – rather than challenge – the hegemonic assumptions and views regarding those very identities and desires (Ghorashi, 2010).

I employ non-visibility in this dissertation to apply to those states of appearance that withstand the subjugating and disempowering effects of visibility. The concept does not stand in contrast to visibility in the sense of that which cannot be seen by the biological eye: the dark, the hidden, the unknown, or the immaterial (although it can contain such states). Rather, I am using the term non-visibility to account for those conditions which, despite their possible partaking in the constitution of the visual field, resist being singled out and registered. It covers various tactics to run unnoticed and operate under cover, multiple ways for disclosure and shelter from public scrutiny. It entails unmarkedness and unobtrusiveness, so as not to interrupt the flow of everyday life and not to arrest undesired attention. Non-visibility entails anonymity and familiarity in order either to deflect the attention of the apparatuses of control or to confuse their systems of identification. It entails camouflage and "impression management" (Goffman, 1959) to control the weight of emotions and affects one receives and emanates in public. It therefore functions within discourses and varies in different times and spaces, responds to culturally constructed and historically sedimented "ways of seeing" (Berger, 1972). It entails heightened awareness of the systems of surveillance and the societal protocols within which one appears.

Amir-Ebrahimi (2006) indicates that people in Iran take refuge in creating impressions of anonymity and non-visibility in order to counter the unsafeties of

public visibility and to enable active public presence. She describes how Iranian women are able to overcome the obstacles to their participation in the public sphere by conforming to the visible and corporeal codes of conduct, which opens up a huge amount of manoeuvring room by guaranteeing them a certain level of anonymity and unmarkedness. Wearing black in Iran, Amir-Ebrahimi indicates, is one such strategy for anonymity, a camouflage of otherness, a way of passing ceaselessly and unobtrusively in public. In his study of fashion in Tehran, Alexandru Balaşescu (2007) provides a similar description for strategies of non-visibility in the unwelcoming streets of Tehran:

> Dressing down, in faded colors, or in conformity with the Islamic moral rules, grants women the liberty of passing through places without being noticed, receiving impolite comments from passers-by, or the risk of being stopped and questioned by the pasdarha. Thus, invisibility gives a general feeling of security, necessary to the freedom of movement for women in different regimes of dress in Tehran. (Balaşescu, 2007, pp. 156-7)

Some commentators have even argued that the compulsory veiling in Iran has had the paradoxical effect of boosting the presence of women in public, exactly by curtailing their bodily visibility (Bayat, 2010, p. 113). Especially for many women from traditional families, for whom unwanted male gazes in public pose an extra burden for religious belief, the homogeneity of the veil suggests possibilities for comfortable presence and mobility in public. This could explain the otherwise contradictory argument of many sociologists that, despite the overwhelming inhibitions on women's rights and prohibitions on their access to particular spaces, the participation of women in public life in Iran has generally improved after the Islamic revolution (Bayat, 2010). In short, it could be said that, by ways of absent-presence, Iranian women have learned to keep a delicate balance between the protective veil of invisibility and the desire to lay claim to the public space.

To return to street photography (Figure 1.1-Figure 1.7), I believe that, by satiating a desire to unsee the people, these photographs also seek to remain faithful to the human subjects' quest for invisibility. I am suggesting to take notice of the corporeality of the practice of taking photographs on the streets, and the interactions it entails between the photographers and their subjects. Such interactions are fraught

14

with the racial, sexualized and class-inflected gaze of the rude photographer, cast upon the passers-by on the moment of taking the photograph, and the subsequent prolongation and fixation of that imbalanced position of power in the photographic image and its display in art galleries (Tucker, 2012, p. 12). To put it differently, I am suggesting to think about what these photographs reveal about the "social and/or political identities that are mobilized" in their production (Rose, 2001, p. 21). Given that all these photographs are taken by male photographers, I take the absence of people as indicative of the photographers' repudiation of the masculine underpinnings of the celebrated character of a tough photographer, who rudely casts his photographing eye on any subject of his desire on the street (Rose, 2001, p. 22).

In addition, emptying the picture of human figures functions as a way of granting invisibility to the photographers themselves. Street photographers constitute a different type of urban spectacle in their practice of taking pictures, "stopping for views, unpacking equipment, focusing the lens, and attracting attention from passersby ranging from curiosity to irritation" (Tucker, 2012, p. 12). Emptying the view from people could function as a strategy for invisibility on the part of the photographers, whose own mode of practice on the street entails strategies for non-visibility in order to remain unnoticed. Street photographers have historically shown a desire for invisibility. In the blind subjects that have appeared in so many street photographs of the twentieth century, Geoff Dyer sees "the objective corollary of the photographer's longed-for invisibility" (2005, p. 13). In the instances of taking photographs of blind subjects, Dyer suggests, "the photographer who is always on the move, who 'sees on and on', is confronted with his opposite: someone unmoving and unseeing" (2005, p. 15). I claim that, just like the blind subject that lacks eyes to look back and notice the photographer in his action, clearing the field of vision from human subjects grants the photographers invisibility. Rather than staying aloof from the everyday, the photographers engage with it in a fashion that is more attuned to the non-visibilities of presence.

Ultimately, the experience of walking in the streets in Iran does not register easily within the photographic medium. I want to conclude this section by pointing to another photographic project which I believe, in a self-aware manner, affectively discloses the unnerving experience of the street and of photographing in it. The female photographer Mehraneh Atashi's series of photographs, *Tehran's Self-Portrait*, registers the discomfort with which the female subject, as the photographer

and the photographed, confronts the shock of her exposure in space and on the photographic image (Figure 1.8).
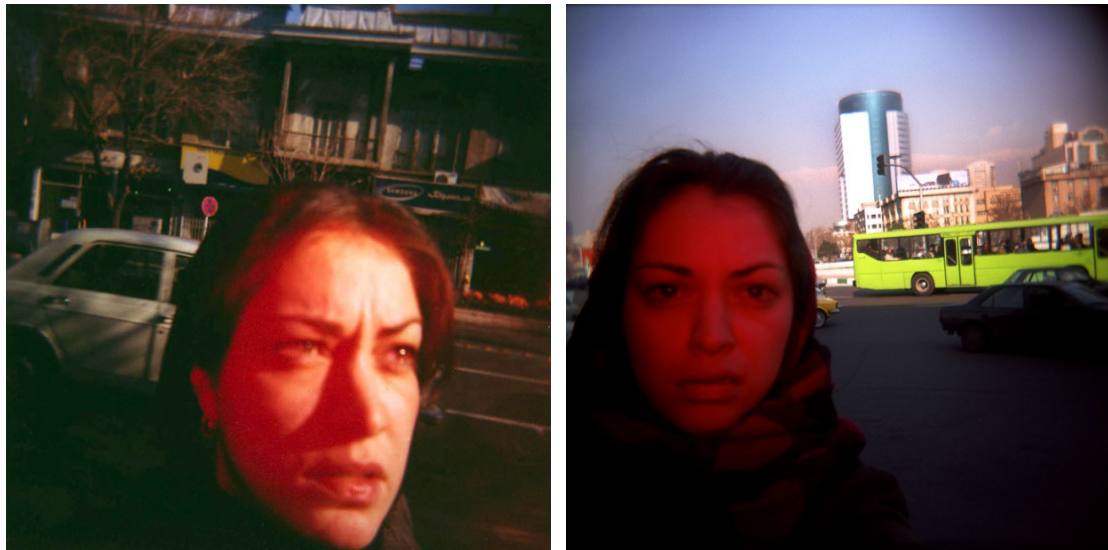
Figure 1.8. Mehraneh Atashi, *Tehran's Self-Portrait*, 2008-2010. Photography project.

The facial expressions on the oversized face of the photographer, the red hue in lighting, and the imperfect composition of the image allude to the swiftness and furtiveness of her photographing practice on the streets. While the view to the street is mostly blocked by the clumsily lit face of the photographer in the foreground (a kind of analogue selfie), what could be detected in the background exudes a feeling of emptiness and void that suggests parallels with the previously discussed photographs. The choice of self-portraiture also corresponds closely to the ethical position of those photographs, of the non-disclosure of anonymous subjects on the street. However, although the human subject has left a visible mark in front of the camera in this series of photographs, she does not exude a sense of sustained presence, as the viewer feels discomfort by reading her body language in front of the camera and imagining her behaviour at the time of photographing.

Non-Visible Modes of Presence

The photographs that I have discussed in this introductory chapter communicate the absence, disappearance, disembodiment, and discomforts of the everyday modes of presence in everyday life in Iranian cities. In the following chapters, however, I look at modes of cultural production that convey embodied modes of presence and action. In pursuit of such moments and spaces, I examine ways of interacting with the

everyday and occupying space that are widely practiced and woven into the fabric of everyday lives in Iran. My analysis engages with those social and cultural forms that over time have come to shape people's orientations towards the everyday, "structures of feeling" (Williams, 1977) which could be said to characterize the lived experience of the contemporary Iranian city. Drawing on Asef Bayat's conceptualization of the art of presence, I will suggest artful ways of cultural practice and social interaction that pertain to non-visible modes of presence: intricate ways of less-visible, yet sensible and affective, engagement with the everyday that are feasible and effective so long as they sustain certain levels of familiarity, anonymity, inconspicuousness, and ordinariness.

In each of the four chapters that follow I conceptualize one particular spatio-temporality in terms of the possibilities for non-visible but embodied modes of presence that it fosters. Similar to my reading of the street photographs of Tehran, my analysis in the following chapters is concerned with modes of being in space, and will also take into account modes of cultural production and the reception of that spatiality. My analysis concerns the relation between visibility and modes of practice; ways of being in, and bodily interacting with, space; ways of moving in space; ways of presenting oneself and observing the performance of others in space; and ways of seeing and being seen. I examine affective registers through which people engage with the everyday, and conceptualize liminal conditions in modes of cultural production.

Chapter two, *Cars: Kiarostami's Embodied Cinema of Mobility*, is about mobility, cars, and Iranian cinema. It studies the common (but largely understudied) practice of driving as a desirable mode of moving in space and being on the streets in Iran. The chapter studies the relational sense of place that the mobility of the car creates, and the possibilities for inhabitation and co-presence in the relatively secure space inside it. It argues that the assemblage of the driver and the car forms an embodied social unit that joins the everyday street and remains unobtrusive to its multiple rhythms. To study the car, the chapter turns to Iranian cinema, which is replete with car scenes, and focuses on the cinema of Abbas Kiarostami in particular. The chapter argues that Kiarostami exhausts the possibilities that the mobility of the car grants in the creation of his embodied cinema of mobility.

Chapter three, *Rooftops: The Invisibility and Ambiguity of Leftover Space*, is about the urban possibilities for non-visibility that the rooftop makes possible through

its locational isolation and visual inaccessibility form the street. First, the chapter studies the recurrent motif of the rooftop as a safe haven in Iranian memoirs and describes how, despite the spatial and temporal escapism attributed to rooftops in such accounts, a sensory connectedness between the rooftop and the everyday city could be envisaged. Subsequently, the placement of satellite dishes on rooftops will be studied in connection to the way they complicate the spatial parameters of rooftops as leftover spaces within the discourse of neoliberal urban planning. In the final and more elaborate section of the chapter, the practice of shouting from rooftops at night as a form of protest will be analysed. The argument follows that such practices simultaneously join the everyday and disrupt the orders of the visible by having recourse to tactics of anonymity and inconspicuousness.

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Chapter four, *Shopping Centres: The Ambivalent Scopic Regime of the Stroll*, focuses on shopping centres in Iran as one of the rare spaces that propagate leisurely walks. The chapter considers strolling in shopping centres as a way of spatial inhabitation that stimulates paradoxical aspirations to both exhibitionism and invisibility. By exploring intricacies in place in the scopic regime of the shopping mall, this chapter argues that a tension resides between regimes of visibility that the shopping centre nurtures and those public orders of the visible that it functions within and is designed to fulfil. Focusing on a number of fictive and visual accounts of the experience of shopping centres in Iran, the chapter argues that, despite descriptive and analytical accounts that purport to define it in one way or another, shopping centres remain ambiguous, uncertain, and difficult to grasp visually. The chapter argues that the experiences of the shopping mall poses possibilities for critique in the way that it suspends the orders that define what can be heard, said, seen, and looked at in the shopping malls.

Chapter five, *Sports: The Unrelenting Visibility of Wayward Bodies*, is about the sphere of sports as it is interwoven in the everyday lives of Iranian citizens in its mediated forms. It considers the interrelation of the geography and visuality of sports as creating multiple contradictions, ambiguities, and possibilities. The differences and contradictions between the regimes of visuality that pertain to the practices of doing

sport and watching it are analysed in this chapter. The complicated relation of women's sports with visibility in Iran, both in terms of the visibility of female sporting bodies to male spectators and the female spectatorship of male sporting bodies, is examined in detail in this chapter too. The chapter argues that, in the realm of sports, bodies and subjects find settings for asserting their presence in recalcitrant ways. It argues that instances of critique are stimulated in the enhanced visibility of bodies doing and watching sports that the magnifying lens of televised sports perpetuates.

Each of these interrelated spatial, temporal, visual, and performative conditions will be introduced and analysed in detail in the four chapters that follow. Through these case studies, I wish to cover a wide range of practices and cultural formations that make up the familiar and ordinary everyday experience in Iran. They encompass such diverse cultural forms as film, photography, television, new media, novels, short stories, art, and architecture; and they relate to such diverse everyday practices as driving, shopping, and watching sports. These cases do not cover all aspects of everyday life in Iran, however these conceptual formations, as addressed within cultural and social spheres, do represent a comprehensive overview of the modes of presence that I call non-visible: the non-conformist ways in which people strive to make themselves seen, heard, and felt.

Non-conformities are lived, I argue, in the everyday practices of driving on the streets, shouting from rooftops, strolling in shopping centres, and watching sports on television. Non-conformities are also practiced and asserted in the modes of production and dissemination of the cultural formations that pertain to these spatio-temporalities. The politics of presence that the social and cultural formation of cars, rooftops, shopping centres, and sports pertain to, is about creating liminal conditions of non-visibility, in order to bypass the apparatus of control and to withstand their domination. Within this liminality there exist potentialities for radical social critique and resistance to the dominant orders of the visible, for rearticulating the relation between visibility and invisibility, between what is seen and how this is interpreted.

2. CARS
Kiarostami's Embodied Cinema of Mobility

This chapter is about how cars and driving are integral to the lived experience of the contemporary everyday street. Its point of departure is the consideration that cars have not only had a huge influence on the material urban forms and infrastructures around the world, but have also become "a common feature of everyday life itself" (Thrift, 2004, p. 46). In contemporary Iran, cars, traffic, and congestion are familiar features of all big cities. For the majority of Iranian middle-class urbanites, driving a personal car or using a shared taxi are desirable and affordable ways of everyday mobility in cities, greatly facilitated by the low price of gas in the oil-rich country. Even though the time spent on the streets in cars and taxis – moving or stuck in traffic – constitutes a significant part of daily life in Iranian cities, in common or critical language it is mostly disapproved of, as wasted and unimportant, connoting negative feelings of a residual time and space in which nothing of significance happens.

The space-time of mobility in this sense evokes everydayness in its most tedious and uninteresting aspect. Such an image of automobility concerns a system that, even though helpful and necessary for transferring people and goods, is detrimental to human societies because of its dehumanizing effects, imbuing daily times and spaces with alienation and individualization. People in their private cars conjure up the image of disconnected individuals moving in their cocoons, disconnected from the city during their transit and alienated from each other, whose mode of interaction with the city is reduced to a visual absorption of the sights and signs of the street in passing. In addition to posing threats to the sociability of cities, cars also seriously endanger the liveability of cities, as a result of their toxic emissions. They also produce enslaving effects, as they conquer the urban space by expanding exclusive zones of automobility – such as streets, roads, highways, and parking lots – from which human bodies are warded off and kept out. They delimit walking and regulate pedestrian flows, and therefore bring human socialization and interaction under their control.

Against this tyranny of the car, walking has gained significance in recent years, as a natural and environmentally friendly way of navigating in space and relating to it. Walking is seen not only as a way of traversing space, but also as a critical tool for seeing and sensing the city differently, and finding new ways for

connecting to space and appropriating it (Solnit, 2000). In this sense, walking could be seen as a means of resistance against the disadvantageous consequences of automobiles, but also against the stifling effects of the systems of urban planning and governance at large. Walking is integral to the various practices of urban exploration that are concerned with discovering residual and forgotten spaces, encroaching upon the guarded and excluded environments, and laying claims on the city (Garrett, 2013). The walker – as psychogeographers advocate – employs playfulness and creativity in order to manoeuvre and uncover new possibilities for action and interaction in space. In recent years, there has also been an increasing interest in philosophizing on walking, suggesting its impacts on the well-being of the mind and body, and helpful for boosting creativity – in support of which the wanderings of Rousseau, Nietzsche, and many contemporary writers are alluded to (Gros, 2014; Solnit, 2000). All this suggests pleasure in walking and, in comparison to the driver's operation, celebrates the freedom that the walker enjoys in absentminded wandering.

What makes walking so fundamentally different from moving in cars is considered to be related to the incorporation of the body and mind of the walker in the act of walking. The joy of walking is essentially related to the feelings and perceptions that the body receives as a result of being in space. In addition, urban walkers can liberate themselves from systems of urban control, basically, because they bring into play a diverse range of bodily movements, gestures, expressions, and performativities: bodily faculties by which they are able to "open up pockets of interaction over which they have control" (Thrift, 2003, p. 109). Most notably, Michel de Certeau (1988) considers the embodied and enunciative capacities of walking to be fundamental to myriad possibilities for resistance that he envisions in everyday practices. De Certeau's practitioner of everyday life is ultimately a walker who navigates, performs, and reads space in footsteps. Such a celebration of walking and its bodily functions permeate critical studies of the everyday city, which favour the conditions in which everyday life unfolds on foot – on side-walks, markets, pedestrianized streets, playgrounds, and busy neighbourhoods – over spaces where the automobile takes precedence over the pedestrian – such as the margins, the sprawl, and the peripheries.

Partly as a reaction to such an unfavourable treatment of automobility, there has emerged, in recent years, a great interest in studying the everyday features of mobility – such as driving, commuting, and waiting in traffic or in public transport

systems – suggesting their significant effects on urban cultures and the everyday lived experiences in creating new meanings, associations, and affects (Miller, 2001; Moran, 2005). Most notably, a huge body of work in geography, anthropology, and sociology has focused on the mobile, relational, and fragmented sense of place that is enacted through diverse forms of mobilities (Adey, 2010; Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2007). A starting point for such studies has been not only a recognition of the significance of cars to urban cultures, but also a critique of the traditions of spatial analysis which, in celebrating the urban walker as a type of absentminded flâneur, evoke a romantic idea of city life that does not comply with the lived experience of many people around the world. The idea of the cheerful and autonomous walker does not necessarily apply to people who live or work in suburbs, whose everyday travel to far-away destinations depends on systems of automobility (Thrift, 2004). In other words, the concept of walking evokes a certain privileged lifestyle that is pertinent only to particular geographies and urban centres.

My concern in this chapter is neither to celebrate the car, nor to disapprove of its undesirable effects in everyday life, but to find ways of critically examining it on an equal footing with walking. To do so, it is important to focus on "an extraordinary complex everyday ecology of driving", which could be "as rich and convoluted as that of walking" (Thrift, 2004, pp. 45-46). A "phenomenology of automobility" has to take into account multiple "embodied cues and gestures which work over many communicative registers and which cannot be reduced simply to cultural codes" (Thrift, 2004, p. 46). Driving, in this way, can be seen as a highly emotional activity that embodies different systems of mobility. The technology of the car is "closely wrapped up in the body" of the driver, whose feet, hands, body, and mind work closely with the car's gadgets and equipment of control (Amin & Thrift, 2002, p. 101). The car, in this sense, could be seen as an extension of the driver's body rather than a container for it (Dant, 2004).

In this chapter, I consider cars as providing conditions for interacting with the everyday and generating meaningful associations in space. Cars do more than just facilitating movement in the city; they are "key means of timing the spaces and spacing the times of the city", of creating fragments of "little times" and displacing the objective clock time (Amin & Thrift, 2002, pp. 100-101). Cars therefore offer various possibilities for the creation and promulgation of spontaneous, non-regulated,

and personalized spatio-temporalities. They could be said to have "reorganized time and space, 'unbundling' territorialities of home, work, business, and leisure that were historically closely integrated" (Urry, 2007, p. 120). The consequent "fragmented time-schedules" enable a more creative use of time and the possibility of holding more than one job for the urban dispossessed, whose daily times are about "the juggling of the conflicting time disciplines of paid and unpaid work" (Sheller & Urry, 2000, p. 249).

This is of great importance to Iranian society, where many middle- to lower-middle-class urbanites rely on several informal jobs for their living, in addition to multiple social responsibilities, which necessitates effective daily time management (Bayat, 2012). Driving a personal car as an unauthorized, but commonly acknowledged, shared taxi is a common practice for many people in search of a secondary source of income. A "modus-operandi of personal transport" (Tehran Bureau, 2011), such an employment of personal cars has produced a particular car culture of passengering – "hitchhiking-slash-carpooling with total strangers" (Elmjouie, 2015). In the confines of this space, and for the duration of journeys on the streets, strangers often discuss politics and share views on social matters. This mode of co-presence and dialogue in cars, Asef Bayat suggests, contributes to the creation of a "political street", which denotes "the collective sentiments, shared feelings, and public opinions of ordinary people in their day-to-day utterances and practices" (2010, p. 13). In this chapter, I therefore focus on cars as "a key form of social interaction" in cities (Amin & Thrift, 2002, p. 100).

Consequently, in this chapter I am concerned with cars as "means of habitation, of dwelling" (Amin & Thrift, 2002, p. 100). Such an otherwise contradictory notion of dwelling in mobility introduces new ways of being public and disrupts the polarity conventionally maintained between the public and private (Adey, 2010, p. 89). Since, in urban theories, this dichotomy is generally coupled to the associations of the sphere of the public with visibility and of the private with invisibility (Brighenti, 2007, p. 332), I argue that, by instigating dwelling in mobility, the car challenges the orders of visibility and their correlated meanings. The liminality of the space inside a moving car enhances conditions of being privately in public and publicly private – invisibly visible and visibly invisible. By creating temporary and mobile conditions of privacy on the streets, which remain unnoticed in the ebb and

flow of everyday life, this chapter argues that the car performs as a non-visible mode of presence on the streets.

Cars in Iran do indeed evoke a certain youth culture of fun and recreation, where many young people spend significant amounts of time in cars, driving around and cruising on the streets (Mahdavi, 2011). As a private bubble in public, the car also encapsulates trivial practices that are officially considered illicit under the Iranian codes of public conduct, and are otherwise curtailed in public, such as listening to unauthorized music and heterosocializing (Mahdavi, 2011, p. 157). Pardis Mahdavi describes this youth culture as follows:

> Though they are moving through the public sphere, the car gives them a sense of agency, a sense of control over their own bubble, or a segment of their lives. Many of them also felt that cars brought about independence, as they felt secure in the knowledge that they could speed away from angry parents or morality police in a difficult situation. The car for these young people, has become a sacred place, perhaps one of the only spaces in which they feel that they have full autonomy. (Mahdavi, 2011, p. 157)

In this chapter I do not intend to outline a certain car culture as 'Iranian', but to analyse the significance of the socially habituated modes of inhabitation and socialization in cars to everyday life in Iran. In the following, I will investigate cars in Iran by analysing films. I contend that, in the past decades, a cinema of the car has developed in Iran, which makes extensive use of the conditions of dwelling in mobility. An iconic case in point is *Taxi, Tehran* (2015), a film entirely filmed within a car on the streets of Tehran, which gained international attention when it received the Golden Bear award in the 2015 Berlin Film Festival.

This Iranian cinema of the car stands in contrast to the familiar car scenes in world cinema in different ways. Unlike the implications of escape from urbanity in road movies, cars in Iranian films are particularly urban elements and depict everyday moments of being on the streets. Rather than making cinematic spectacles of fast cars, in chase scenes for instance, these films mostly focus on the interiority of the space within a car that moves with a familiar and reasonable speed. Unlike the cold and gloomy sense of alienation that the interiority of wandering cars in the work of such

directors as Wim Wenders or Jim Jarmush evoke, the interior of the car in Iranian films is usually a vibrant space where friends or family members spend a pleasant time out together, a place where social and intimate relations develop.

In short, the car in Iranian films is a space filled with emotions and affect. It is also often a feminine space, which grants women mobility in the face of multiple forms of immobilization and enclosement that affect their free movement in Iranian cities (Milani, 2001, p. 102). In a great number of Iranian films, automobiles evoke a sense of extending women's bodily presence in public and the actualization of female urban flânerie, they "serve as a safe meeting place, a contained and private location for making acquaintance with the world outside the bounds of home, class, tradition, and law" (Khalili Mahani, 2006). They are also instruments and spaces of female rebellion (Khalili Mahani, 2006).

In this chapter, I focus on the car scenes in the films of Abbas Kiarostami. Almost all of Kiarostami's feature length films produced since 1990 – with the exception of the experimental *Shirin* (2008) – include significant scenes shot in and of cars. Cars are especially prominent in *Zendegi va Digar Hich/Life and Nothing More* (1991), *Ta'm e Gilas/Taste of Cherry* (1997) and *Dah/Ten* (2004) – the latter film being shot entirely in a car. Saturating the screen and filmic time, cars in these films suggest a world of inhabitation in mobility, and produce a visually distinct cinematic language. This chapter is therefore about the operational logic of cars in instigating a cinema of mobility in Abbas Kiarostami's cinema. It aims to uncover the cinematic effects that Kiarostami creates through automobility.

Kiarostami's cinematic style is particularly pertinent to the study of modes of non-visibility in this dissertation, because it famously relies on the "absent" and "the hidden" for the development of the story (Lippard, 2009, p. 31). In Kiarostami's films, crucial events often unfold off-screen or in indiscernible situations such as in the dark or in super long shots. Most notably, Laura Mulvey (2006) draws attention to Tahereh's pivotal but "unseen look" in *Zir-e Derakhtan-e Zeytoon/Through the Olive Trees* (1994). In an impassioned speech to the silent and mostly out-of-the-frame Tahereh, Hossein, her former suitor, says that he is aware of Tahereh's positive inner feelings towards him, because of the suggestive look that she had once returned to him. Mulvey writes:

the camera registers Hossein's intense gaze but gives no indication of Tahere's look. This missing moment becomes a crucial point of uncertainty in the film. It inscribes Tahereh's impossible position, caught between family and suitor. But it also bears witness to the guidelines for the cinematic depiction of relations between the sexes established by the ministry of culture and Islamic guidance. (Mulvey, 2006, p. 139)

Rather than the absence, I focus on the modes of presence that Kiarostami activates in his cars. Rather than shunning away from intense looks, I claim that Kiarostami's cars set in motion a mobile regime of looks. They extend the presence of bodies on the screen, and mobilize their affective registers.

 In the following, I analyse the intertwined spatial and aesthetic regime that builds on the car's mobility in Kiarostmia's films, and think through the social and cultural points of critique that such mobility offers. My main argument is that Kiarostami evokes a mobile mode of sense experience, which both mobilizes and critiques socially and culturally constructed regimes of spatial signification, visual communication, and cinematic production. Kiarostami's body of work not only outlines the potentialities that the car enables as an in-between mode of dwelling, but also builds upon the car's modality as an intertwined social and aesthetic regime that functions within the realm of everyday life and, by being attentive to its own modes of production, eludes the policing of the space and images.

On the Move: Wandering Cars and Extended Presence

Once one recalls Abbas Kiarostami's films, the image that stands out distinctly is perhaps that of a car and a driver – and one or more passengers. Godfrey Cheshire writes: "As a car slows on a dusty road in Iran, a man inside asks passersby for directions. Of all the images in Abbas Kiarostami's films, this one must be the most recurrent, the most emblematic" (Cheshire, 2000). The conjunction of the image of the car in Kiarostami's films with that of a countryside road touches on probably the most symbolic of all themes in Kiarostami's films: the journey. From early on is his career, as Geoff Andrew explains, the theme of the journey builds a "structural basis" (2005, p. 22) for a number of Kiarostami's early films that feature school kids on the way home, away from home, or in search of a friend's home. Yet, it is not until the

middle of his career, in *Life and Nothing More (1991)*, the second of Kiarostami's *Koker* trilogy, that a car supplements the film's journey and becomes inextricably bound up with it.

Life and Nothing More is about the journey of a filmmaker – Kiarostami's on-screen surrogate – who, accompanied by his son Pouya, sets out on roads in his own car towards the earthquake-stricken town of *Koker.* In the days following the devastating earthquake of 1990, the filmmaker travels to the area to find out about the lives of two local boys, the Ahmadpour brothers, who had formerly played the lead roles in Kiarostami's first film of the *Koker* trilogy, *Khane-ye Doost Kojast/Where is the Friend's House?* (1987). Since it is by and within a car that the travellers set out on arduous roads to their destination – never leaving the car except for short intervals – the car's functional logic in this film exceeds its instrumentality in the actualization of physical movement in space, and acquires a status essential to the cognitive and sensory development of the film's journey.

The intertwinement of the car and the journey in *Life and Nothing More* draws upon a number of associations. To begin with, the car influences the narrative development of the story in peculiar, and somewhat counterintuitive, ways. In contrast to the implications of speed, swiftness, and ease of movement that the car customarily carries, in *Life and Nothing More* it precipitates a slow and difficult movement in space. *Life and Nothing More* begins as a car journey with a clear quest: to search for the Ahmadpour brothers. In the course of the journey, however, the search for the two boys gets "delayed" by roads that are inaccessible due to heavy traffic or devastations caused by the earthquake (Mulvey, 2006, p. 128). Forced to take detours, the car moves slowly through this arduous geography, loses its direction and never reaches its initially intended destination. During these endless diversions, the car encounters new people, scenes, and events that might at first seem irrelevant to the main storyline of the film – or at best digressions from it. The extended mobility of the film therefore creates multiple narrative diversions and slows down the filmic tempo to a somewhat open ending: the filmmaker does not find the two brothers, but hears of their survival from locals. Such a narrative and geographical expansion, coupled with a perpetual sense of suspension of the filmic event, contributes to what Laura Mulvey calls Kiarostami's "aesthetic of digression" (2006, p. 125).

As the journey repeatedly gets redirected into roads that stretch out and lead elsewhere, the car's extended presence on the roads (and in the story) injects a

"perpetual sense of movement" (Bransford, 2003). Within the circular geography of the car's endless wanderings and meanderings, the viewer is caught in a web of routes that seem to lead to nowhere. Not only does the car's constant mobility imbue the film's journey with a sense of disorientation, but it also creates typically Kiarostamian encounters and dialogues that revolve around the idea of 'nowhere'; 'Where are you headed?', the traveller often asks people he meets on the roads; 'Nowhere. We are heading nowhere' passers-by reply (Bransford, 2003). The purportedly aimless wandering of the car and the expanded time of the journey therefore reinforce a sense of mobility. Kiarostami himself, in an interview with Geoff Andrew, states: "the journey is very important to me. It's like all my roads: you don't know how far they go, there are no signs telling you where they lead, and you don't know where they end. But it's important just to be moving" (Andrew, 2005, p. 7). The car, I wish to demonstrate in this chapter, is not only instrumental in sustaining this perpetual sense of movement, but is also fundamental to the more sophisticated processes of mobilization that Kiarostami's cinema of mobility aspires to.

As the constant slow wandering of a car in Kiarostami's films imbues the physicality of the journey, the character of the traveller becomes intertwined and inseparable from that of the driver, who, by implication, travels as he drives. Kiarostami's interest in driving and the figure of the driver is played out to the fullest extent in *Taste of Cherry (1997)* and *Ten (2003)*, which are set predominantly in a moving car in the city of Tehran, and whose main characters could best be defined as 'drivers'. *Taste of Cherry* depicts Mr Badii driving around the outskirts of the city in search for a person who will agree, in return for money, to aid him in his suicide plan by burying his dead body. He rambles around dusty roads in the hilly fringes of Tehran, scouting like a hunter for the right person to give a ride to, and tries to talk his would-be accomplices into the job while having a drive together in his car. Kiarostami's interest in the disposition of a driver is even more stressed in *Ten*, which is set entirely in a car and is comprised of ten short episodes in which Mania, the female driver, drives towards home, a confectionery, a friend's house, or just moves around the streets of Tehran without a proper destination in mind. Accompanied by one other person in the car in each episode, the driver's conversations with her passengers constitute the film's storyline.

CHAPTER 2

What all these films have in common is that the more the car wanders on the roads and streets, the more it transmits a sense of dwelling in motion. Kiarostami's characters travel, work, talk, discuss, cry, laugh, and share in the car – in short, they dwell in it. Such a sense of mobile habitation is additionally emphasized by the fact that Kiarostami typically avoids the interior space of the home. The car, in other words, could be said to stand in for the unseen realm of domesticity in his films. During the press conference of his latest film *Like someone in love* (2012), following its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival, Kiarostami was asked to comment on the reasoning behind his love for shooting long sequences in cars. Unhappy with the question, he responded:

> I have previously talked at length about the car, let me skip it this time. It always strikes me why people do not ask the question 'why' when [a scene is shot] in a conference hall, in a house, or in a room. It is as if all locations are suitable for filming except the car. As soon as you shoot in the car people ask why. The car is a place like other places. (Cannes Film Festival, 2012; my translation)

Kiarostami treats mobility and fixity with notable equality. He rejects the commonly favourable valuation of the latter – as authentic, historically embedded, and loaded with meaning – for the often almost completely neglected spatiality of the former. Kiarostami's spatial understanding, I suggest, resonates closely with the mobile, fragmentary, and relational notions of place that studies of mobilties (sometimes referred to as Mobilities discourse) offer in relation to conditions of globalization and heightened mobility. Scholars concerned with mobilities share a standpoint with Kiarostami in that they define themselves against sedentarist traditions in spatial analysis. These traditions either disregard situations of dwelling in mobility as spatially insignificant, abstract, and therefore unworthy of analysis, or else criticize mobility as the force that dissipated authentic apprehensions of place, which it supplants with ungrounded placelessness (Cresswell, 2004, pp. 22-46). Peter Merriman, for example, criticizes the way in which geographers and anthropologists have commonly defined place as being "meaningful, lived, rooted, organic and symbolic sites with which individuals develop fairly long-standing attachments", and have therefore denigrated temporary spatial conditions as "ageographical", "abstract",

and "placeless" (2004, p. 146). Instead, he supports the range of attempts in recent writings on space that strive "to rethink movement and mobility as not simply occurring *in* or *across* space and time, but as actively shaping or producing multiple, dynamic spaces and times" (Merriman, 2012, p. 1). Such a dynamic understanding of place-making, Merriman writes, leads to an appreciation of "transient, mobile and momentary senses and experiences of dwelling", which in turn may be effective in creating hybrid notions of home and sociality (Merriman, 2004, p. 146).

Kiarostami's cars respond to such a relational conceptualization of space in mobility, in which "place is constituted through reiterative social practices – place is made and remade on a daily basis" (Cresswell, 2004, p. 39). By setting his characters in wandering cars, Kiarostami breaks away from the conventional regimes of representation in which space – as fixed and stable – is bound within particular regimes of identification and carries specific symbolic meanings. In this way, he strives to set a relational and fragmentary process of place-making in motion, one that is constantly shaped, deformed, and reshaped through the interactions of the car with the geography in which it moves. Kiarostami's cars are not disconnected from their surroundings – one does not get the feeling of being alienated and cocooned in the car – but are very much in negotiation with the geography through which they pass.

"It may seem trivial", Bransford (2003) writes, "but the side windows of cars in Kiarostami's movies are almost always open". In *Life and Nothing More*, for instance, the slow, bumpy, noisy, and uneasy mobility of the car enacts a relational sense of place in the making, which stays conscious of the geography and the means of its own navigation. Attentive to his surroundings, Kiarostami's slow driver repeatedly stops, steps outside, looks around, converses with the villagers, and gives a lift to the passers-by he meets on the road. It is through such repetitive physical interactions that a mobile, vibrant, and lively sense of place is made in *Life and Nothing More*, which neither complies with the symbolic gestures of freedom and speed that cars typically carry in road movies, nor with the feelings of deep sorrow and grief that an earthquake-stricken geography might be thought to evoke.

More specifically, Kiarostami's spatial understanding concerns the contained space within a moving car and the sense of dwelling in mobility that it enhances. One spatial characteristic of the car's interiority is that it fosters conditions of co-presence. The car not only provides a space of inhabitation for the driver, but also for one or

two passengers. Kiarostami is especially interested in the possibilities for interaction and socialization that the co-presence of the driver and passengers in a car generates. It is noteworthy that, in contrast to the sense of perpetual mobility that the car in *Life and Nothing More* evokes, Kiarostami highlights the interiority of the car as the only safe and reliable roofed space in the earthquake-stricken region. Pivotal to this sense of inhabitation in the car is the temporariness of inhabitation inside it, which resonates with that of the tents and temporary dwellings set up for the survivors of the earthquake, and its perpetual wandering, which forms parallels to the wanderings of the homeless who have lost their houses in the earthquake. How Kiarostami treats a mobile and relational sense of place as generative of conditions of co-habitation in the car is the focus of the following section.

Dwelling in Mobility

Co-habitation inside a car by way of passengering – giving lifts to passengers and riding along with them for a limited period of time – plays a key role in creating a sense of dwelling in mobility in Kiarostami's films. Such car-sharing practices deprivatize the space of the privately owned car (Urry, 2004). They amount to the creation of a "collective private transport" that tends to "gather together the disparate situations where a number of people – be they friends, families, acquaintances, or colleagues – find themselves sharing a vehicle more, or less, informally" (Laurier, et al., 2008, p. 2). Cohabiting in moving cars enacts particular modes of communication. For example, Laurier et al. suggest that "once you add a passenger cars become places of talk and places where the expectation, unlike an elevator, is that we will talk" (2008, p. 7). Sheller and Urry, in addition, describe the ways in which automobilty produces new bonds of domesticity through "social relations such as the 'back-seat-driver' or the common dependence upon a partner for navigation and map-reading" (2000, p. 746). Kiarostami's drivers always seem eager to lose a little of their privacy in favour of creating such temporary conditions for sociality by way of passengering. They engage in deep conversations with their passengers in order to acquire information on the local issues (*Life and Nothing More*), negotiate a deal (*Taste of Cherry*), or to discuss common issues of interest (*Ten*). Kiarostami is keen on creating temporary conditions of publicness within the contours of private cars.

Such a spatial hybridization, conversely, amounts to conditions of privacy to be lived in public. Among Kiarostami's films, *Ten* is particularly acclaimed for its

creation of a private space, away from home, in a wandering car on the streets of Tehran (Andrew, 2005; Caputo, 2003; Orgeron, 2008). Two episodes in *Ten* are particularly renowned for the intense moments of intimacy created in the car: episode 4, which centres around the driver's attempts to console her highly emotional, broken-hearted, desperate, and uncontrollably crying friend while driving (figure 2.1); and episode 2, in which the passenger – with whom the driver has established a sort of kinship after randomly passengering her for the first time in a previous episode – shares her feelings about her lost love relationship and, in a highly affective gesture, momentarily lets her scarf slip from her head so that she can share her despair (as symbolized in her shaved head) with the driver (figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1. *Ten.*

Figure 2.2. *Ten.*

CHAPTER 2

Critics have mentioned that in *Ten*, by creating a feminine space in the car, Kiarostami has been able to create a parallel world of domesticity that is better accommodated for the regime of representation in Iranian cinema. Since the depiction of unveiled female bodies or contact between opposing genders is prevented in Iranian cinema, a realistic representation of the private life in Iran seems unattainable. Kiarostami's digression from the interior to the exterior then could be regarded as a genuine tactic for bypassing such inconveniences without losing credibility (Andrew, 2005, pp. 60-61). In other words, by eluding the home and staging his films in public spaces, Kiarostami could be said to recuperate unrepresentable domestic scenes within public orders of visibility.

By relocating such intimacies inside a wandering car, however, Kiarostami achieves something more substantial. Insistently creating a hybrid space of interiorized publicness and exteriorized privacy in the car, Kiarostami sets the notions of publicness and privacy in motion. Eluding spaces designated specifically as public or private, Kiarostami sets his characters free from sets of behaviours, gestures, functions, and emotions attached to their socially defined roles as mothers, children, husbands, lovers, sisters, or friends. He therefore allows his characters to surpass their intended *place* in society and to flourish as subjects in the making. He sets off a relational and fragmentary process of subjectivation, enacted in liminal times and spaces, performed in everyday conditions of embodiment. What the car entails is therefore a mobile bounded space that extends, disrupts, disseminates, and hybridizes the social roles attributed to subjects of different gender, age, occupation, and social status. Emphasizing the spatial liminality of the car, Kiarostami destabilizes the system of social organization that allocates certain subjects, behaviours, and emotions to specific places and times.

Kiarostami's cars directly address such a cultural system of spatial signification and provide a cinematic critique of it. In *Taste of Cherry,* for instance, the suicidal Mr Badii struggles to create a different sense of relating with the world, from which he seems alienated, by inhabiting his wandering car. His insistence on inviting would-be accomplices to his suicide plan inside his car, in order to maintain a discussion with them while driving together, is in part an attempt to set his passengers free from the set of relations to the world that they customarily inhabit. In order to convince his passengers to agree to his eccentric request, Mr Badii repeatedly reminds them of the spatial and temporal character of their simple 'drive together' and asks

them to forget, for the duration of their short trip, about the kind of reactions that they might have had to the idea of suicide and the person committing it in their daily lives. He tells his second passenger, the Afghan seminarian, that he does not wish him to engage in a religious discourse on suicide, since, had he wished for that kind of argumentation, he would have visited him in his school rather than taking him on a short trip in his own car. It is as if by driving along in the car, Mr Badii expects his passengers to diverge, even momentarily, from performing their asserted roles in society, and to build new sets of relations that do not pertain to the world outside.

Similarly, in *Ten,* for the duration of the short journeys on the streets in Tehran, the liminal spatiality of the car generates possibilities for the materialization of a complicated, uneasy, and dynamic mother-son relationship that transcends the positions they hold in the privacy of their homes. As a divorced mother, living with a new partner, and the son of divorced parents, living with the father, the mother and son in *Ten* have difficulty establishing a private space of their own in any of the homes they live in. Far from all the homes in which they seem not to belong together, the car becomes their temporary space of inhabitation. Their time spent together in this condition of in-betweenness, moving between homes, is uneasy and tense, and is marked by numerous moments in which they get angry, raise their voices, and shout at each other. The mother and the son repeatedly express their need of uninhibited pronouncement of normally uncommunicated feelings. The resulting unfettered explosions of utterly intimate but complicated verbal assaults, accusations, expectations, and emotions is marred by the condition of being publicly on the street. In the middle of one of Mania's uncontrollably loud rushes of emotions, the son reacts 'ok mom, just don't shout on the street'. The mobility of the contained interiority of the car on the public streets of Tehran in *Ten* concerns a re-articulation of the contours of home, rather than the development of a mobile parallel to it.

However, Kiarostami does not celebrate the sense of liberation from social ties that such hybridization of space entails. Rather, he questions the power dynamics that sustain social relations. The spatiality of the car simultaneously liberates its occupants from certain positions they hold in daily life, and coerces them into new forms of power relations sustained in the car. Having a hold over the means of mobility, the driver is commonly thought to impose his/her command within a car. The passengers, on the other hand, could feel subservient to the will of the driver, locked in space and

time. Captive to the powers held by the driver, they might feel trapped into a discussion against their will, locked in a situation from which exists no escape without the consent of the driver. As Laurier et al. explain, the opportunities for different relationality that the car fosters can precisely be premised on "an obligation to make passenger talk", rejecting them the choice to "walk away from or walk into a conversation with another speaker" (2008, pp. 7-9). In *Taste of Cherry,* Kiarostami's driver exerts such an authoritative pressure on his passengers by making them listen to his eccentric demands under a condition of mobility from which they seem to have no escape. Distinctly uncomfortable and reticent under the obligation to carry on a situation of co-habitation over which he has no control, Mr Badii's first passenger steps out and runs away as soon as he finds the opportunity (figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3. *Taste of Cherry*.

However, the forces of domination in the car are not always in favour of the driver. In *Ten,* the confrontational discussions between the mother and the son, the driver and the passenger, effectively show the dynamism of the authoritative positions in play within a moving car. The son feels confident enough to seize the moment and recklessly express his rage at his mother, to shout at her and accuse her of being a selfish mom, since the mother's confinement to the steering wheel leaves her with no other choice than to concede to her son's will and to listen carefully (figure 2.4). Not only the mother's confinement to the driving seat and the primary task of driving holds her back from taking recourse in the sort of parental punitive measures that are applicable at home – such as locking up the child in his room or forbidding him from watching TV – but also their position in the publicness of street, with cars passing by and people peeping inside, requires behaving properly.

Figure 2.4. *Ten*.

Laurier et al. explain the simultaneously empowering and coercive dynamics of the car with regards to the conditions of parent-child cohabitation:

> children find the car is a good place to talk to parents. With no one else there to distract their parents or carers they get time with mum as mum, dad as dad, grandma as grandma etc. whereas in other settings they might be competing with, say, mum-as-friend-to-someone-else, dad-as-cook, dad-as-TV watcher or mum-as-homeworker. Even so, in the car children as passengers have to deal with their parents' responsibility as drivers. Children's desire to occupy the front-seat is thus all the more understandable, since in this position they have fullest access to the captive parent (carer or grandparent). (Laurier, et al., 2008, p. 12)

Kiarostami mobilizes the authoritative dynamics that the confined time-space of the car provokes. Such dynamism builds the essence of Kiarostami's spatial apprehension of the car. I have tried to explain that the space inside a moving car not only provides a setting for a relational sense of inhabitation in motion, but also activates the process of disarticulation and re-articulation of social relationships. The resulting relational, embodied, and lived sense of place, in an ever changing process of making and remaking, stands in contrast to most common depictions of automobility in cinema and the theorizations of its spatiality in film analyses.

CHAPTER 2

The driver, it is usually invoked, inhabits a secure and rather comfortable – but lonesome and alienated – space in the car, detached from the world and disengaged from it in meaningful ways. This notion entails that the driver's human capacities for communication are reduced to an abstract level, as he is held back by the practice of driving. Such a condition of heightened mobility, devoid of authentic elements of spatial attachment, is then thought to foreground the visual at the expense of other sensorial faculties. Through the framing of the windshield and the side windows, the driver is said to connect to the world only as a detached observer, watching the world in motion. The spatial disconnectedness of the space inside a fast moving car from the world outside has mostly led critics to devalue the regime of the visual that it entails as too abstract, quick, and alienating. Margaret Morse (1990), for example, has famously claimed affinity between the visual experience of driving on a freeway and that of watching TV, as both experiences, in her view, account for the coupling of abstract conditions of spatiality with alienating regimes of visuality.

In the following pages, I analyse the regime of visuality that corresponds to Kiarostami's spatial understanding of the car. The particular regime of visuality that he activates through automobility not only relies on the relational sense of place-making that is set in a moving car, but also develops a particular, car-based visual language, which disrupts – one might say poses a critique of – the established regimes of the gaze in cinema. This is not to say that Kiarostami downplays the position that his drivers, or passengers, hold as observers. Indeed, as a car moves on winding roads in hilly landscapes in *Life and Nothing More*, its driver looking for pieces of evidence in the aftermath of the earthquake, one gets the impression that the subject of the driver/traveller develops into that of a 'seer' – one who meticulously 'observes' (Mulvey, 2006, p. 129). However, I suggest that the gaze that the mobility of the car evokes in the drivers and passengers – and, by implication, the audience – is as dynamic as the spatiality of the car that Kiarostami invokes.

Mobilizing the Look

In *Life and Nothing More,* Kiarostami emphatically provides a multiplicity of looks in and from the car, in various directions and with different durations. From early on in the film, Kiarostami's camera captures the driver and the passenger (the father and son in the story) in the act of observation, lingering on their respectively curious and fixed looks out of the window, into the geography through which the car passes (see

Figures 2.5-6). Subsequently, Kiarostami's camera takes the place of those observing eyes and rests its own gaze in the direction of the character's looks (see Figures 2.7-8).
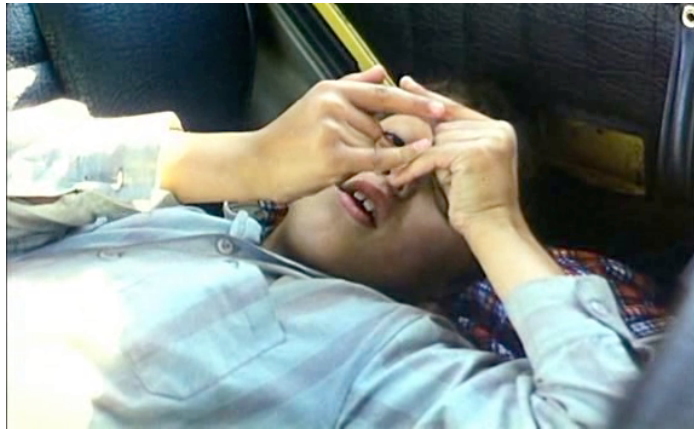
Figure 2.5. *Life and Nothing More.*

Figure 2.6. *Life and Nothing More.*

So far, Kiarostami's technique of shot construction adheres to a classic method of establishing cinematic points of view. However, as the film goes on, Kiarostami complicates the process of identification with such implied subjective points of view by multiplying the shots of the onlookers and their (intended) view-points and, further, interchanging between them irrespective of their logical sequence. Moreover, Kiarostami complicates the process of visual identification by inserting shots that cannot be realistically associated with any of the characters' points of view. For instance, the camera's long take and stable position in (figure 2.8), continuing uninterrupted for 38 seconds, comes across as an impossible view-point for the driver, who cannot possibly be looking sideways while driving for such an extended period.

CHAPTER 2

Such a comprehension ignores the indications of subjective referentiality that the combination of cinematic techniques – the sequence of editing (the scene directly follows figure 2.6), the position of the camera, and the development of the narrative – provide in the first place.

Figure 2.7. *Life and Nothing More.*

Figure 2.8. *Life and Nothing More.*

The uncertainty that follows sets Kiarostami's viewers free from developing a strong sense of identification with the characters on the screen. One gets the impression that, towards the middle of the film, it becomes hardly possible to associate a scene definitely with the driver's, the passenger's or simply the camera's gaze. For instance, 67 minutes into the film, where Kiarostami provides a long take looking forward onto the road (Figure 2.9), continuing for 100 seconds, his camera's look is completely severed from a specific subjective position and stands on its own. Such long looks into the landscape embrace at least three positions of spectatorship: the driver, the passenger, and the camera itself. The viewer is prompted to assume the look of a fixed camera in a mobile car, which, at the same time, is not entirely foreign

to that of the driver or the passenger. Upholding such varying – but not necessarily dissimilar – spectatorial positions, the system of automobility emerges as embodying the camera's gaze in Kiarostami's cars.

Figure 2.9. *Life and Nothing More.*

Kiarostami builds an interdependent system of mobility, the visual language of which is developed in alignment with its techniques of spatial movement. In contrast to such methods for generating cinematic movement as the handheld camera and fast editing, Kiarostami's effects of mobility are developed mainly by fixing his camera to a slow moving car and fixating its gaze onto objects in motion. Kiarostami attunes his camera to the car's interior stillness. In *Ten*, Kiarostami's two fixed cameras remain focused symmetrically on the driver and the passenger, while capturing random scenes of the street in motion through the side windows. Kiarostami's sparse use of editing in these scenes has the effect of further fixating the viewers' eyes on the two characters, and attuning them to the specific pace and aesthetics of the car/camera's mobility. Most notably, the first scene in *Ten*, a single take with the fixed camera focused on the passenger (the son in the story), continues for 16 minutes without a cut, move, zoom, or change in the focus (Figure 2.10). In this way, Kiarostami's viewer is propelled from the start to adjust to the film's system of mobility and to assimilate its regime of visuality.

It might initially seem paradoxical and confusing that a filmmaker persistently produces movement by deploying an incessantly wandering car in order to eventually provide conditions of fixity – in a way, immobility. Asked about the function of still imagery in his cinema, Kiarostami is eloquent and explicit in his response to Jean Luc Nancy:

I'm increasingly convinced of this image's ability to call things up powerfully, of the way it allows the spectator to enter it deeply and come up with a personal interpretation. But in the shots where there's motion, where one element enters at one point and exits at another, there's less concentration, the viewer's attention cannot remain mobilized. It's like going on a trip. I cross the main hall of a train station and I walk past hundreds of people. But the only person I'll remember is the traveler who'll sit across from me, when I'll have time and take a good look at this person. Perhaps I'll have walked past him or her before, but I won't have had the time to concentrate my attention on this person. Now the motionlessness lets me look at this person fixedly, like an image. And then my ability to construe things is set in motion. The details of the face, other faces that it calls up will start taking shape in my mind. In fact, just as I'm settling down like a camera, this person is arranged like a subject and becomes fixed like a still image. It makes me think of Bresson's camera, which allows this time for *fixations*. (Nancy, 2001, p. 87; emphasis in original)

By creating conditions of fixity in mobility, Kiarostami mobilizes the looks in two opposite ways. On the one hand, arrested in the fixed frame, Kiarostami's viewers are provoked to look sharply at the centre of the image, interrogate it in depth and read it carefully. Having kept their looks fixed on the faces of the drivers and passengers, the viewers gradually become "more aware of the subtle cartography of the almost imperceptible gestures, movements, and facial expressions" of the bodies held to the car's seats, and start to engage emotionally with the image (Grønstad, 2013, p. 27). On the other hand, as fleeting sights of the everyday street go by in the depth of the image, framed by the car's side windows, Kiarostami's fixed camera produces a plethora of light, unfocused, fast, and inattentive looks that linger over and beyond the centre of the image and supplement – one might say, free – the viewer's otherwise captivated gaze. Such a rich regime of looks is activated in complete alignment with the car's system of movement, and highlights the effects of its mobility.

Indeed, mobility and fixity do not stand in contrast to each other, once the relational nature of the notion of mobility itself is taken into account. In other words, one cannot approach mobility without endorsing the 'immobilities' that it entails. As Jörg Beckmann explains, one is never just "at rest" or solely "on the move" in

conditions of mobility, but constantly oscillates between "various movements and non-movements" created through mechanical or digital means (2004, p. 85). He writes, "the body is arrested in the driver's seat while the person commutes to work, and the net-surfer stays at home while the virtual self roams cyberspace. Who can say how mobile these travellers are? Who can say if they are movers or the moved?" (Beckmann, 2004, p. 85) In describing the co-existence of mobility and fixity in such conditions of being "mobile without necessarily performing movement", Beckman draws attention to the concept of 'motility': "Motility means neither immobility nor mobility, it describes the motile stages where people are physically, virtually or residentially not quite at rest and not quite on the move" (Beckmann, 2004, p. 85).

Figure 2.10. *Ten*.

Not only do the bodily posture of the inhabitants of a moving car (the driver and passengers) resonate with the implications of motility, but the regime of their looks also directly responds to conditions of motility. The practice of driving itself relies on a complex and expanded field of vision, comprised of looks that differ in intensity, temporality, and fixedness. The driver's eyes respond to "shifting modes of vision and attentiveness" while driving, as they are trained to simultaneously look in different directions and be alert to the visual information available on different surfaces – such as the rear view mirror and the side view mirror (Adey, et al., 2012, pp. 173-179). This regime of looks in a car gets even more complicated when a passenger accompanies the driver and demands his partial visual attention. The visual regime associated with automobility therefore is based on "extensive periods of engagement and observation", enacted through sharp and focused looks, in

combination with situations of "distracted attention" that entail looks that are indirect, averted, and which hover beyond the direct field of vision directly available to the driver (Adey, et al., 2012, pp. 173-179). Kiarostami builds upon the operative regime of looks in the car in order to create a visual language of shifting gazes.

To further explicate the principles guiding the looks in Kiarostami's car scenes, I want to turn to Negar Mottahedeh's (2008) description of the 'averted gaze' in Kiarostami's cinema. Kiarostami's application of the principle of the averted gaze, Mottahedeh believes, concerns the specific "commandments of looking" in Iranian cinema that abandon the direct male-female exchange of gazes and ask for "visual modesty" (2008, pp. 8-10). In her analysis, she draws heavily on Hamid Naifcy's analyses regarding the operative logic of an "Islamicate gaze theory", present in Iranian cinema, which propounds adopting an "averted or veiled look" on the principles of the "hermeneutics of modesty", propagated in Iran after the Islamic revolution of 1979 (Naficy, 2012, pp. 106-107). By responding directly to the requirements of a modest gaze, Mottahedeh explains the ways in which Kiarostami is able to not only evade censorship, but also create a visual language of "averted" and "unfocused looks", which, through its distinct system of shot construction, effectively counters "the ideological function of suture" and undoes "the voyeurism embedded in the conventions of dominant cinema" (2008, pp. 121-126).

To explain the mechanism of the averted look in Kiarostami's films, Mottahedeh provides a careful and illuminating analysis of a particular car scene in *Through the Olive Trees*, and explains the ways in which the intended effect of aversion is produced in accordance with the technology and aesthetics of mobility. Although Mottahedeh's analysis is not particularly focused on cars, I want to establish its significance for my argument by briefly recapitulating her insightful analysis, and stressing the instrumentality of the car in the construction of such visual aversion.

The aforementioned scene begins with a fixed shot of the right (passenger) side window of a car (figure 2.11). It follows from the information the audience receives in the previous scene that Shiva plans to step into her car and drive off.

> The camera enters the truck with Shiva. But it does not shift. The camera acts as if it has come in the driver's side door, lens first, and remained there facing the passenger side window. The car moves forward, so we assume that Shiva has taken her place in the driver's seat facing forward and that she is once

again driving the car. But this time, when the car moves, the camera resists the conventional point-of-view association with the look of the driver (or the car). Rather than look ahead with Shiva as she drives forward, the camera looks out the side window at the greenery passing along the roadside. It maintains an 'averted gaze'. (Mottahedeh, 2008, p. 122)

Figure 2.11. *Through the Olive Trees*.

Figure 2.12. *Through the Olive Trees*.

Figure 2.13. *Through the Olive Trees*.

On the way, the car passes two young passers-by and the fixed camera momentarily captures them. Keeping the camera's fixed gaze on the passenger's window all along, the car stops, moves backwards, and stops in front of the two youngsters as the camera frames their faces. At this moment Shiva, the driver whom the viewer has not seen but whose presence is assumed, starts a conversation with the two boys (figure 2.12).

> Throughout the conversation between Shiva and the village children, the camera looks out the window on the passenger's side. While we can now assume that the camera has adopted Shiva's look as she looks at the boys outside the car's side window, the sequence refuses to provide the conventional reverse point-of-view shot from the perspective of the children looking at Shiva. This reverse point-of-view shot would consolidate this assumption on our part. That linkage fails to materialize, and as the car moves on again to its destination, the camera captures fields of green, children, and the villagers' new school tent in the side-view mirror, stubbornly maintaining its averted gaze. The camera never looks forward, not once. (Mottahedeh, 2008, p. 124)

Throughout the sequence, the camera obstinately holds on to its initial position, capturing the two boys momentarily in the wing mirror as it moves ahead after that short break (figure 2.13). The viewer is provided with the possibility of adapting momentarily to the driver's potential fleeting look at that wing mirror. The driver's look steps in and out of the camera's steady position, and the viewer is prompted to simultaneously adjust the camera's look to that of the driver and to break that connection as the technology of automobility demands. Mottahedeh's analysis explains clearly how Kiarostami succeeds in "dissociating the camera from the look with which the narrative has identified" (2008, p. 125). Furthermore, it shows the ways in which such a process of dissociation is subsequently broken by the moments in which the unwavering camera adopts particular looks (of the driver, for instance) when the combination of the logic of driving and the film's narrative demand. Kiarostami's camera therefore neither rejects nor establishes firm positions of identification, but rather creates an interdependent and shifting regime of looks. By stubbornly maintaining an averted gaze, it effectively assimilates the looks of the

driver, the passenger, and the viewer into the regime of looks particular to the technology of mobility.

Interestingly, the principle of the averted gaze corresponds closely to the way looks perform in social interactions in the car. Within the car, it seems that there exists no obligation to look in a certain way or in a certain direction in order to hold a serious discussion or sustain a strong emotional bond. Mutual engagement in socialities maintained in the car does not rely on reciprocal eye contact, as people do not normally exchange views by exchanging gazes, but rather look in different directions while their bodies are seated facing forward. Yet social bonds created in the car do not lose strength as people avoid looking directly at each other and let their looks disperse. Such non-face-to-face conversations, sustained through non-reciprocal looks, necessitate a method of cinematic address different from the established format of shots and reverse-shots. Kiarostami pays particular attention to the regime of looks in a car, wisely adapting his cinematic style to its dynamics to produce a creative, but modest, visual language in accord with the terms of mobility.

By being attentive to the dynamics of mobility, Kiarostami not only tactically finds a way to evade control over looks in Iranian cinema – the result of which, some have argued, has been the absence of the female gaze – but also subverts the power relations contained in the practice of looking in, and at, films, as constructed historically in cinema by evoking gendered, sexualized, and desiring regimes of gazes (Mottahedeh, 2008, pp. 8-12). Although the dissociative and autonomous character of the gaze in Kiarostami's films, and the critique of the language of cinema that it supports, is a point already made in film analyses, I believe that the instrumentality of the car in this construction has been mostly overlooked. Stephen Bransford, for example, suggests that Kiarostami's "objective" approach to visuality is conditioned by avoiding elements encouraging the audience to "identify subjectively" with his characters, and could lead to either completely doing away with the entire system of cinematic identification, or opening up "the possibility for identification with *all* of the characters" in his films (Bransford, 2003). Similarly Jean-Luc Nancy believes that, in Kiarostami's films, "we are not dealing with sight – seeing or voyeuristic, fantasizing or hallucinating, ideative or intuitive – but solely with looking: it is a matter of opening the seeing to something real, toward which the look carries itself and which, in turn, the look allows to be carried back to itself" (2001, p. 18). It is by

studying the visual language of looks, enacted through the mobility of the car that one can best understand the mechanism through which Kiarostami establishes such a different regime of looks. The objective and autonomous essence of looks in Kiarostami's cinema, in other words, is closely related to and depends upon the car's system of mobility.

An Embodied Cinema of Everyday Interaction

In addition to issues of spatiality and visuality, Kiarostami's use of the car connects to his methods and tactics of filmmaking. In his use of cars, Kiarostami not only debases socially and culturally constructed regimes of spatiality and visuality, but also deregulates the regimes of control to which the processes of cinematic production are subject. The mobility of the car influences Kiarostami's direct presence or absence during the shooting, and determines the levels of control that he is willing to exert on the acting (of mostly non-actors) and editing. During the shooting of *Taste of Cherry*, it was Kiarostami himself who sat in the car next to his characters, occupied the seat of the driver or the passenger, and played as the unseen party to the discussions carried out in the car. Each time Mr Badii discusses his suicide plan with a passenger, he is actually talking to Kiarostami and, in effect, being directed by his responses in this process. Conversely, each time a passenger responds to Mr Badii's demands, he is actually responding to Kiarostami's role-playing as the suicidal Mr Badii behind the wheel. The confined spatiality of the car and the averted system of gazes that the specific shot-reverse-shot construction of mobility enacts aid Kiarostami in eventually editing himself out of the film's narrative.

In *Ten,* Kiarostami achieves different effects by, conversely, absenting himself almost entirely from the shooting site. Kiarostami fixed his cameras in the car and sent his cast off to the streets, only to watch the recorded material and select scenes later, when the short journeys of the car were over. By absenting himself from the shooting set, Kiarostami deliberately limited his control over the filming process. He simply let things happen and waited until the editing stage to have a say over what had already been recorded (Andrew, 2005; Krzych, 2010). This way, however, Kiarostami does not simply grant a position of control to his driver, but rather mobilizes the notion of control so as to build a complex system of affective engagement. Even though the driver/actor entertains a certain level of autonomy in the absence of Kiarostami's direct directorial control on the streets, the

unpredictability of the everyday flow of life impedes upon such autonomy. Both the car's movement and the conventions held within it are influenced by unanticipated happenings on busy streets. Stuck in the system of automobility, on several occasions in *Ten,* Mania has to negotiate other drivers on the streets, ask for the help of a police officer at a busy junction, and argue for parking space with the shop owner who does not want her car parked in front of his shop (figure 2.14).

Figure 2.14. *Ten*. Mania negotiates for her parking space

Detecting such dynamics of control unfolding on screen, the viewer is drawn to affectively participate in the act of driving and urban navigation, over which no one seems to have full control. The film's "affective economy" (Orgeron, 2008, p. 197) is enacted through such an embodied process of driving:

> Engaged as she is in an evolving form of self-authorship, Mania's mobility itself is a critical, physical expression of her attempts at control, and there is an undeniable, palpably realist pleasure in seeing this control express itself randomly. Allowing for the uncontrolled, in other words, is Mania's principle form of control. (Orgeron, 2008, p. 197)

Furthermore, the combination of the semi-autonomous driver, the fixed camera, and Kiarostami's absence from the filming set gives rise to numerous moments that in conventional cinema would have been regarded as residual and unimportant. Kiarostami's fixed camera highlights the facial gestures of the driver and the

passenger not only during conversations in the car, but also in moments when no significant action happens. Kiarostami's emphasis on residual everydayness is most emphatic at one point in *Ten,* when, after Mania parks her car and leaves to buy a cake, the camera remains as it was in the car, focused on the passenger (Mania's sister) waiting for Mania to return (see Fig. 2.15). Viewers might feel uncomfortable watching these uneventful moments, but they do not feel unreasonably compelled to do so because they can situate these moments of waiting as a segment of the practice of driving, which is what the whole film is about. Kiarostami's car therefore casts an eye on "what people actually do when they are 'doing nothing'" (Ehn & Löfgren, 2010, p. 4), and therefore accounts for the everyday in its most trivial, familiar, uneventful, and even tedious form.

Figure 2.15. *Ten*: Residual footage

By being attentive to such residual spaces, times, and practices, Kiarostami builds an embodied and affective unit of mobility that shifts along with the rhythms of everyday life and engages with "those most repeated actions, those most travelled journeys, those most inhabited spaces that make up, literally, the day to day" (Highmore, 2002, p. 1). Accordingly, the mobility of the car, coupled with the absence of the director, provides the conditions for Kiarostami's fiction to join the flow of everyday life on streets. Kiarostami's cars do not interrupt the everyday through the mechanism of film's production; neither do they build a simulation of the everyday in fictive or documentary formats. Instead, they join the everyday in its blend of documentation and fiction, absence and presence, and action and re-action.

Kiarostami does not simply show the reality of everyday life on the streets, but actively engages in producing, transforming, and mobilizing the interactive spatial and visual regime that constitutes the everyday.

Everyday life is imbued with different forms of embodiment that shape our sensorial relation to space. Embodiment concerns the notion that the relationship of a subject to its world is primarily lived rather than rationally understood, that perception is always situated in the bodily orientation towards the world (Dant, 2004, p. 71). Indeed, the lived experience of the system of automobility is not foreign to the concept of embodiment. The experience of driving is an embodied experience, in which the bodily and cognitive faculties of the driver and car interact, and build one conjoined sensorial unit. Tim Dant (2004) draws on Merleau Ponty's phenomenology of Perception to explain the ways in which the car becomes incorporated into the driver's body as an extension, just as a blind person's stick forms an extension of his/her body. The driver establishes a perception of the car's dimensions and capabilities, just like he has of his own body. Skilled drivers never think while driving, but rather feel the driving experience through the car, and they do not wait a second to think whether or not they (their car) can pass through a certain gate, for instance.

As a result of a repetitive process of everyday interaction, drivers extend their bodily perception to include the body of the car, situating it as an extension to their own body. Through the process of habituation, as Tim Dant explains, driving turns into "an embodied skill that becomes a taken-for-granted way of moving through space" (2004, p. 74). As a result, the driver's experience of being in the world – his sense of speed, for instance – "becomes a skill embodied through the vehicle, not only its dials and controls but also its sounds and vibrations" (Dant, 2004, p. 74). For drivers, the experience of driving a car then becomes "an aspect of bodily experience that they carry into all their other perceptions and engagements with the material world in a way that they take for granted and treat as unremarkable" (Dant, 2004, p. 74). Dant (2004) suggests that one cannot dissociate the driver's agency from the car, but has to acknowledge an embodied concept of driver-car as performative in the act of driving. "The car does not simply afford the driver mobility or have independent agency as an actant", he writes, "it enables a range of humanly embodied actions

available only to the driver-car" (Dant, 2004, p. 74). This assembled social body then performs on the level of the everyday:

> The assemblage of the driver-car produces the possibility of action that, once it becomes routine, habitual and ubiquitous, becomes an ordinary form of embodied social action. People who have become familiar with the driver-car through participating in the assemblage become oriented to their social world, partly at least, through the forms of action of which it is capable. Social institutions – legal systems, the conventions of driving, traffic management – develop to embed the coordinated habits of driver-cars within the social fabric. The use of cars is not then simply functional, a matter of convenience, nor is it reducible to individual, conscious decision. Like the wearing of clothes or following conventions of politeness, the actions of the driver-car have become a feature of the flow of daily social life that cannot simply be removed or phased out (like dangerous drivers or leaded petrol). (Dant, 2004, pp. 74-75)

Dant here directs attention to the assemblage of the driver-car as an embodied social being, an ordinary practitioner of everyday life. Such a conceptualization of embodiment is crucial for understanding the lived experience of driving as socially and culturally embedded in the everyday. The assemblage of the driver-car is therefore subject to various forms of social control, and, at the same time, resistant to those structures of domination as a result of its endless repository of bodily moves, expressions, and performativities. By aligning his cinema to the technology of mobility, Kiarostami not only presents a real and honest portrayal of the everyday dynamics of driving, but also creates an embodied unit of cultural influence in itself. He orients his audience's affective mode of engagement with the film to the forms of spatiality and visuality manifest in a driver-car assemblage. Kiarostami's drivers, passengers, camera, and filming techniques interact in creating an embodied concept of a driver-passenger-camera-filmmaker-car. The functioning of this assemblage is central to the affects of everydayness and non-visibility that Kiarostami's cinema pertains to.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the car as a spatio-temporality that offers possibilities for non-visible modes of presence on the streets, possibilities to remain unnoticed and unobtrusive within the ebb and flow of the everyday. I have examined the car as portrayed and employed in Abbas Kiarostami's films, where the car encapsulates an embodied social agent that performs in accordance with the mundane, recurrent, and inconspicuous practices of the everyday, remaining unobtrusive and attuned to its multiple rhythms. In this way, Kiarostami not only succeeds in depicting the everyday, but also in transmitting the process of cinematic production to the experience of the everyday. The car therefore functions as a means of engaging with the everyday city during filming, facilitating production on the streets in a way that does not disrupt the everyday flow – as conventional filming procedures would – but joins it and lends itself to its multiple uncertainties and trivialities.

In this way, I have also argued that the car is instrumental to the cinematic style of Kiarostami. I have explained the ways in which, with the use of a mobile car, Kiarostami deconstructs the conventional spatial and visual regimes of signification, through the enactment of a relational sense of place-making and an averted regime of looks. In doing so, he not only succeeds in complying with the rules and regulations of depiction in Iranian cinema, but also cunningly creates a distinct aesthetics of mobility that subverts the premises based on which those regulations are made. In this cinema of mobility, the behavioural, sensorial, and cognitive experience of Kiarostami's drivers and passengers closely embody the mobility of the car and the camera that it carries. Kiarostami creates an averted regime of gazes that corresponds closely to the mobility of the car. Kiarostami's long shots from the front window of a moving car effectively make "camera and car seem interchangeable" (Rosenbaum & Saeed-Vafa, 2003, p. 22). In addition to the camera, Kiarostami and his filming crew get attuned to this assembled body, acquiring its habits and embodying its functions in the process of filming. In other words, the filming technology joins the embodied driver-passenger-camera-car to form a comprehensive assembled social being. Analysing the car in *Ten,* Krzych refers to habitual, sensorial, and embodied influences that the car, driver, passenger, and the (digital) camera have on each other in generating "auto-motive conversations", a "form of connection between human and technology that entails no fundamental point of divide" (2010, p. 34).

Kiarostami's cinema therefore enhances the car's mobility by stretching the process of embodiment (of the driver-car) to include the cinematic apparatus. What follows is a car-driver-passenger-camera-director that joins, rather than disrupts, the everyday and orients the viewers' modes of engagement with space and visuality. The embodied car-driver-passenger-camera forms an in-between state of presence that remains unobtrusive in its performance on the street and in its cinematic depiction on the screen. Kiarostami is only able to pose social and cultural critique by orienting the affective mode of the audience's engagement with the film towards the embodied unit of a driver-passenger-camera-filmmaker-car.

3. ROOFTOPS
The Invisibility and Ambiguity of Leftover Space

This chapter is about the implications of non-visibility that urban rooftops carry in everyday life in Iran[1]. Considering its elevated location, the rooftop's relation to visibility is twofold: on the one hand the rooftop remains ordinarily invisible to the unequipped eye on the street; on the other hand, it equips the eye with a privileged position to look down, observe the street, and make visible its everyday flow. This double relation is predicated on the rooftop's spatial placement as vertically distant from the ground level where everyday practices unfold on the street and shape its rhythm. As a consequence of such a geographical and visual mismatch, the rooftop is typically positioned outside of the realm of everyday life, implying occasions of escape from it, rather than engagement with it.

This chapter, however, lays claim to an understanding of the rooftop that engages with the practices of everyday life on the same grounds, if not on the exact same level, as the street. It aims at surpassing the discursive distinction between the rich cosmos of everyday life and the blank surface of the rooftop. To do so, this chapter explores the ways in which the rooftop's isolation from the everyday city – as being out of reach and out of sight – is encroached upon through sight, sound, and everyday practices. The chapter therefore adopts the premises of the habitual, familiar, unnoticed, and ordinary as the theoretical foundation for endorsing the rooftop critically. It builds upon the diverse, unmarked, and uncategorized practices, expressions, and performativities that routinely encompass the everyday. To analyse these premises, this chapter focuses on the rooftops in Iran.

In the following, first, I will further explore the implications of incompatibility with, even complete opposition to, the everyday street that rooftops possess in critical urban studies. Subsequently, I will recount a similarly disengaging account of the rooftop as presented in a great number of published memoirs of the Iranian émigré, living in Western countries, which renders a stereotypically nostalgic imagery of the Iranian rooftop as a safe haven, detached and secured from the brutalities and

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[1] Parts of this chapter are published in: Dibazar, P., 2016. Leftover Space, Invisibility, and Everyday Life: Rooftops in Iran. In: C. Lindner & M. Meissner, eds. Global Garbage: Urban Imaginaries of Waste, Excess, and Abandonment. London & New York: Routledge.

discomforts of everyday life. Despite the spatial and temporal escapism attributed to the rooftop in such accounts, I will explain that its quaint spatiality gets intruded, often violently, by the myriad stimuli of the everyday city. This sensory connectedness between the rooftop and the city, often with disquieting effects, I employ as a starting point for situating the rooftop within – rather than outside of – the everyday city.

The resulting everyday rooftop, I argue, is premised upon multiple ambiguities and uncertainties regarding its spatial configuration. In the subsequent section of this chapter, I outline the concept of leftover space to critically analyse such an indeterminate condition of being left out of the systems of spatial configuration and signification, which further instigates exclusion from the orders of the visible and sensible. Next, I briefly explain the development of the common residential rooftops in contemporary Iran as leftover space. My observation is that, as a consequence of the processes of neoliberal urban transformation in recent decades, common residential rooftops in Iran are cast off as 'wasted spaces' in terms of planning and the values associated with it. I will explain how the visual and spatial configurations of the rooftops in Iran as leftover space are further conflated by the proliferation of satellite dishes on them.

Finally, I provide an in-depth analysis of the everyday practices of shouting from rooftops as a form of civil protest. I explain how in such protests the rooftop serves as an extension of the street, from where defiant voices could be heard but not seen. As I demonstrate, the Iranian residential rooftops' contours are rendered ambiguous in everyday practice, specifically in terms of visibility and systems of control. I contend that such practices disrupt the orders of the visible by having recourse to tactics of anonymity and inconspicuousness, in ways that enhance – rather than repudiate – the conditions of indeterminacy, insignificance, and non-visibility that the rooftop fosters, precisely on the account of its leftover spatiality.

Rooftops and the Everyday City

In his widely cited study on the practices of everyday life, Michel de Certeau (1988) begins the chapter on "walking in the city" by evoking a spectator standing on top of the Twin Towers in New York. In his account, this high altitude responds to the spectator's "desire to see the city", fills him with the voyeuristic joy of "seeing the whole" and the "ecstasy of reading" the cosmos of the city from afar (1988, pp. 91-

92). However, this entry point is to be negated promptly, as de Certeau is unequivocal in distinguishing that condition of total visibility from the fractured experiences of the "ordinary practitioners of the city", indicating that "to be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp" (1988, pp. 92-93). For de Cearteau, the elevated surface of the rooftop epitomizes a condition of detachment from lived experience, a disembodied state of intangibility provided by being "no longer clasped by the streets" (1988, p. 92). What follows is that in order to grasp the city, and to be grasped by it, one needs to descend, to go "down below", "below the thresholds at which visibility begins" (1988, p. 93). The story of the quotidian, de Certeau steadfastly maintains, "begins on ground level, with footsteps" (1988, p. 97).

Even though the shortcomings of restricting the quotidian to one mode of mobility in the city – walking with 'footsteps' – has more recently been examined and criticized, particularly, within the discourse of mobilities (Adey, 2010; Cresswell, 2006; Thrift, 2004; Urry, 2007) – to which I have also responded in the previous chapter by expanding de Certeau's notion to encompass the practice of driving – de Certeau's emphasis on the 'ground level' as the somewhat commonsensical loci of the ordinary practices of everyday life is a viewpoint that is widely shared amongst urban commentators, and rarely disputed in critical analyses of the everyday city. By being relegated to a location outside and beyond the openly accessible street, the surface of the rooftop in such accounts is deprived of spatial merits concerning form, usage, and meaning, functioning merely as an elevated standpoint for spectators who, in order to observe the city down below, stand on its fringes and turn their backs to it. Accordingly, a contrast is maintained between the realness and corporeality of life on the streets and the abstractness of the visual knowledge that is obtained of the city from rooftops. Such a polar opposition is made pivotal in a great number of studies of the everyday city:

> The idea that geographic order is imposed 'from above' through the panoptic gaze and segregationist strategies pursued by the police, magistrates, engineers and planners accordingly needs to be tempered with the observation that at 'street level' we find that individuals and groups create their own urban geographies, using cities in ways very different than bureaucrats and administrators intend(ed). (Hubbard, 2006, p. 106)

CHAPTER 3

As a matter of fact, such an emphasis on the street is not exclusive to viewpoints
focused on the everyday. The street is indeed a key factor in a considerable portion of
critical urban studies, simultaneously foregrounded in analyses that focus on the top-
down processes of design, management, and policy making, and the studies that seek
to render bottom-up possibilities for participatory practices. The street is also a focal
point of enquiry in studies addressing processes of – and struggles against –
commodification, neo-liberalization, globalization, and militarization of cities. The
street is pivotal to the broader conceptualizations of the public space, whether defined
as a communal space of openness and inclusiveness (Jacobs, 1961; Sennett, 2006); or
as a stage for social and political struggles, exemplified in recent years in such events
as the Gezi movement, the Umbrella movement and Occupy movements (Harvey,
2012; Kallianos, 2013). Streets encompass a diverse and conflicting range of activities
and visions of the city; streets are "the terrain of social encounters and political
protest, sites of domination and resistance, places of pleasure and anxiety" (Fyfe,
1998, p. 1).

In this chapter, I do not intend to disparage the spatial, temporal, and
phenomenological constituents of the street in the formation of everyday life – indeed,
a critical account of the city oblivious to the street is somewhat unimaginable.
However, the point I want to make is that, to a great extent, a disguised logic
underlies such studies that approach the street as the common, quintessential, and
exclusive site for authentic publicness, overlooking other possible spatialities,
temporalities, and materialities of the quotidian that transcend the physical boundaries
of the street, and challenge its purported accessibility and visibility. Furthermore,
what compels the exclusion of the rooftop from the ordinary city is the idea of
extreme verticality and high-rise structures that the rooftop most often conjures up in
critical studies.

Rooftops bring into mind the distanciated top level of skyscrapers of such
modern and postmodern cities as New York and Hong Kong, whose high density and
maze-like urban structures further necessitate psychological detachment from the city
in everyday life – a heightened sense of "blasé attitude" (Simmel, 2010). However,
the skyscraper is neither the most pervading architectural form around the globe, nor
the typology that treasures the rooftop in terms of space, form, appearance, function,
performance, or materiality. As Alejandro Zaera Polo (2008) suggests, while the flat-

horizontal buildings of such public facilities as airports, factories, and shopping malls make considerable use of the rooftop in providing access and accommodating functions, the skyscraper remains largely oblivious to its spatially distanced rooftop. Typically accommodating the corporate sector, the skyscraper is an architectural form that best serves the interests of the real estate market by increasing the surface of profitable space, stacking levels on levels of square meters. In effect, tall buildings have become "paradigmatic of the representation of power in the city, be it that of a corporation, a city or the might of a political regime" (Zaera Polo, 2008, p. 96). It is therefore not totally coincidental that the managerial look of the spectator from the rooftop – or a top floor – of a skyscraper corresponds with such buildings' ideological lineage. The point that I want to make is that a study of rooftops should question the discursive coupling of the rooftop with high verticality, which inevitably associates with it specific types of buildings, geographies, and ideologies.

In their study of Hong Kong's postmodern cinema, Chow and de Kloet indicate that rooftops are frequently presented in films as "a potential way out of the detachment, nihilism and destruction of the postmetropolian city" (2013, p. 143). Rooftops in such films, they write, breed moments of "radical reconnection" that are steadily waning – if not completely missing – in the global city, moments in which "the protagonists of the films recuperate the possibility to know, feel and remember who they are" in the face of the "claustrophobic" city around them (Chow & de Kloet, 2013, p. 143). They write:

> we posit to understand the deployment of rooftops in Hong Kong cinema as a way out, literally and figuratively. The rooftop is thus read as one urban liminal space where one can force the city to suspend, to become on hold: it is the space, we argue, where the acrophilic *flâneurs* of the twenty-first century gather, a space beyond surveillance and outside of the logics of global capitalism, where one negotiates and perhaps overcomes a blasé postmetropolitan individuality with moments of radical reconnection. (Chow & de Kloet, 2013, p. 140; emphasis in original)

CHAPTER 3

Chow & de Kloet's account of the rooftop purports a spatiality that is inhabited and lived, from where the characters do not only observe the city down below, but make connection to the city and to one another. However, their account sustains a different kind of separation of the rooftop from the everyday city by attributing to the rooftop conditions that are at times the direct opposite of the ones attainable on the street. The rooftop radically reconnects because it postulates a refuge from the meaninglessness of the daily life on the streets of the postmetropolis and its everydayness. In this way, the rooftop suggests an "escape" from everyday life and creates an "alternative reality" to it (Cohen & Taylor, 1992, p. 6). The rooftop in this account offers relief from the everyday city. Such an escapist vision of the rooftop is a recurrent motif in Iranian popular culture, to which I briefly turn in the following section.

Rooftops of Iran: Memoirs and Popular Culture

Rooftops are frequently alluded to in the stories, autobiographies, and memoirs of Iranian émigrés in western countries. Published in English and other European languages, and intended largely for an international readership, a great number of these works claim to provide a first-hand account of life in Iran by a generation that has been forced to leave the country as a consequence of socio-political turmoil following the revolution of 1979. Although not always playing a central role in the story, the rooftop's homogenous recurrence in a vast array of such narratives, often with hints of romanticism and orientalism, is compelling.

A nostalgic vision of the Iranian rooftop is presented in *The Last Living Slut: Born in Iran, Bred Backstage* (2010), the autobiographical story of the British/Iranian Roxana Shirazi. The first part of the book, *Home*, recounts Roxana's childhood memories of Iran before she was relocated in the UK at the age of 10 in the early 1980s. A point of reference in this section is the house in which her childhood was spent, particularly its rooftop: "The house had a vast roof. On blazing hot summer nights, like everyone else in the neighborhood, my grandmother, my mother, and I would put our bedding outside and sleep under the stars that crammed the raw Persian sky" (Shirazi, 2010, p. 18).The allusion made to peaceful sleeps under the starry sky conjures up the cliché imagery of mystic oriental nights, further marked by the reference made to the word 'Persian' rather than 'Iranian' or 'Tehranian'. In real life, however, this portrayal is far from precise, considering Tehran's high levels of air

pollution, which makes sleeping on the roof less enjoyable and the stars less vivid in the grey sky.

  The following sections of the book recount Roxana's coming of age and her explorations into sexuality in her new abode, Manchester. In the UK, she indulges herself in a rock 'n' roll lifestyle, enjoys the freedoms it offers and comes to terms with its frustrations. No further reference is made to that nostalgic vision of the rooftop until the last section in the book, where Roxana decides, quite abruptly, to return to Iran. In the book's short epilogue, set on a plane to Tehran, Roxana shares her final thoughts on the past and feelings towards the prospects of a new life in Iran. At this final stage, she expresses her disillusionment with the life she has built for herself in the UK, feeling "uprooted from the loving nestle" of her culture and "thrust into a deserted zone" (Shirazi, 2010, p. 312). Unrealistically enthusiastic about her uncertain future in Iran, she writes:

> I am going where the sun is shining…I will walk the sleeping sunshine alleys of my childhood in plastic slippers. I will walk past the fruit trees and the gardens. I will walk into my grandmother's derelict house and try to be me. I will sleep on the rooftop of my cousin's home under the sharp blaze of the stars so I can shed this skin and hatch the real yolk of me. I will go to the ancient cities of Esfahan and Shiraz to see the splendor of my country's epic history. I can't wait to go to family parties, eat a banquet of Persian foods, and dance like the Iranian girl that I am. (Shirazi, 2010, p. 312)

Once again the romantic image of sleeping on the rooftop facing the stars is conjured up to stand in for all that supposed authenticity and sense of rootedness that has been denied to Roxana as an immigrant to Britain. Whereas Roxana's first account of the rooftop takes the form of a nostalgic recollection of childhood days in Iran, and therefore is held in the past, this second – and last – evocation of the rooftop is projected onto the future. Either way, the romantic, almost idyllic, rooftop is distanced from the present. Roxana's vision of the rooftop therefore nourishes an imaginary retreat from the undesired present, an escape from the everyday into an unreal future built upon distant memories. More than the exact nature of the envisioned rooftop, such an escapism has a bearing on the insufferable present. Everyday life is indeed

most often so terrifyingly dull, dreary, meaningless, burdensome, and unfulfilling, that it "creates an overwhelming need not to attend to the here and now but to escape from it, at least temporarily" (Foley, 2012, p. 5). To escape from the everyday, writes Foley (2012), people have recourse to such seemingly free areas as entertainment, travel, partying, alcohol, drugs, or sex – where the everyday could be held back.

The image of the Iranian rooftop serves as such a free area of escape from the everyday for Roxana. Although memories are not per se antithetical to everyday life – indeed, everyday lived experience is suffused with dreams and memories that are lived with routinely and evoked momentarily – Shirazi remains oblivious to the everyday associations of the rooftop by denying her memory to act upon the present. Moreover, Shirazi keeps her vision of the rooftop distanced from the present by insistently making connections to the 'epic history' of the 'ancient' Persia and glorifying its cultural heritage. Although the vision of the rooftop is most likely to change once Roxana steps on the ground and spends some time in Tehran, the book ends in the plane "somewhere over Iran", "past ancient Persian mountains, chalky and restless secret nomads" (Shirazi, 2010, p. 313), keeping the everyday Iran inaccessible to Roxana and readers of the book.

Similar nostalgic views of the rooftop are traceable in a novel that perhaps makes the most direct and expansive reference to rooftops in Iran: *The Rooftops of Tehran* (2009), written by American/Iranian Mahbod Seraji. A common rooftop in Tehran plays a central role in the development of the characters and events of the book. A work of fiction influenced by personal memories, *The Rooftops of Tehran* portrays the dreams, friendships, loves, and lives of a generation of young adults in the politically charged times prior to the revolution of 1979. Even though, in the book, Seraji reproduces a nostalgic vision of the rooftop that is quite similar to Roxana's, his treatment of the rooftop as key to the development of the narrative is of significance in that it does not hold back the everyday, but relates to it.

The blurb on the back of the book states: "In a middle-class neighborhood in Iran's sprawling capital city, seventeen-year-old Pasha Shahed spends the summer of 1973 on his rooftop with his best friend, Ahmed, joking around and talking about the future". Pivotal to the development of the story, Pasha's rooftop in *The Rooftops of Tehran* is a place to live and inhabit. The rooftop is Pasha's most cherished space, where he shares secrets and the most thoughts with his best friend, Ahmed; where he meets Zari and shows affection towards her; where he holds the otherwise unlikely

direct talk with his father. Pasha's rooftop is an intimate and emotional space, where secrets are unveiled, relations are upheld, tears are shed, and truths are reached.

Pasha's rooftop is also a secluded and unreachable place, kept safely hidden from the eyes on the street, from where Pasha observes the alley and peers at the comings and goings in the neighbourhood. The narrator, Pasha, raises this point in the opening pages of the story: "Our summer nights on the roof are spent basking in the wide-open safety of our bird's-eye-view" (Seraji, 2009, p. 10). Reminiscent of de Certeau's spectator, Pasha observes and reads the neighbourhood from the rooftop and gains knowledge of the events that unfold in the alleys. This is best exemplified in a crucial scene in which Doctor, the secretive political activist to whom Pasha looks up as his hero, is chased in the middle of the night by three agents of SAVAK (the then Iranian intelligence service). The scene is described from the point of view of Pasha on the rooftop, from where he observes the chase and sees Doctor climb over the wall of the neighbouring house and hide in its front-yard – a move that remains hidden from the eyes of the agents. In addition, Pasha's spectatorship from the rooftop satisfies a strong masculine voyeuristic desire. Pasha secretly falls in love with Zari precisely as a result of his frequent peeking into the privacy of the neighbouring front-yard where Zari lives.

However, in contrast to de Certeau's spectator, Pasha's look from the rooftop is often completed by a look back from the street. Pasha develops feelings towards Zari not merely by casting an objectifying masculine gaze upon her from top of the roof, but by recognizing and appreciating her reciprocal looks: "She knows that I'm watching her because she looks up often" (Seraji, 2009, p. 72). It is the reciprocity of looks that propels the story to a dramatic point in the scene where Pasha watches Doctor being chased by the secret service agents in the alley. While appreciating the possibilities for observing such an exciting chasing scene that the rooftop grants him, he realizes, to his astonishment, that he is the only person in the vicinity that is enthusiastically following the scene from a rooftop. "I can see that more and more neighbors are watching from their darkened rooms. No one wants to be seen, but everyone wants to know how this will end" (Seraji, 2009, p. 82). Absorbed in the scene, Pasha probably takes this as a sign for the cowardice of his neighbours who are scared of being seen. But the evens that follow swiftly lead to a tragic moment in

which one of the agents looks up at Pasha and tracks the direction of his look. Pasha's observation form the rooftop therefore involuntarily gives away Doctor's hideaway:

> I can't take my eyes off the scene that has frozen in time in Zari's yard. A sound suddenly diverts my attention to the end of the ally. The man with the radio is looking at me. I quickly sit down behind the short wall, but it's too late. He must have been watching me for a while, and from the direction of my gaze he has pinpointed the house in which Doctor has taken sanctuary. (Seraji, 2009, pp. 82-83)

In this scene, the dramatic effect of the visual interrelation between the city, on the ground level, and the rooftop is horrifying, as the interplay of looks bears resemblance to the systems of surveillance. In this approximation, the spectator on the rooftop is not reduced to disembodied observing eyes, but is corporeally present and subject to undisclosed observations and surveillance from the street. In this scene, the typically sequestered rooftop of the story is violently intruded by the city "down below" (Certeau, 1988, p. 93), with drastic consequences indeed (Doctor is caught, imprisoned, and finally executed). During this event, not only the privacy of Pasha's retreat is encroached upon, but also his autonomy and power in gazing around is undermined. By resorting to his rooftop, Pasha is therefore not necessarily safe from the unsafeties that pervade everyday life. Pasha's rooftop is not completely severed from the everyday street, but the relation it maintains with the street is a hostile and aggressive one.

By contrast with the hostile and aggressive relation that Pasha's rooftop maintains with the everyday street, a fruitful and welcoming connection with the city is recounted in Hamid Dabashi's childhood memory of open-air cinemas in Ahvaz. In the introduction to his book on Iranian cinema, the American/Iranian scholar Dabashi writes:

> In addition to the main theaters, all movie houses had an open-air section for summer. In Ahvaz the summer days were long and monotonous, but because of the breeze from the Karun river, the evenings were extraordinarily cool and pleasant. Very few pleasures in the world could compare with watching an Indian musical on a cool summer evening in an open-air theater. People living

in the adjacent apartments, if they were lucky, could actually see the screen and hear the soundtrack in the privacy of their own homes. Television had not yet come to the Ahvaz of my childhood, and these big screen miracles could quadruple the price of a house. Even those who were too far away to see the screen but close enough to hear the soundtrack considered themselves fortunate. The breeze would carry the sound of an Indian musical into the furthest reaches of town. All you had to do was see a film once and then listen to its soundtrack and songs from the top of your roof for night after night. Women in some neighborhoods would have impromptu parties on their roofs, as they were laying out the bedding for their family (we slept on the rooftops during the summer), listening to the soundtrack *of Sangam,* particularly the songs sung by Nargess and Raj Kapour. (Dabashi, 2001, p. 2)

Even though this account also romanticises the rooftop to a certain extent, it does so by precisely suggesting its connection to, rather than detachment from, the city. Dabashi's rooftop does not provide an escape from the everyday, but creates a different way of relating to it. Its special quality is the possibility it grants for sensing the city, for hearing its sounds and connecting to it. The rooftop functions as an extension to the open-air cinema, providing audial access to it, and hosts communities and collectives of cinema-goers.

In popular culture, many references are made to groups of people shouting revolutionary slogans from rooftops during the 1979 revolution, which follow along parallel lines of audial connectivity with the city and the creation of collective sentiments. In other words, the dreamlike image of the rooftop as a personal retreat away from the everyday city (with its romantic undertones) is paralleled in popular accounts with a real (but no less romanticized) image of collective rooftops as spaces that connect with the city through revolutionary sounds and practices. Later in this chapter I will examine more recent incidents of shouting from rooftops during the political unrest following the 2009 presidential elections in Iran. In order to be able to better situate these rooftop protests in space, I will first briefly examine the physical form of contemporary rooftops in Iran and their structural transformation in the past decades. To do so, and to be able to better situate my argument regarding the non-visible modes of presence that the rooftop adheres to, I will study the rooftops as

leftover spaces. In the following section, I will introduce leftover space as a conceptual apparatus that helps in understanding the ambiguous position that Iranian rooftops hold in joining the everyday and yet remaining non-visible to it.

On Leftover Space

Leftover space is a contested term in urban studies, often used interchangeably with a range of definitions that denote the spatial properties of being neglected, lost, derelict, vacant, blank, slack, marginal, and void (Carmona, 2010; Doron, 2007). Broadly speaking, it alludes to seemingly empty, uninhabited, or uninhabitable spaces whose form, function, boundaries, and aesthetics do not comfortably fit into the physical arrangements or conceptual frameworks of urban planning. Urban literature mostly considers the indeterminacy of such spatial conditions as an undesirable side effect of modern urban planning, caused by either negligence in the initial processes of design (space left over after planning, such as the margins of cities), failure in maintenance, programming, and after-care (space left over after use, such as old industrial sites), or inability in achieving sustainability (space left over after the living, such as wastelands). Such grey zones are thought to pose a threat not only to the appearance of a desirable city, but also to the function of a cohesive society. Imprecise, ill-defined, and under-utilized, leftover spaces are commonly considered breeding places for illegal activities and dangerous behaviours.

To solve the problems posed by leftover spaces, the overall strategy developed in urban literature is the implementation of the concept of 'appropriation': conceiving creative ways to reverse the threat by reclaiming the void as a resource for carving out new concepts of public space. In this process, two antithetical processes are envisaged. Urban design and planning professions, on the one hand, aim at recuperating such forgotten spaces into the desired domains of economy and spatial order, in effect extending their managerial and ideological reach to those ill-managed sites. Processes of redevelopment and regeneration in contemporary cities are exemplary of this total planning attitude (Carmona, 2010; Tranick, 1986). On the other hand, the claim is frequently made that such leftover spaces open up avenues for diverse and spontaneous ways for people to make use of space in everyday life, therefore producing multiple spatialities, not necessarily in accordance with the proper orders of the space as defined by law. Advocating creative uses of space that resist given definitions of the public realm and that defy real and metaphoric

boundaries of space, this second approach – illustrative of which are the postulations of "everyday urbanism" (Chase, et al., 1999) and "everyday city" (Hubbard, 2006) – sees in leftover spaces potential for hidden and unacknowledged counter-publics.

In other words, constant contestation over the use, and therefore definition, of space runs between the systematic processes that seek to maintain the status quo by recuperating leftover spaces – leading to more homogeneous urban environments – and the vernacular everyday practices that look for alternatives to the hegemonic order in such indeterminate settings. It is in part following this line of thought that I argue for the uncertain premises of rooftops in Iran as grounds for contestation between competing regimes of control within everyday practices. However, central to the spatial condition analysed in this paper is the perpetuation of conditions of indeterminacy in ways that defy easy appropriation and categorization into one or the other regime. As I will explain in the following, it is in exploring such a sustained condition of indeterminacy that I believe the term 'leftover' is helpful, on a conceptual level, in complicating any attempt to categorize such spaces by conventional definitions of meaning, aesthetics, or functionality.

Inherent in the notion of the leftover is, first of all, the temporality of before and after use, which purports a certain sense of waste and garbage. John Scanlan writes: "in an unproblematic sense garbage is leftover matter. It is what remains when the good, fruitful, valuable, nourishing and useful has been taken away" (2005, p. 13). Even if an object remains visibly and materially unchanged before and after use, Myra Hird (2012) believes that its ontology changes in the course of this transition from a desirable matter to garbage. Therefore, she explains what defines things as garbage is their "usability or worthlessness to human purposes", suggesting that "no entity is in its essence waste, and all entities are potentially waste" (Hird, 2012, p. 455). Following a similar line of thought, Scanlan refers to garbage as inexact and equivocal, that which defies neat definitions, and could be conceptualized as "the remainder of such neatness" (2005, pp. 16-22). In other words, he writes, "the stuff of garbage" can best be defined in a metaphoric sense as "the remainder of the symbolic order proper" (2005, pp. 16-22). Consequently, "the meaning of 'waste' carries force because of the way in which it symbolizes an idea of improper use, and therefore operates within a more or less moral economy of the right, the good, the proper, their opposites and all values in between" (Scanlan, 2005, pp. 16-22).

CHAPTER 3

Leftover spaces should be read in ways that allow for the critical questioning of such moral economies. Over and above regarding the leftover space as a resource for potential uses, it is also possible to regard its uselessness – its defiance of the culturally constructed significations of value – as potential. In order to theorize a sustained critique of space as leftover, it is crucial to pay attention to the equivocality of meanings and values associated not only with the physical shape and materiality of space, but also with the range of activities, temporalities, and aesthetics that get attached to the processes of appropriation of it. In this chapter, I analyse such intertwined spatial, social, political, and aesthetic processes that account for the residual and indefinite status of rooftops in Iran. By regarding Iranian rooftops as leftover spaces, I wish to highlight the power contained in them to question, if not totally transform, the dominant hegemony in everyday practice.

A second point about the 'leftover' is that, by conjuring up waste and that which does not conform, it addresses issues of proximity and exposure. That which remains after the useful and valuable is exhausted is usually seen as posing a threat to the orders of the spatial and the visible, precisely because of its assertive presence, detectability, visibility, and contiguity in everyday life. To administer both its inappropriateness and disclosure, the leftover therefore needs to be disposed of, disconnected from sense experience, placed elsewhere and removed from everyday contact. Hird suggests that our societies are overwhelmed by "the desire to disgorge ourselves of waste and remove it from sight" (2012, p. 455). However, taking into account the indeterminacy of the definition of waste on the one hand, and the daily procedures of waste production and management on the other, waste is present and never totally removed from everyday contact. The physical and symbolic endurance of the residue is even more accentuated in the case of spatial leftovers, as a result of their historically embedded and contested geographies. Rather than losing touch with everyday sense experience, spatial leftovers obstinately establish contact with everyday life by providing ideal settings for a multiplicity of quotidian practices of deviation, transgression, and appropriation. The intertwinement of visibility, connectivity, and indeterminacy then poses the possibility of critique, since "visible remainders", as Scanlan writes, "stand as the evidence that something else is going on besides the conventional use materials and products are put to" (2005, p. 109).

It is due to such ambiguous positions regarding visibility and everyday contact that I find the concept of leftover space pertinent to analysing everyday practices of

the rooftop in Iran. Being located above street level and disconnected from it, I argue that the rooftop's contours of visibility are in effect ambiguous and complicated in everyday practice. In particular, I will show that the subversive capacity of the rooftop in instigating counter-publics and giving voice to political dissent is predicated upon a twofold relation between visibility and invisibility, proximity and distance, and presence and absence.

Finally, the concept of the residual is instrumental to an understanding of the practices of everyday life that I pursue in this paper. To examine everyday life, as Michael Sheringham (2006) explains in his study of a range of theories and practices, is to be sensitive to the activities, aesthetics, and feelings that lag behind the dominant structures of thought and regimes of representation, and that are therefore left out of consideration in the processes of knowledge production. Most notably, Henri Lefebvre writes: "everyday life, in a sense residual, defined by 'what is left over' after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out by analysis, must be defined as a totality" (1991, p. 97). Similarly, Maurice Blanchot believes

> the everyday is platitude (what lags and falls back, the residual life with which our trash cans and cemeteries are filled: scrap and refuse); but this banality is also what is most important, if it brings us back to existence in its very spontaneity and as it is lived – in the moment when, lived, it escapes every speculative formulation, perhaps all coherence, all regularity. (Blanchot, 1987, p. 13)

It is the liveliness of this inexorable remainder that serves as a rich and infinite source of creativity, criticality, and resistance to the ordered structures of space that seek to monopolize every aspect of modern human life. Sheringham, describing Lefebvre's theory, writes: "the irreducible residue comprises basic human rhythms and biological needs that are not simply remainders but factors which, in surviving (and resisting), struggle against the forces that oppose appropriation" (2006, p. 149).

What follows from this attentiveness to the multiple implications of the residual is, as I will show in the following, an intertwined social, political, and aesthetic condition of indeterminacy, in terms of the orders of the spatial, apparatuses

of control, and the multifaceted ramifications of visibility in everyday life. By focusing on the positioning of satellite dishes on the rooftops and the practices of shouting from them as protest, I will argue that, despite being neglected in the processes of design and positioned out of reach and out of sight of the street, urban rooftops in Iran do not repudiate prospects of engagement with the everyday city. On the contrary, their exteriority to the orders of the spatial and the visible precisely raises possibilities for joining the everyday in ways that are disruptive of the orders of the sensible. They establish connections with residual practices of dissent and discarded voices of protest in unconventionally indeterminate, but affective, ways. The possibilities for critique that this paradox of spatial detachment and affective attachment provides are, I argue, premised upon the leftover status of such spaces. Iranian rooftops play out the power contained in the concept of the leftover space – as residual, wasted, and indeterminate – to sustainably destabilize positions taken for granted within the spatial, temporal, aesthetic, and political patterns.

Urban Rooftops in Iran: The Ambivalence of Leftover Space

The history of contemporary urban development in Iran shows precisely how the residential rooftops have been systematically cast off as leftover in design and planning. Since the late 1980s, Iranian cities have been radically remodelled under the influence of the forces of speculative markets, that see in the renewal of urban centres the possibility for profit making, by vertically adding to the profitable square meters of cherished real estate (Bayat, 2010; Madanipour, 1998). Rather than being controlled, this process has been aided by municipalities that, disregardful of their own zoning regulations, have devised policies for selling 'building rights' as a means for maximization of their revenues. Such policies began when the mayor of Tehran, Gholamhossein Karbaschi, introduced a new mandate for financial self-reliance against a backdrop of dependence on central government's financial support (2010, p. 112). To eliminate all state subsidies, municipalities then had to find new and safe revenues. Kaveh Ehsani writes:

> Three quarters of the new revenues came from the sale of residential permits that were in explicit violation of zoning laws. These violations either allowed commercial use of public land or were generated by the 'sale of density,' which exempted developers from zoning laws by allowing them to subdivide

plots and build high-rises well above the permitted norm. The latter, highly controversial move was justified on the grounds that it would boost the housing supply through increased 'vertical density.' (Ehsani, 2009)

In the dense vertical cities that have emerged as a consequence of the demands of the market, space is a scarcity that, in tune with the drive for maximization of profit, calls for prudence in the spatial configuration of new apartment buildings. Accordingly, spaces that do not fully contribute to square meters of sellable space – that are not readily categorized as indoors or functional – are for the most part considered as 'wasted', a squandering of the developer's investment and a dissipation of space. In this process, while such in-between spaces of the old single house units as courtyards, balconies, basements, and attics are either completely removed or reduced to the minimum in exchange for sellable square meters of indoor space, the rooftop is an unavoidable element that is held onto as necessary, but treated as worthless in the processes of design and construction. Market yearnings for higher profit and architectural sensibilities for scrupulous design therefore combine to set forth new definitions of 'unnecessary' spaces.

As a result of such neoliberal urban development schemes, common rooftops in Iranian cities are designed with little to no thought for their appearance and maintained absentmindedly over time. The rooftop in this system is reduced to a basic structural element, responding to such necessities as weight bearing and insulation. Resonating with this negligence is the invisibility of common rooftops for the unequipped eye on the street, which has led to the ignoring of rooftops in urban beautification policies, regarded as being inconsequential to the cityscape. In short, left over as insignificant, urban rooftops have been systematically forgotten and severed from everyday contact. As a consequence of this negligence, the typical Iranian urban rooftop suffers from haphazard design and a lack of maintenance. In this process, rooftops have become the common location for the installation of aesthetically undesired, yet functionally necessary, apparatuses that sustain the performance of a building; among them are several systems of ventilation, such as coolers, and technologies of communication, such as TV antennas. The rooftop is therefore significant in the preliminary design phase and during its functioning only to

the extent that it inconspicuously accommodates such leftover materialities related to the everyday performance of the building.

However, with the proliferation of the previously unthought-of satellite dishes on the rooftops, from the early 1990s onwards, rooftops have taken on a new meaning (see Figure 3.1). Unlike TV antennas and cooling systems, satellite dishes have not been treated as insignificant in terms of their visibility. As the receiving of foreign TV channels through satellite dishes is regarded as undesirable by the state, on the basis of the state's lack of control over it, the previously unimportant rooftops have been unexpectedly charged with political significance. The government by and large regards the satellite technology as a 'cultural invasion by the West', a morally corruptive network that needs to be fought against. In 1995, the Iranian Parliament passed a law against the importing, sale, and use of any kind of satellite equipment, legalizing their confiscation from rooftops.

Figure 3.1. Common urban residential rooftops in Iran. Photograph by Kamyar Adl (Kamshots@Flickr)

However, satellite dishes have continuously resisted confiscation by the authorities, since their placement on rooftops effectively conflates the dividing lines between the legally binding concepts of the visible and hidden, public and private, and moral and immoral. By recounting disputes over the issue in the Iranian

parliament in 1995, Fariba Adelkhah (2000) explains that the core threatening effect of satellite dishes was believed to arise from their visibility on the rooftops, as evident manifestation of unruliness and nonconformity to the moral values of the State. Rather than the content of the transmitted programmes, it was the satellite dishes' display on the roof that was considered to be morally incorrect, as it intruded into the orders of publicness – and was therefore subject to punishment. More recently, in May 2011, then deputy commander of the Iranian police, Sardaar Ahmadreza Radan, clearly stated that the police's priority in seizing the satellite dishes were the clearly visible ones (Jahannews, 2011).

However, the application of the concept of visibility to satellite dishes on the rooftops is ambiguous. The accusation of intentionality in blatant public display of an unlawful behaviour is untenable, since the surface of the rooftop is ordinarily unseen from the street. How, when, and to whom then are the satellite dishes visible? Although it is possible to bring the rooftop dishes into view from neighbouring rooftops, the premises upon which that visibility is assured is questionable. Particularly since the in-between state of the rooftop as a privately owned yet publicly disclosed space is posited ambiguously within the realm of the state's control: how can visibility from a private setting be used as an allegation of a public violation of the orders of the visible?

In answer to such questions, I argue that the rooftop's implications of visibility stem from its spatial condition of ambiguity as a leftover space. Through the intertwinement of ambiguous premises of the visibility and privacy of the rooftop, a state of uncertainty ensues that poses a threat to the orders of the visible. The rooftop's implications of visibility stem from its spatial condition of ambiguity as a leftover space. Whereas the leftover status of the rooftop does not suggest any particular aesthetic regime of the visible, positioning satellite dishes adds specific meaning to its otherwise blank composition. Even though the issue of visibility is often invoked to tackle the problem of satellite dishes, what instigates rigorous reactions is the way in which, by the installation of satellite dishes, the previously insignificant rooftop gains significance as a site for illegal and immoral conduct. In other words, by adding satellite dishes, the uncertain spatial status of the rooftop is changed into one with a particular political message.

What is most compelling is that, by growing into a subject of debate and legislation in public discourse, the insignificant rooftops have gained a critical edge in questioning the cultural constructedness of such abstract, but legally binding, concepts as visibility and privacy. Furthermore, with the police's sporadically violent conduct and adventurous manoeuvres in seizing satellite dishes, the out-of-sight and insignificant rooftops have gained visibility in the media, exposed to the world as bearers of anti-establishment sentiments. The results of a Google search for satellite dishes in Iran show the extent to which the rooftops are rendered visible in the media as sites of seemingly unstoppable confrontation between the hegemony of the state – as manifest in the spectacle of the confiscated and destroyed dishes – and the waywardness of its citizens – detectable in the enduring presence of dishes on the rooftops. In the following, I will explore the confrontational aspects of Iranian rooftops by analysing the rooftop protests associated with the Green movement.

Rooftop Protests: The Everyday Practice of Shouting from Rooftops

During the political uprisings in the aftermath of the disputed 2009 presidential elections in Iran, a number of rallies were organized on the streets by the Green movement; the first and most famous of which was a 'silent' rally, in which hundreds of thousands of people came to the streets in Tehran in silence. People's silence, although a precautionary strategy, in practice intensified the affect of their overwhelming presence, as the message of the demonstrations was to let the government see and feel the existence of people whose votes, the protestors argued, were not counted. The only signs of expression during the protests were small signs, here and there, exclaiming 'where is my vote'. Although peaceful throughout the day, in the evening, when demonstrators were spreading out on their way back home, gunshots were fired, during which a number of civilians were killed. That initially peaceful demonstration was followed by a few less silent rallies on the streets, during which more people were killed.

The uneven balance of power was already known to the demonstrators, who had opted for a silent and less provocative demonstration. However, the reaction of the regime – the extent to which it was eager to use its uneven power – was not exactly known beforehand. After those deadly demonstrations of power by the government, the Green movement's street politics, which were effective to that point and unprecedented in post-revolutionary Iran, gradually died away. Subsequently, the

main concern of the movement was to find ways to hold on, to resist complete annihilation, and to assure endurance:

> The problem now for the protest movement is to find a way to keep up the pressure while defusing the impact of state violence…. The movement will probably conclude that protest should move off the streets, where violence is easier to employ and the flame of dissent itself burns hotter and more unsustainably. The state escalation of violence has made the streets a site of confrontation rather than mobilization (Ehsani, et al., 2009).

One of the forms in which the movement stayed relatively alive for a longer period of time, and undermined the monopoly of the authority over the public sphere, was by shouting from rooftops, which came to be known as rooftop protests (Ehsani, et al., 2009). After nightfall, around 9 or 10 PM depending on the season, people would go up to the roof of their dwellings – mostly shared rooftops of apartment buildings – and shout 'Allah-o Akbar' (God is Great) and 'Marg bar Dictator' (Death to the dictator). Bearing resemblances to chants of Allah-o Akbar that animated the revolutionary crowds in 1978 and 1979, this form of protest alluded to the ideals of the revolution of 1979, and gained significance for revitalizing its forgotten patterns.

As a form of protest, the chanting from rooftops invites comparison with the more conventional form of street protest. It certainly purports to be a different form of expressivity in terms of space (rooftop instead of street), temporality (night instead of day), materiality (voice instead of banners and placards), and sensory faculties being invoked (sound instead of sight). Nevertheless, as I will explain in the following, rather than rejecting street politics, it effectively extends the reach of those politics to different spatial, temporal, material, and bodily functions.

The move from the street to the rooftop has a locational significance, in the first place: it is a strategy of distanciation from the street. While the street is constantly policed as a result of the mobility that it offers, the rooftop maintains an autonomous geography, at least temporarily, as a result of being posited outside that system of flow. In that respect, by way of not being within the immediate reach of the police force, the move to the rooftop is a strategy to delay, if not completely deter, the direct counterattacks and brutalities of the police. In this context, the rooftop is a

retreat to a 'less dangerous' position than the street, an escape to a less readily accessible space. Besides, the rooftop provides additional possibilities for escape by being in close proximity to each person's house, as it is always possible to run down and take shelter inside – given that the police is not yet prepared to fully relocate its field of action from the public to the private sphere. Therefore, the move to the communally owned rooftops of shared apartment buildings challenges the state's unconditional reaction to such demonstrations, entangles the police in legal limitations to its field of command, and charges its reactions with ambivalence and indecisiveness.

In addition to relocation, the spatiality of the rooftop addresses a different regime of visibility, as it remains mostly out of the sight of the eyes on the street. The temporality of night further positions the rooftop in a non-visible condition of darkness. The act of shouting therefore rejects visual means of demonstrability and display, by simultaneously mobilizing conditions of non-representability (in the face of the state's monopoly over such public media as TV and the press) and non-recognisability (in the face of apparatuses of surveillance on the street). To put it differently, the invisibility of the rooftop provides certain level of safety through sustaining conditions of anonymity. Massimo Leone describes this point succinctly:

> whereas diurnal slogans/chants of protests come from a visible source, nocturnal slogans/chants of protests come from an invisible source, protected by both the darkness of night and the position of the 'performers': thus, also those who, for various reasons, are unable to join the protests in a visible way, can do it in an invisible way (the less young, for instance). (Leone, 2012, p. 350)

All in all, one might find a tactical gesture in the move to the rooftop, that constitutes a less dangerous way of exerting a certain level of voice and agency that is wound up intricately with everyday forms of expressivity. To start with, there are certain aspects of the rooftop protests that readily correspond to the practices of everyday life. While organizational efforts are required to sustain a single street rally on a specific day in a particular location, the shouting from the rooftop recurs with a daily rhythm at a predicted time in diverse places all around the city, and is ordinarily run as one among several daily errands with no special need for pre-arrangement. Besides, compared to

street protests, it is inclusive of a larger range of social groups and generations. To give an example, while parents in a normative family seldom participate in street demonstrations and, dreading the prospect of the dangers involved in such rallies, would discourage the youngsters from getting involved, it is common that in the rooftop protests all members of a household participate collectively. This invitation for participation is directly connected to the conditions of anonymity that the invisibility of the rooftop provides, rendering the experience of shouting from the rooftop visually inconspicuous.

Since elusive practices of the everyday usually maintain an inconvenient relation with representational forms (Highmore, 2002, p. 21), professional journalism has mostly failed to capture the rooftop protests visually. An exception is Pietro Masturzo's photograph of women shouting from a rooftop in Tehran, which has been widely circulated after winning the 2009 world press photo prize (see Figure 3.2). By portraying a generally neglected spatiality, this picture makes visible those ordinary people who are usually silenced, or at best misrepresented, in the media, as a result of the over-exposure of certain others.

Figure 3.2. Women Shouting from the Rooftops. Photograph by Pietro Masturzo, from *Tehran Echoes* series, 2009.

Whereas in street protests women are for the most part either absent from the scene or only get highlighted in the media when their tighter and more colourful clothing attests to the image of a modern, secular, western styled subject, in this photo it is ordinary looking women with casual clothes that are depicted. Furthermore, this photo is particularly affective because it depicts, by fixing in a purely visual medium, such ordinary women performing the otherwise non-visual act of 'shouting'. Moreover, to portray the act of shouting, the picture makes visible those dirty, trivial and unimpressive scenes of the city that are customarily left out from consideration: bare walls and messy cooling systems next to the jumble of a construction site. Seen in this way, the photo is an attempt at depicting the leftovers of the governing orders of the visible; yet, it does so by being attentive to those residual aesthetics and activities to the extent of sustaining the invisibilities inherent in them.

Peculiar to this photograph is the vantage point of the photographer, and by implication the viewer, as the photograph seems to be taken from an elevated point, most probably from another rooftop. In this case, the photographer's move from the street to the rooftop is first of all a practical move, as a rooftop is visible only from a point higher in altitude. In addition, given the state-imposed restrictions on photographing in times of political unrest, the move from the street to the rooftop is, to an extent, forced. However, as the rooftops in question are privately owned, this is not just a matter of simple relocation on the part of the photographer. To be on the rooftop, the photographer has to gain admission by winning the trust of the inhabitants of the building, which usually works through such strategies as befriending them – in short, he has to be welcome up on the roof. One consequence of this process of relocation is that, in contrast to a street photographer, the rooftop photographer emerges as a member within the community of the specific rooftop that he enters.

The photographer is therefore transformed from a mobile specialist, ready to capture the moment while keeping his distance to the subject on the street, to one who lingers on along with a certain community, bound to the limits of the rooftop. As the protests take place at night, the immobility of the photographer is emphasized, as he is forced to use high exposure times, appropriate for photographing fixed objects. The time spent on the rooftop within the proximate and consistent community of the rooftop leads to the photographer's active and affective engagement in the scene of his photography. In a number of Marutzo's other photographs in his rooftop protests

collection, moments of intimacy within this community of the rooftop are captured (see Figure 3.3).
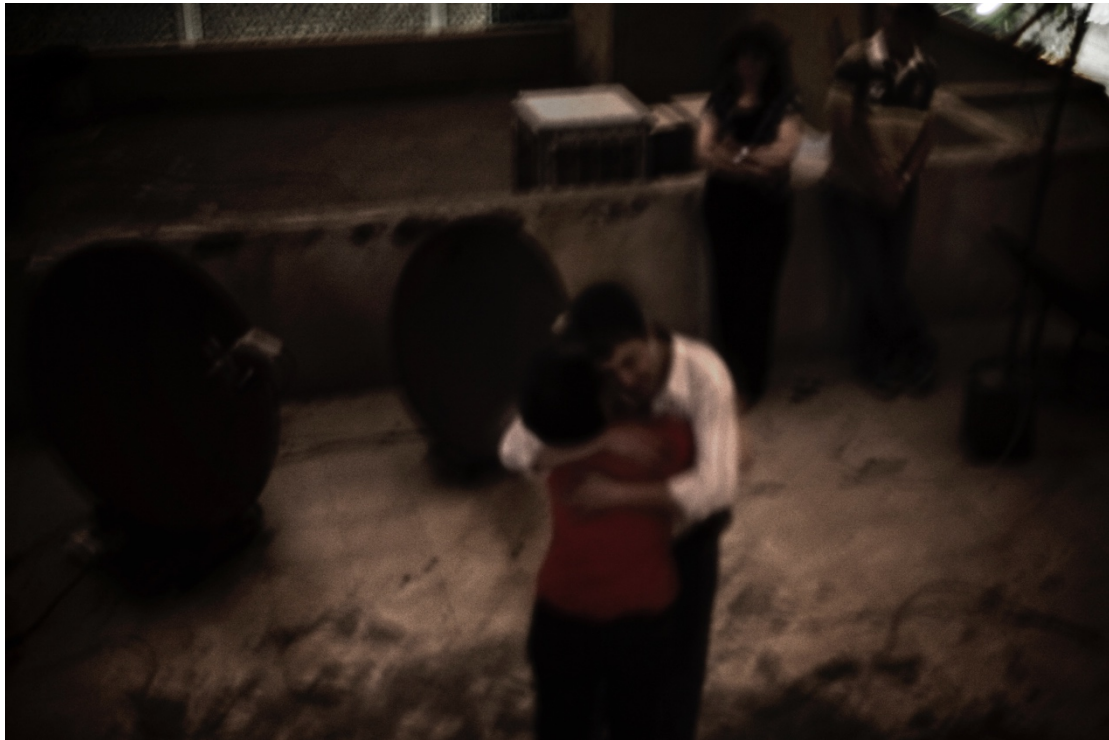
Figure 3.3. Photograph by Pietro Masturzo, from *Tehran Echoes* series, 2009.

Explaining the story behind this photograph in an interview with The Guardian (2010), Masturzo recounts how, after having had dinner as a guest at the house of a casual acquaintance, he accompanied his host and the rest of the guests to the roof in order to join the protests. Describing the atmosphere on the rooftop as 'emotional', as people hugged and cried, he says:

> The image is blurry because I had to use a very long exposure. It was night-time and I couldn't use a tripod or flash – the protesters were very nervous about being seen in the company of someone with a camera. It was also vital that their faces were not recognisable: in fact, it was difficult to convince them to let me take their picture at all, but I explained that no one would see who they were.
>
> I particularly like this picture because I loved that night on the rooftops. There was so much emotion. (The Guardian, 2010)

The blurry disposition of the image is therefore not necessarily an inevitable consequence of the darkness, but particularly intended to maintain non-visibility and anonymity. In fact, a photographic mediation can violate the privacy of the rooftop – as a privately owned space – by disclosing it to the public. Particularly opting for invisibility, the need for the visual containment of the rooftop is enhanced by substituting the professional ethics of transparency, impartiality, and objectivity with an amateurish, but no less dexterous, enthusiasm for affective engagement in the event. To be sure, as a hug between a man and a woman in Iran is incompatible with the public orders of the visible that carefully maintain the segregation of genders, the emotions contained in the photograph suggest a rather personal take suitable for private family albums. What I want to emphasize is that, as the photographer captures the practice of the rooftop protest by living it himself, he is positioned at a difficult and indeterminate point between representation and action. Masturzo's rooftop photos therefore inhabit the liminal space between the private and public, invisibility and transparency, amateurishness, and professionalism.

It is following this logic that rooftop protests have been disseminated extensively on the Internet through homemade videos uploaded on YouTube (see Figure 3.4). In such videos, acts of protest and recording merge as the people recording the event are at the same time participating in the protest by shouting on the rooftop themselves. This is strongly sensed in the videos since, given the amateur video recording equipment's ineptitude in capturing distant sounds, the clearest and loudest voice unequivocally belongs to the filmmaker – one who holds the recording device and shouts closest to the microphone. Indeed, as Leone describes, the condition of being simultaneously a "performer" and the viewer, "an actor of protest and a spectator of it (or, to be more precise, a listener to it)", is inherent to the rooftop protests, in contrast to diurnal street rallies in which "the crowd is a collective actor that stages a protest for the rest of the community and for the media" (2012, p. 351). In this "nocturnal collective musical performance" there exists no separation between the stage and the audience (Leone, 2012, p. 351). In the same way, by merging the process of mediation through recording with protesting through shouting, the rooftop videos compellingly propel the viewer/listener to an affective engagement with the performance.

Crucial to the anti-representational nature of the videos of the rooftop protests is the invisibility of the rooftop that, paradoxically, negates channelling through visual

media. Startlingly similar in form and content, in almost all of these videos the screen is almost always completely dark, making it difficult to discern anything except for a few sources of light in the distance. While the association of the temporality of the night with the spatiality of the rooftop – a sort of hidden time and space – renders the rooftop protests invisible, it is the voice uttered most powerfully from the top of the buildings which presents itself unreservedly to the city that is free from the noise of daytime, as well as to the viewers of the videos. Subsequently, what the films depict are the shouts, which are particularly affective by being juxtaposed to the darkness (emptiness) of the visual field.

Figure 3.4. Screenshots from a number of videos of rooftop protests on YouTube.

Setrag Manoukian (2010) observes such rooftop videos in his careful analysis of the new forms of affective and experiential politics in contemporary Iran. Closely

analysing a single 'video-poem' of the rooftop, he discerns a new form of politics emerging, which is premised on the interrelation between collective action – as exemplified in the video by the multiplicity of voices that shout – and individual, intimate sensations – as exemplified by the darkness of the image and the hushed voice of a woman commenting on the events. Furthermore, he detects in the particular gesture of shouting from rooftops and the exact chants of the protest a mechanism of direct referencing to – as citations and appropriations of – the same gestures and words used during the revolution of 1979. With this redeployment of the past as conveying new meanings in relation to the political landscape of the present, he believes a temporal disjuncture has taken place in Iranian everyday lives. For him, following Agamben, the darkness of the rooftop video is illustrative of this disjuncture because of the intuitive courage it carries to look into the darkness, to grasp something beyond the restraints of chronological time. Manoukian's insightful analysis of the rooftop protests in the context of the Green movement, interestingly, parallels my reading of the rooftop videos in the use of a number of key conceptual and theoretical frameworks. However, I want to stress that – unlike Manoukian's paper, but not necessarily in contradiction to it – I use the concept of the leftover as the framework for studying the rooftop protests. It is through the interrelation between the trashy aesthetics of the visual and sonic field of the videos, the casualness of their processes of production through everyday practices of shouting, and the leftover attributes of the space of the rooftop that I wish to analyse the subversive power contained in such practices.

As people do not use amplifying devices, the sound that is disseminated in the city during the nights of protest is unmediated, unfiltered, and uncontrolled. The shouting therefore maintains a bodily and performative utterance that suggests the most primitive and rudimentary way of demanding one's rights – shouting out loud. The unrefined character of the homemade videos supplements this condition of rudimentariness, downplaying the medium's intrinsic mediality. The way in which the texture of sound in these videos is shaped by the spatial and temporal attributes of the rooftop and the night is in contrast to what Emily Thompson (2002) describes as the disembodied soundscape of modern cities. In modern times, Thompson writes, with the proliferation of sound technology and amplifying devices, such as microphones and loudspeakers, a fundamental compulsion has existed to control the behaviour of sound in space, to purge out what could be regarded as the unwanted noise, and

therefore to dissociate sound from its direct spatial bearings. The overall sonic experience of the modern city does not capture the reverberations of space, he continues, but rather accounts for nonreverberant, disembodied and disjointed sounds, which have little to say about the places in which they are produced or consumed. In the modern soundscape therefore, Thompson believes, reverberations conceived as "the lingering over time of residual sound in a space", are mostly regarded as "noise, unnecessary and best eliminated" (Thompson, 2002, pp. 2-3). The rooftop protests, however, are affective precisely because they make sensible the reverberation of space, to the extent that one cannot definitively dissociate the shouts from them. One might say that, rather than clear shouts of protest in their singularity, the videos convey the whole space as protesting in reverberation. In short, the coarseness of the sound, unintelligibility of the image, and the ingenuousness of the performance in these videos maintain a close relation with the spatial attributes of the rooftops as leftover space.

In the rooftop videos, the resonances of near and far shouts create a depth of the spatial field. By foregrounding and backgrounding sounds, an auditory idea of distance that embraces the city through the soundscape substitutes for the indiscernible flatness of the visual landscape. As a consequence, a cityscape is created that, unconventionally, is more attuned to sound than vision, making it poorly suited for the apparatuses of control as the elusiveness of sound, unlike vision, evades traceability and identification. Accordingly, as sources of the shouts are not seen in the videos, there exists no synchrony between sound and image. Michel Chion (1999) explains in relation to sound in cinema that a sound can be non-synchronous without necessarily inhabiting the imaginary off-screen. He writes, "consider as example the 'offscreen' voice of someone who has just left the image but continues to be there, or a man we've never seen but whom we expect to see, because we situate him in a place contiguous with the screen, in the present tense of the action" (Chion, 1999, p. 4). Such sounds and voices, he writes, are "neither entirely inside nor clearly outside", instead they are "sounds and voices that wander the surface of the screen, awaiting a place to attach to" (Chion, 1999, p. 4). Yet, what complicates the issue in the rooftop videos is that this off-screen sound does not refer to any specific visual space, since the darkness of the image conflates a definite conception of the inside or outside of the screen.

In fact, it might be the reversal of Chion's description that is carried through in the rooftop videos: that it is a vision – an imagined vision of a person shouting – that is wandering, awaiting a sound to attach to. Therefore, the non-synchronous sound and image in the rooftop videos is conducive to the absence of direct referencing. As Chion maintains in relation to the silent cinema, "it's not so much the *absence of voices* that the talking film came to disrupt, as the spectator's freedom to imagine them in her own way (in the same way that a filmed adaptation objectifies the features of a character in the novel)" (Chion, 1999, p.9; emphasis in original). Along the same lines, by recourse to absence of vision, the videos in question provide conditions for the imagination of the spectator to attach the voice of protests to an imagined vision. It is this imagination, intensified by the resonances of sound through the night, which is most affective and disruptive of the regimes of the sensible. It is this dissociation of the embodied voices from the vision that produces an ever-present spectral sense of hovering over the landscape. As a consequence of the absence of the vision, the vigorous presence of embodied voices transpires a presence that is emphatically felt, if not exactly seen.

Such expressive audial presence, predicated upon visual abstinence, is different from Amir-Ebrahimi's conceptualization of the strategies of "absent presence" in Iranian society, which indicates that, in order to entertain a "more extensive presence in the public and often masculine spaces of the city", individual particularities and bodily non-conformist features need to be downplayed – in effect absented (2006, p. 459). Individualities obtain overall public presence, she argues, by managing the impressions that they leave in order to be "protected by the disciplinary monotony" imposed on them (2006, p. 459). What follows are ghostly ways of being present in everyday life that are not seen or felt. Although the rooftop protests nurture conditions of spectral invisibility and anonymity, they do not insinuate such an absence, since the interrelation of the spatial, temporal, audial, and performative aspects of the act of shouting from the rooftop is particularly expressive of protest as discontent, resistance, and confrontation, and is impressive since it breaks the monopoly of the state over the public sphere by compellingly challenging the orders of the sensible by audible means.

Indeed, 'impression management', as James C. Scott (1990, p. 4) argues, has always been one of the key survival skills of subordinate groups in power-laden situations. Yet, such tactical control over the impression that one leaves – which

might lead at times to rigorous limitations that would make the person seem absent on the basis of the deprivation of her individual expressivities – is a delicate undertaking in the course of the practices of everyday life in ways that are not completely devoid of moments of confrontation, defiance, and critique. To understand those personal tactics of affect control, Scott conceptualizes the notion of 'hidden transcripts', in opposition to 'public transcripts'. He writes:

> If subordinate discourse in the presence of the dominant is a public transcript, I shall use the term *hidden transcript* to characterize discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by powerholders. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript." (Scott, 1990, pp. 4-5; emphasis in original)

To the extent that the rooftop protests take place off-stage and off-screen, employing diverse strategies of non-visibility, they pertain to such a hidden transcript as a vehicle through which one could "insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct" (Scott, 1990, p. xiii). However, as the rooftop protests conflate the status of the stage and backstage, both in the real act of shouting and in the distributed videos, they encroach upon the public transcript by influencing the soundscape. In that regard, the rooftop protests do not stay put on the side of the hidden, or the absent, but provide that liminal condition in which the hidden transcript meets the public one, affecting the contours of both, and sustaining an in-between space of nameless potentiality.

Finally, since this liminality is conditioned on visual, audial, and perceptive constituents, I want to turn to Jacques Rancière's definition of an aesthetic act as "configurations of experience that create new modes of sense perception and induce novel forms of political subjectivity" (2004, p. 9). Rancière describes aesthetic regimes as the following:

> the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and

the stakes of politics as a form experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time. (Rancière, 2004, p. 13)

It is by disturbing such orders of the visible, by introducing novel forms of sense experience to the partitions of time and space, that the rooftop protests provide a specific "aesthetic-political field of possibility". The political significance and potency of the rooftop protests, thus, does not simply emanate from politically-charged words that are vehemently spoken against the power in an act of protest. Rather, it is the interruption of the distributive systems of the sensible that the rooftop protests substantiate – that which Rancière considers to be the essence of politics.

Yet, what sustains this politics is its embeddedness in the everyday. It is the everyday, ordinary, and diffused composition of the rooftop protests that endures in time and scope, amounting to sustained and active modes of presence. I see rooftop protests as incidents of "active citizenry", of the artful and tactical ways of "asserting collective will in spite of all odds, circumventing constraints, utilizing what is possible, and discovering new spaces within which to make oneself heard, seen, and felt" (Bayat, 2007, p. 202). Embodying tactics of non-visibility, rooftop protests capture a liminal space of unremittingly resilient and oppositional potentiality for radical public presence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for situating rooftops within, rather than apart from, everyday modes of presence in the city. In this way, my intention has been to de-romanticize the nostalgic vision that has frequently been posed of the Iranian rooftops in popular culture as a retreat and safe haven. Instead, I have argued for an approach to the everyday city that expands the limits of the street to encompass the rooftop, where the rooftop connects to the city through sight, sound, and practice. I have described how in recent decades the installation of satellite dishes on rooftops has brought the issue of visual connectedness of the rooftop with the street into focus. By highlighting the ambivalences of the visibility of the rooftop, I have argued for considering the Iranian rooftop as a leftover space.

Finally, I have argued for the rooftop as an everyday, leftover and non-visible political space during the rooftop protests. I have explained that, by exhausting the possibilities for non-visibility and anonymity that the leftover rooftops offer, the rooftop protesters subvert public orders of the sensible in an everyday fashion and reclaim the city's soundscape by way of their embodied presence. Consequently, I have argued that, by enacting a liminal condition of expressivity, such protests sustain active public presence, encompassing the artful ways in which, as Asef Bayat (2007) puts into words, citizens aspire to make themselves "heard, seen and felt" within their everyday domains.

I want to conclude by reiterating that what sustains this potentiality for politics is the way the rooftop protests constitute the everyday. Central to this argument is the resonance between the insignificance of the spatiality of the rooftop, as out of reach and out of sight, and the anonymity, inconspicuousness, and unmarkedness of the practices of shouting from rooftops at night. Contributing to a different regime of aesthetics, rooftop protests capture a liminal space of unremittingly resilient and oppositional potentiality for radical public presence, by being appreciative of the residual elements contained in their disposition in terms of space, aesthetics, and everyday practices.

4. SHOPPING CENTRES
The Ambivalent Scopic Regime of the Stroll

This chapter focuses on shopping centres in Iran and the experience of shopping. As proliferating urban spaces, shopping centres make up a significant part of the everyday lived experience and are indispensable to the physical structures and affective registers of Iranian cities (Kazemi, 2009). Today, huge shopping complexes multiply rapidly in urban centres around the country, attracting middle-class citizens to their big and small retail stores, supermarkets, coffee shops, fast food courts, restaurants, cinemas, art galleries, billiard rooms, enclosed amusement parks, and several other recreational spaces. Increasingly, the Iranian urban middle class frequent these shopping centres and spend their free time in them. Images, posters, and advertisements of shopping malls, both newly built and under construction, proliferate in urban space and the media. This chapter studies the lived experience of shopping centres in Iran by focusing on Saghar Daseri's series of paintings *Tehran Shopping Malls* (Daeiri, 2009)*,* the popular film *Boutique*, and the Novella *Yousefabad, Khiyaban-e Siy-o Sevvom /* 33rd Street, Yousefabad (2009).

Even though, in western cities, shopping malls are usually regarded as indicative of the urban condition of postmodernity (Friedberg, 1993, p. 109; Stevenson, 2003, p. 61), the new shopping centres and department stores that emerged in Tehran in the 1970s and that, since then, have steadily grown in numbers and size in major cities around the country – except for a decade of recession following the Islamic revolution of 1979 – symbolize modernity and modern (sometimes western) ways of living. Shahram Khosravi (2008, p. 110) believes that the allure of the new shopping centres – sometimes referred to in Farsi as *Pasazh-ha* (Passageways) – resides in their contrast to the traditional Bazar, in terms of urban geography (periphery versus centre), services (luxurious versus basic commodities), function (leisure versus commerce), temporality (weekends and evenings versus daytime and weekdays), identity (modern versus tradition) and visitors (middle class versus working class). In the twenty-first century, shopping centres in Iran are also places where globalization manifests itself in commodities and youth cultures. Today, to regularly spend time in shopping malls in Iran is a way of embracing the "concept" of "being middle-class global citizens" (Khosravi, 2008, p. 120).

CHAPTER 4

Iranian Shopping centres are also significant because of the "new forms of flânerie" (Kazemi, 2009, p. 81) that they support and give rise to, specifically within the context of an urban condition that is increasingly becoming hostile to walking – physically and psychologically – as more and more parks, plazas, and side-walks are being ruthlessly usurped by roads, cars, and buildings. In major Iranian cities, shopping centres are popular hangouts for fun-seeking youth, "vital spaces in which young boys and girls as well as retired men and women could socialize" (Bayat, 2010, p. 110). The spatial structure of shopping centres, including indoor atriums, plazas, and many corridors, are one of the very few spatial conditions in Iran that accommodate mundane pleasures of leisurely strolls, loitering, voyeurism, bodily display, and unscrupulous social contact – ways of presence in public which are typically deemed immodest and restricted under the orders of public behaviour in Iran. Young people spend time in shopping malls to reach out for and make contact with the opposite sex, as they walk and pass in front of shop windows pretending to do shopping, confusing the morality police that prohibits such contacts in public (Kazemi & Abazari, 2004, p. 108). Shopping centres therefore signify a site of cultural resistance in Iran, where dominant orders of public presence are subverted on a daily basis through the very mundane and playful wanderings in the shopping centre (Khosravi, 2008, p. 168). "In a city dominated by gender-segregated public space", writes Khosravi, for many urban youths shopping centres are the only places "where they have an opportunity to 'present themselves' to the other sex" (2008, p. 112).

This chapter therefore argues for the centrality of leisurely walks and strolls to the experience of shopping centres in Iran. Indeed, as syntheses of leisure and consumption, it is built into the structure of shopping centres to "stress on various forms of *flânerie* (loitering, aimless strolling) and leisure" (Shields, 1992, pp. 5-7). Such a way of inhabiting shopping centres holds an ambivalent position in relation to spatial, temporal, and aesthetic regimes of visibility. I will explain that the stroller in a shopping mall – the maller, as I will call him/her, or the shopping flâneur/flâneuse – sets in motion a dynamic relation between his/her mode of mobility and the scopic regime to which he/she is subject. He/she therefore maintains a concomitant position in-between seeing and not seeing, recognition and concealment, transparency and camouflage, attentiveness and distraction, sensitivity and indifference – hence, the liminal condition of nonvisible mode of presence in shopping centres. Underscoring this ambiguous position is the equivocal arrangement of the shopping mall as ordinary

yet luxury, local yet global, real yet dreamlike, festive yet boring, and dominated by the visual yet obfuscated by it. By exploring the intricacies in place in the scopic regime of the shopping mall, as enacted through the everyday practices of shopping flanerie, I argue that a tension resides between the regimes of visibility that the shopping mall nurtures and those visual orders that it is designed to be upholding. The experience of the shopping mall therefore suggests the suspension of the public orders of visibility, and accounts for a non-visible mode of presence in public.

Ambiguities of the Shopping Centre

To begin with, it is mostly the implications of the activity of *shopping,* rather than the connotations of an urban *centre,* that defy clear description. Shopping as purchase entails all the social practices, movements, and times that supplement the pure act of purchase. Shopping is not only about buying, but also about getting out of the house, getting to the shopping centre, walking through the centre, checking out the windows, choosing the goods, negotiating with the seller, buying, paying, walking back through the centre, getting distracted by other goods or people, and so on. Furthermore, people use shopping centres in multiple ways, ranging from targeted shopping to not shopping at all. One can differentiate between two basic orientations towards shopping: the intentional shopping *for* and the recreational shopping *around* (Falk & Campbell, 1997, p. 6). However, a single "shopping trip" is almost never unambiguously about one type of orientation, and it usually contains elements of both (Falk & Campbell, 1997, p. 6). Shopping in shopping centres, thus, is always about ways of being bodily in space and experiencing space (internet shopping excluded). It is therefore not reducible to any certain practice, and suggests a variety of bodily actions and interactions in space.

However diverse the implications of shopping, shopping malls are rather homogeneous in their physical structures and character, as artificially controlled indoors environments that invoke enclosed consumerist paradises (Crawford, 1992). They are aggregations of retail shops, isolated from the surrounding city and kept enclosed in a system where "everything from temperature to merchant displays are rigorously *controlled* in ways that sustain an ersatz world of fantastic images and displays" (Langman, 1992, p. 49). Contemporary shopping centres mostly follow the structures, forms and function that developed in the American shopping malls in the

second half of the twentieth century, but the nineteenth-century urban environments, such as arcades, department stores, and exhibition halls, could in many ways be seen as their forebears (Friedberg, 1993, p. 109).

In post-war urban development in the United States, shopping malls were specifically designed to artificially create "pedestrian densities" in the "car-based suburbs", serving as magnet points where the dispersed population of the urban sprawl could come together and, ideally, re-establish "face-to-face communication, community life and culture in a climate protected environment" (Dovey, 1999, pp. 125-6). By creating safe interior spaces for walking, socializing, and being in public, shopping malls therefore cater specifically for those urban conditions that are unsafe or unfriendly, and those social groups whose presence in public (their use of the public street) is additionally inhibited, or heavily regulated, by social and cultural norms. For instance, the presence and engagement of women in public is said to benefit largely from the structure of shopping malls, for whom it "fills a gap between the containment of the home and the vastness – and often hostile foreignness [sic] – of public space" (Backes, 1997, p. 10). It is exactly because of such an embracement of marginal groups and alternative uses of space that contemporary shopping malls in Asia, Middle East and Latin America are often regarded as having democratic effects (Abaza, 2001; Schmidt, 2012; Salcedo, 2003; Stillerman & Salcedo, 2012). Shopping centres are crucial for generating "cross-class interactions" in Santiago, Chile, write Stillerman and Salcedo (2012, p. 309), and they are "ideal places for mixing" in Cairo, writes Mona Abaza (2001, pp. 117-118).

Asef Bayat believes that, in contemporary Iran, shopping centres are among those new urban structures that, by absorbing different social groups, have made the young "extend their horizons" beyond the limits of their homes or neighbourhoods to the city at large, and have therefore had broader effects of "spatial levelling" (2010, pp. 110-111). Kazemi and Abazari (2004) consider the democratic effects of shopping malls on Iranian women's public presence. They believe that, while traditionally in the urban settings in Iran it was merely within the mosques, public baths, and cemeteries that women were allowed freely to inhabit the public space – albeit segregated from the male in exclusively designated female annexes – in modern times it is in the shopping centres that women's presence in public is permitted unconditionally, and even promoted and deemed essential to the performance of the space and the profitability of the enterprise.

However, shopping malls could also be seen as carefully designed to control and shape a particular type of population, to foster an ideal community of consumers by keeping out the undesired crowd. Critics also argue that, "while its signifiers are heterotopic the mall embodies the utopian desire for a purified community of social harmony, abundance and classlessness", "where anything different to the norm of the happy consumer is subtly excluded" (Dovey, 1999, p. 133). What shopping malls do, is create carefully sketched shopping experiences, influenced by phantasmagorical spectacles of dazzling, exuberant, and excessively commodified – and commodifying – imagery. To go shopping, in this sense, is to consume the experience of shopping that the shopping mall offers. Mike Featherstone writes:

> Shopping sites such as malls, department stores, theme parks and heritage centres offer various blends and combinations of selling goods and experiences. They sell goods which can be taken away, they sell experiential goods to be consumed on the spot. They additionally offer free experiences (or ones purchased with the general entrance ticket) in the form of the aestheticized and designed environment – a more general ambience, the atria, fountains, mirrored walls, escalators and more elaborate disneyfication effects. The pleasure of shopping mall therefore lies in the simultaneous consumption of commodities, imagery, and the space. Shopping centres, heritage and tourist sites are hence designed to be, and are used as, places of sociability and association; people walk around, look, talk, joke and engage in forms of display. (Featherstone, 1998, p. 917)

Seen this way, shopping malls cater to a distinct character who frequents the malls, wanders in them, and ultimately immerses in the experience of space and seeks pleasure in the spectacle of commodities, imagery, and the crowd. His/her experience therefore varies from a range of "various doings" in the mall to "just being where the action is" (Falk & Campbell, 1997, p. 5). The experience of the mall is therefore intrinsically related to the maller's mode of mobility in space, and the multiple ways of looking, recognition, and socialization that are enacted through his/her particular way of dwelling in space. Rather than the shopping centres themselves or the

commodities that are displayed for purchase, it is this figure of the maller – the mall-jammer or mall-rat – that appeals to different groups of people who go shopping.

The motivations of such a character, critics argue, in wandering in shopping malls and his/her ways of relating to and experiencing space, suggest affinities with the classic literary figure of the flâneur, who wandered in the earlier forms of modern enclosed spaces of consumption – the Parisian arcades and department stores – felt at home in them and sought voyeuristic pleasure in their spectacle and crowd (Campbell, 1997; Falk & Featherstone, 1998; Friedberg, 1993; Kazemi, 2009; Kazemi & Abazari, 2004). Just like the classic flâneur, Falk and Campbell write, "the updated version remains primarily a consumer of experiences, someone who enjoys the freedoms offered by urban space, especially the freedom of choice and the freedom to move around freely in the midst of the stimuli offered by people and things" (1997, p. 6). The figure of the flâneur symbolizes the spectatorial position of the urban consumer of spectacles, commodities, and the aura of consumption (Nixon, 1992, p. 152). Most notably, Mike Featherstone suggests to consider the late twentieth century "shopper as flâneuse" (1998, p. 916).

I am not arguing that the maller today is the exact equivalent to the nineteenth-century Parisian flâneur, neither am I suggesting to overlook the geographical and historical specificities of the original figure that was introduced by Baudelaire and theorized by Walter Benjamin. Indeed, new forms of flânerie in shopping centres suggest different interests and sensibilities, some of which might not have been available to the historic figure. For instance, Falk and Campbell, who suggest to read the (post)modern shopper as the equivalent of the flâneur/flâneuse, also imply that "in contrast to his/her nineteenth-century Baudelairean predecessor, however, the modern shopper figure tends to be more interested in things than in people" (1997, p. 6). Furthermore, in today's cities, where "hotels, office buildings, cultural centers, and museums virtually duplicate the layouts and formats of shopping mall" (Crawford, 1992, p. 29), where "the world of the shopping mall – respecting no boundaries, no longer limited even by the imperative of consumption – has become the world" (Crawford, 1992, pp. 29-30), the shopper can simply be considered as the contemporary urban "passer-by" (Bowlby, 2001, p. 51). Unlike the glamour and singularity of the figure of the flâneur, the shopper as passer-by is "quite simply *unremarkable*, almost defined – not that anyone bothers to stop and define him – by lack of significance. A marginal presence in every period or place but in none

specially, he has tended to pass by, as by nature he must, unobtrusively, without arousing much interest" (Bowlby, 2001, p. 51).

Such a stance on the ordinariness of the habits and practices of contemporary shoppers is pivotal to my analysis of shopping as constituting the everyday. However, as Bowlby is eager to assert, the flâneur does not stand as the absolute opposite to the familiar passer-by, but is often a different way of conceptualizing the same character: "the two are often one and the same: you cannot be a *flâneur* without being, from another perspective, a passer-by" (Bowlby 51-52). Unlike the uncomplicated and reductionist implications of the passer-by or the shopper as consumer, the figure of the flâneur/flâneuse is complex, rich and full of intricacies. To be precise, it is the conceptualization of the flâneur/flâneuse as an urban type, whose identity and practice brings to the fore multiple ambiguities concerning his/her spatial and visual experience, that is helpful to my analysis of the non-visible modes of presence in space. "To talk of the flâneur", writes Mike Featherstone, "raises questions about the relationship between the aesthetic experience of public spaces and the possibilities that these same spaces hold for citizenship" (1998, p. 911).

To start with, Richard Pope believes that, even though this figure has mostly been coded masculine, someone who enjoys the freedom to roam around without escort and enjoys an "assured capacity to gaze on the social and political order according to his will and desire", his manliness is overshadowed by the non-productive and wasteful way in which he partakes in the public (2010, p. 9). Pope believes that for his "foreignness" to the traditionally masculine "register of use-value and production", "the *flâneur* can only appear trivial, or feminine" (2010, p. 8). In addition, Pope believes that, since the flâneur is mostly alluded to as a literary figure and "there is no agreed on set of actually existing *flâneurs*", it does not convey a clear-cut identity position, but conveys a "shifty fellow" without a "proper content" (2010, p. 8). Moreover, the flâneur maintains a fluctuating "moral constitution", as Benjamin evokes, since, on the one hand, he is the intellectual and the artist who mingles in the crowd, in order to detect hidden meanings and features in it for the purpose of his own intellectual or artistic production; yet, on the other hand, "the flâneur completely distances himself from the type of the philosophical promenader, and takes on the features of the werewolf restlessly roaming a social wilderness" (1999, pp. 417-418).

The figure's relation to the crowd is also ambiguous from another perspective, as he purports to be gaining enjoyment from mingling in it, yet maintains an aloof, reserved and unnoticed position within that crowd – detached from it yet passionately attentive to it. He is the self-asserted "man of the public", a "sovereign spectator going about the city in order to find things which will occupy his gaze", and yet he is an "utterly empty" being who, in order to "satisfy his otherwise dissatisfied existence" and to "complete his otherwise incomplete identity", needs "to be filled" by losing himself in what he observes – similar to a lover losing himself/herself in the beloved (Tester, 1994, pp. 6-7). The flâneur therefore "develops his aesthetic sensibility in swings between involvement and detachment, between emotional immersion and decontrol and moment of careful recording and analysis of the 'random harvest' of impression" (Featherstone, 1998, p. 913).

One consequence is the equivocality of the scopic regime of flânerie, as it is not clear whether the flâneur keeps the spectatorial authority to himself (to gain pleasure from observing his objects), or whether he himself transfigures into a figure in the crowd on display, to be observed by other people, for their visual pleasure. He thus holds a liminal position between recognition and anonymity as he "feels himself viewed by all and sundry as a true suspect" and yet, at the same time, remains "utterly undiscoverable, the hidden man" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 420). Deborah Parson explains the ambiguities of the visual field of the flâneur succinctly, arguing that:

> the *flâneur* is frequently described as a personification of spectatorial authority, yet this interpretation overlooks the tensions and paradoxes inherent within the term for, as Benjamin notes, the habitat of the *flâneur* was being destroyed just as he was becoming a recognizable social type, making the *flâneur* by definition someone who is out of place. The urban characters evoked in the work of Charles Baudelaire, which, along with Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd', has become a meta-text for the discussion of *'flânerie'*, exhibit this paradox of the scopically authoritative yet wandering and placeless *flâneur*, whose habits result from a mixture of reaction against, dependency on, and anxiety in, bourgeois culture. These complexities are essential to an understanding of the concept of the *flâneur*, and are interlinked with the themes of modernity, spectacle, and gender, implying an instability in his sense of superior, masculine self-identity. (Parsons, 2000, p. 19)

It is exactly such an oblique relation between the intrinsic drift of the wandering figure of the flâneur/flâneuse, the scopic regime to which he/she is subject, and the spatial specificity in which he performs, that suggest the figure as appropriate and helpful for conceptualizing the experience of the shopping mall in this study. Such intrinsic ambiguities conflate the classificatory orders of the visible and go against the systems of control, which need clarity to be able to recognize based on visible codes. Therefore, I claim that the combination of the scopic regime that the flâneur/flâneuse responds to – the spectatorial position and the spectacle that he/she enjoys – and the specific manner of wandering and prowling by which he/she engages in public – attends the crowd and inhabits the space – attest to a non-visible mode of presence. It is to the scopic regime of shopping, and the specificities of walking inherent to it, that I turn in the following sections.

The Scopic Regimes of Shopping

"Androgynous teenaged mall-jammers, doing more looking than shopping, go to the malls to kill time." (Langman, 1992, p. 58)

"we strolled around to see and to be seen." (Khosravi, 2008, p. 9)

The pace and fashion of strolling in the mall responds to, and is constitutive of, a particular scopic regime. The intensity, fixedness, and protraction of the maller's look is inextricably entwined with the manner, pace, and temporality of his/her walking. Strolls constitute multiple ways of "looking around", where the body slows down in repose and the eyes wander round the space, over everything that is available to them (Falk, 1997, p. 180). The enigma of the flâneur/flâneuse therefore lies in the way in which he/she, on the one hand, absent-mindedly idles away (wastes time and space) and, on the other hand, meticulously observes and looks around. Important to the perceptive and affective registers of flânerie are the commitments "to stroll and look, to idle and dawdle" (Featherstone, 1998, p. 913).

However, in order to fully comprehend the scopic regime of the maller/flâneur one has to take into account that the aesthetic sensibility of his/her voyeurism – associated with lingering in time and space – partakes of a twofold pattern of

visibility. On the one hand, the flâneur is conceptualized as the figure whose movement in the crowd follows a "high sense of invisibility", where he enjoys "the masquerade of being *incognito*" (Featherstone, 1998, p. 913). On the other hand, the figure is iconic in that he/she strolls "in order to see and be seen" (Miles, 2010, p. 101). The flâneur/flâneuse not only takes pleasure in scrupulously, but stealthily, observing the spectacle – the space, commodities and the crowd – but also partakes in the constitution of the spectacle and becomes a target of (other people's) observations. In other words, engrained in the practice of flânerie are two seemingly contradictory agential positions: the looker/observer and the subject of observation(s).

This suggests, first of all, an optical exchange – communication through looks – in which the maller marks objects and people, and recognizes distinct features in the crowd, and gets mutually detected and acknowledged as possessing distinct features himself/herself. However, it also suggests a paradox of being invisible yet visible, which can only be resolved by positioning the lonely wanderer as already part of the crowd of fellow mallers. Although it is the individual maller who observes the crowd, he/she is only recognizable as part of the crowd and inseparable from it as an individual. By being looked at as an element within the crowd, lost in the spectacle, the lonely figure of the otherwise idiosyncratic flâneur/flâneuse becomes non-visible. This is particularly useful for understanding the experience of shopping centres in Iran as being conducive to the creation and dissemination of collective identities and sentiments.

Referring to the youth's tactics of public presence in Iran, Asef Bayat writes:

> identities are formed mostly through 'passive networks,' the nondeliberate and instantaneous communications among atomized individuals that are established by the tacit recognition of their commonalities and that are mediated directly through the gaze in public space, or indirectly through the mass media. As present agents in the public space, the young recognize shared identity by noticing (seeing) collective symbols inscribed, for instance, in styles (T-shirts, blue jeans, hairstyle), types of activities (attending particular concerts and music stores, and hanging around shopping malls), and places (stadiums, hiking trails, street corners). (Bayat, 2010, p. 119)

Bayat's description suggests that the cultural specificity of the regime of looks in the shopping experience is intrinsically entangled with the cultural and social meanings, associated with the physical modes of being and traversing in space. The process of recognition of collective interests is not only activated by seeing and detecting shared features, but also, and more importantly, by understanding the commonality of the corporeal way of being in space. Ways of looking and seeing, in this sense, are fundamentally connected to ways of mobility in space. It is the interdependency of looks and modes of mobility in space that convey meaning. For instance, what constitutes 'loitering' as an offence, is the violation of the "unwritten scopic code" that associates the interaction between certain type of walking – or indeed non-walking as hanging around – and a specific intensity and fixedness of the look as misdeed – that which could be described as gazing or staring (Falk, 1997, p. 180). The figure of the flâneur is therefore helpful, as it intricately binds the two issues together: the mobile experience of the flâneur mobilizes a shifting gaze that sees, recognizes, and classifies; while, at the same time, the combination of his/her mobile body and shifting gaze is already constituted within the specific cultural regime of the visible, which indicates specific ways of being 'seen' – and therefore being identified, recognized, and classified.

At first glance, the complexity of such a scopic matrix seems to be overlooked in Saghar Daeiri's series of paintings *Tehran Shopping Malls* (2009) (see Figure 4.1). In these paintings, an exclusively female space is depicted that builds on the stereotypical correlation between shopping and femininity, and suggests female bodies as commodities on display. The consumerist disposition of the shopping mall is stressed by the combination of a huge crowd, gazing at commodities on display, and the abundance of signs of 'sales' in shop windows. Furthermore, the paintings highlight the cliché image of the female exhibitionist attention-seeker, by emphasizing the eroticism of the excessive use of cosmetics (makeups, nail-polish, nose-jobs, and face-lifts) and suggestive dress codes (the combination of colourful and tight overalls and loosely worn scarfs). Yet, the corresponding scopic regime that the paintings suggest is more variegated.

Daeiri's paintings stress the interiority of space and its seclusion from the street. They depict a semi-public space, in which public orders of the visible seem to be suspended. The paintings clearly invoke this distinction, as the women's

flamboyant costumes and makeups come across as inappropriate for passers-by on the street. In contrast to the heavy exhibitionism and quest for visibility that Daeri's female shoppers show, women's presence on the streets in Iran entails dressing down in dark, faded, or sombre colours – several forms of "dressing for invisibility" (2007, pp. 156-9). By having recourse to tactics of non-visibility, women seek ease of movement on the streets without being noticed.

However, such colourfulness and breaks from the restraints of public dress codes do not strike as liberating. Rather, the paintings give the impression of entrapment in a confined and stifling space, encircled by shop windows, dead-end corridors and artificially lit interiors. In contrast to the wide and endless corridors, spacious atriums, scenic fountains, panoramic perspectives, and shiny surfaces for which the architecture of the shopping mall is known, the space depicted in these paintings is rather tight, dark, and lacks depth of the field of vision. Confined to space, the female bodies in these paintings do not conjure up the figure of the free moving flâneuse who feels a strong urge to see. Unlike the flâneur/flâneuse, whose body escapes being inscribed in space and whose look shifts freely over space, these figures are treated as objects firmly placed in space to be looked at. They suggest a rather abstract and disembodied mode of being in space, where bodies do not interact and eyes do not seem to be looking at anything in particular.

The paintings also present a homogeneous space, where not only all the bodies and gestures look similar, but everything in the space is evenly disposed and distributed too. Rachel Bowlby describes that, in many shopping malls, there exists "no clear demarcation between shop and non-shop" and corridors act as extensions to the shops, as "the controlled temperature means that the shops can do without doors at all, with customers wandering in without that implying any particular intention or interest" (Bowlby, 2001, pp. 76-77). Even shop windows do not serve as punctuations in space, and do not possess aesthetically distinct features, since in most settings they are reduced to a single glass panel and have "no independent life of being lit up and open to view when the shop is closed" (Bowlby, 2001, pp. 76-77).

Figure 4.1. *Tehran Shopping Malls*, by Saghar Daeiri. Painting.

One consequence of the blurring of the distinction between the spaces for movement (corridors), purchase (shops), and display (window shops), is the conflation between the subject positions of the stroller, the buyer and the commodity itself. Sean Nixon explains that in most contemporary retail stores "the consumer is put on display", along with the commodities that are distributed in space in a way that invites the costumers to walk in between them and spend time looking at them (by contrast to the older settings in which the spaces for customers and commodities are clearly demarcated) (1992, p. 155). By stressing the transparency of the undifferentiated space within the mall, Daeri's paintings evoke such a conflation between shoppers and commodities.

Furthermore, Daeri's paintings call attention to the objectification of female bodies, by suggesting resemblances between them and the mannequins. As real women and soulless bodies become indistinguishable, an image is presented of a body as a commodity on display, that does not have agency of her own. As a result of this conflation, the soulless and polished disposition of the mannequins casts a homogenizing mask on the real women's faces and bodies. The mask, however, serves not only to fetishize, but also to hide genuine feelings and appearances. It highlights distinctions between the self, its presentation in public, and representation on the canvas. Not only the distinction between shoppers and mannequins is difficult to assert in the paintings, but also the real and represented are conflated, as virtual copies of real bodies and mannequins are reflected through windows and mirrors. Dominating the frame in these paintings are the interchangeably real and reflected bodies, identical figures and faces that gaze into space and blur the distinction between embodiment and disembodiment, between bodies that look and eyes that hover in space.

Such disembodied gazes suggest an experience of shopping that is purely visual and is independent of other forms of bodily interactions in space. Scholars such as Backes (1997), Crawford (1992), Friedberg (1993), Morse (1990), and Paterson (2006) believe that the experience of modern shopping is in fact largely predicated upon such processes of disembodiment. Crawford argues that within the indoor shopping malls "the obligation to buy implied by the active exchange of bargaining", which is the characteristic feature of markets and more traditional environments for commerce, is superseded by "the invitation to look, turning the shopper into a passive

spectator, an isolated individual, a face in the department-store crowd, silently contemplating merchandise" (1992, pp. 17-18). Morse (1990) and Friedberg (1993) have gone so far as provocatively claiming affinities between the experiences of shopping in a mall, driving on a freeway, and watching TV – indicating the passivity of the subject in the face of the images.

Daeiri's paintings present an abundance of eyes and convey such an encouragement for "just looking" (Backes, 1997, p. 3). Looks are not cast at objects and do not meet one another in these paintings, but are diffused into space and thrown into the air. Such a one-directional regime of looks is predicated upon a "scopic regime which allows a variety of more or less prolonged looks – gazing, watching and staring – furthermore opening up the possibility of resting one's eyes" (Falk, 1997, pp. 181-2). Daeiri's frames are impregnated with such prolonged looks that endure in time and space and rest on objects (commodities, bodies, space). However, such a prolonged and relaxed manner of gazing does not indicate sensorial engagement with the surroundings. After all, Daeiri's frames are imbued with disaffected, unenthusiastic, indifferent, and dumb looks into the air, conveying an apathetic and dispossesive regime of looks, reminiscent of the zombie wanderers in the mall in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978).

Daeiri's paintings are exceptional since references to the shopping centre are rather uncommon in visual media in Iran. Within Iranian film and television production, the very few shopping mall scenes in the film *Boutique* (2003), directed by Hamid Nematollah, stand out as quite exceptional. Central to the story in *Boutique* is the relationship between Jahangir, the salesman of a boutique located in an unspecified shopping mall in Tehran, and Etti, whom Jahangir has first met as a customer in the shop and has since developed a crush on. Although the film's plot develops around concerns raised in the shopping centre, it does not portray a comprehensive picture of it. In contrast to the vibrant and colourful space depicted in Daeiri's paintings, the few shopping mall scenes in *Boutique* present rather empty and unexciting scenery. This is highlighted in two almost identical scenes (see Figure 4.2), which depict the mall before and during opening hours. Following Jahangir from the escalators to the boutique where he works, both scenes depict an almost empty mall in the background. In spite of the fact that the shops are mostly closed in the first scene, and the space is dimly lit, differences are downplayed in the two scenes. Even though

the emptiness of the space and its unexciting colours and materials stand in contrast to the lavish shopping environment depicted in Daeri's paintings, both works are similar in the way they use closed frames to convey suffocating feelings of entrapment in space.

Figure 4.2. *Boutique*. The empty mall before (left) and during (right) working hours.

Figure 4.3. *Boutique*. Male figures and mannequins.

One other pressing point in the comparison between film and paintings is that male characters and mannequins in *Boutique* replace their female counterparts in

Daeiri's shopping centre depictions (see Figure 4.3). Although female customers are not completely absent in *Boutique*, the abundant use of male close-ups, combined with the almost exclusively male mannequins, is suggestive of a masculine order. The general rules of depiction in Iranian cinema (Naficy, 2012) that restrict the sexually suggestive presentation of women's body (as in female mannequins) and face (close-ups) could be held partly accountable for this absence of femininity. As the female body is driven to invisibility, the male figure suffuses the frame to fill in that absence, leading to what could be regarded as male exhibitionism (Mohammad Reza Golzar, the actor playing Jahangir, is indeed a male icon in Iran). Nevertheless, rather than stressing male sexuality, the saturation of the field of vision with male prototypes conjures up the absented figure of the female shopper, evoking the violence contained in the processes that enforce such an absence.

Mehrangiz Kar (2006) draws parallels between the restrictions imposed on women's bodies after the revolution of 1979, and the violence exerted on the female mannequins in shops and retail stores. She describes how, after the Iranian revolution, female mannequins were faced with the same restrictions on their appearance as female bodies. To comply with such orders, female mannequins were first disposed of their hair, then of sharp and bright colours on their cheeks, lips, and eyes – so that "the sparkle of cheerfulness" left their style (2006, p. 35). A symbolic act of violence followed, Kar indicates, when the heads of mannequins were cut off and replaced by round flat surfaces, sometimes additionally covered by long scarves. The highlight of Kar's story is an incident she had been witness to in the early 1980s, when armed men had entered a retail store, pointed at the shopwindow, and ordered a few inches to be added to the skirts the mannequins were wearing. Kar writes:

> That day, I felt like these armed officials were scratching their sharp claws against the most intimate surface of my own femininity. And yet because of such attacks – which were taking place frequently in cities throughout the country – shop owners began to systematically direct all their anger and frustration at the helpless mannequins. They threw the mannequins in storage rooms or locked them up in dark, foreboding attics. This treatment of the mannequins is how I first came to realize that the feminine identity of Iranian women was being violated. (Kar, 2006, p. 30)

Faded into the background, the absented femininity brings to the fore a masculine ordering of the space, in which the occasional presence of female bodies stands out as out of place and attracts extra attention. In such a condition of heightened visibility, female flânerie seems impossible. In the only scene in *Boutique* in which Jahangir and Etti are shown to be walking together for a few seconds, on the way out of the poorly populated mall, the shopkeepers' curious observing male gazes from behind are detectable (see Figure 4.4). Being spotted and pointed at, the couple do not enjoy the privacy and anonymity that one would expect from walking in the mall. Either by absenting the feminine body, or by making it look out of place, the shopping mall in the film purports a sense of insecurity.
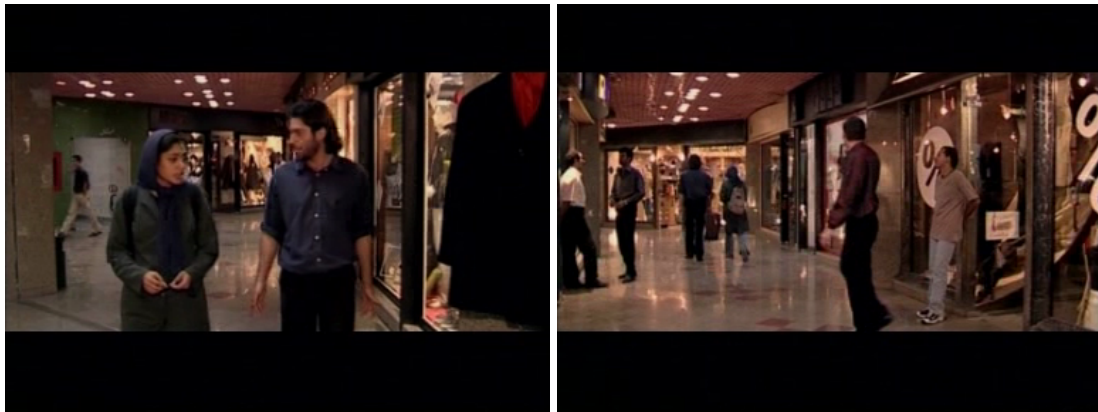
Figure 4.4. *Boutique*. Jahangir and Etti in the mall.

As if avoiding the shopping mall, Jahangir and Etti meet, walk, and enjoy each other's company in the city in several scenes in the film, rather than in the dull and empty space of the mall (see Figure 4.5). It is suggested that, by being in the middle of the crowd on busy streets, Jahangir and Etti can enjoy the anonymity and invisibility that seems unattainable in the shopping mall. The film avoids intense feelings and serious discussions taking place in the mall. The dull space of the mall is contrasted to the plethora of urban conditions – such as in a car or in the metro – in which the couple are shown as happy and joyful. Even though the viewer is made aware of a first encounter between Jahangir and Etti taking place in the shop, the plot strikingly avoids that crucial moment. The film begins on a random day following that decisive meeting, when Jahangir unexpectedly meets Etti on the street, recognizes her, and makes a reasonable excuse for asking to meet her again. Except for a few short and

awkward confrontations in the mall, throughout the film, the couple either communicate by phone or meet outside.

Figure 4.5. *Boutique*. Jahangir and Etti in the city.

What I want to emphasize is that the regime of visibility of the shopping mall, in all its real and mediated forms, is complicated and difficult to pin down definitively. Although physically segregated from the street, the shopping mall does not construct a specific scopic regime that either stands in contrast or agreement to the orders of the visible on the street; rather, it complicates and suspends those orders. Attesting to the suspension of the regimes of visibility is the way in which flânerie in the shopping mall propagates a complex field of visibility, at times to the extent of absenting the visual. Rather than reading the space from a distance, flânerie pertains to the embodied practices of walking as inhabiting, enacting and producing space – that which de Certeau identifies as foreign to the visual register. In addition, by inviting couples, friends and groups to walk together in it, the mall suggests forms of togetherness that are not necessarily conditioned on the visual communication through looks. Since walking together is not predicated on a face-to-face communication model (quite similar to driving together, which I examined in chapter 2), it suggests the dispersion of looks rather than intensity and fixity of them – in an extreme case, it even suggests the disappearance of the communication model based on the visual reciprocal interaction. In the next section, I focus on walking in the mall by exploring Sina Dadkhah's novella, *Yousefabad, Khiyaban-e siyo sevvom* / 33rd street, Yousefabad.

Going for a Walk in the Shopping Centre

"By being constantly on the move through corridors, floors, shops,

stairs, we could not be stopped and separated from the opposite sex"

(Khosravi, 2008, p. 91)

In contemporary Iran, shopping centres invite shoppers from all over the city and serve as popular destinations for the youth's loitering and flânerie. The enclosed and circular configuration of space in shopping malls is integral to the leisurely dawdle and uninterrupted ambulation that they instigate. Unlike the older and more traditional spaces of commerce – such as markets, arcades, passages, and the bazaar – which maintain a close connection with the surrounding urban contexts and let passers-by cross the space, in the indoor shopping malls people are propelled to enter the space and to walk endlessly within it, in isolation from the city and with no other place to go (Bowlby, 2001, pp. 76-77). Such a form of mobility is not only crucial to shopping centres' ambience and sense of place, but is also instrumental in boosting commerce – the more shoppers roam around in the corridors and walk past shop windows, the higher the chances are that they step inside the shops and actually purchase something. In contemporary cities, that are planned to a large extent under the influence of ideals of modernism, according to which "lingering wandering *flânerie* is discouraged as non-utilitarian", Deborah Parsons believes that shopping malls are one of the few spaces in contemporary cities in which walking is not only permitted, but also celebrated and utilised as integral to the performance of the space (2000, p. 13). By promoting walking, shopping centres also invite different forms of interaction, socialization, and communications that are rooted in, or spin-offs of, walking. In Iran, just like many other places in the Middle east (Abaza, 2001), urban youth increasingly go to shopping malls on dates, to meet up with friends or with opposite sexes, to socialize and to hang out (Bayat, 2010, p. 123).

The capacities and limitations of going for a walk and hanging out in a shopping mall in Tehran are explored in *Yousefabad, Khiyaban-e siyo sevvom* (33rd street, Yousefabad)[2]. My focus in this chapter is the first section of the book, which describes a first date between Saman and Neda, which takes place in the *Golestan* shopping centre in Tehran. The shopping centre is not just a random location, but is

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[2] All citations from *Yousefabad, Khiyaban-e siyo sevvom* are my translations.

portrayed as significant to the youth's hanging out and leisure. Saman, who considers himself a professional maller, sees Tehran's shopping centres as magnets that draw young people and couples from all over the city: "Every mall is an ocean; and streets make big rivers that discharge into the ocean" (Dadkhah, 2009, p. 25). The chapter is narrated by Saman, and starts in a cold dark winter evening, as he awaits Neda in front of the entrance to the *Golestan* shopping centre, excited about the dream-like situation that he would soon be in, walking with her in the warm and cosy *Golestan*. As Saman's mind sways back and forth in time, the reader realizes that, even though Saman sees the time he is about to spend with the girl he has been secretly in love with (but has never had the guts to ask out) as a sort of date – a precious opportunity to be out together – it was in fact Neda who had asked him over the phone to accompany her on a shopping trip: "I want to buy a knee-high boot. The one I bought last year is worn out…so let's go to *Golestan…*" (Dadkhah, 2009, p. 8). The date is disguised, so to speak, as a sort of shopping trip, for which Neda has requested Saman's assistance, as someone who knows all about shopping and Tehran's shopping centres.

Throughout their subsequent walk in the shopping centre, which constitutes the rest of the chapter, their mode of presence in space is an unclear and sometimes puzzling combination of shopping as leisurely stroll in the mall, target shopping as looking for the specified pair of boots, and hanging out together on a date. What further complicates the nature of the walk is the deadening silence that endures throughout their walk together in the shopping centre. Neda is self-absorbed and does not speak a word, and Saman cannot find a way to break the ice. Not being able to relate to his surroundings or to Neda in the present, in his mind, Saman reproduces the missing cosiness of the mall and joy of wandering in it by reviewing his past shopping experiences, the excitement he used to get from wandering in malls (alone or with other girls) and the feeling of luxury he used to get by living the "global dream" that the commodities evoked (Dadkhah, 2009, p. 17). In the present, however, this aura that the shopping mall was supposed to create for his time with Neda is completely unavailable to him. The wandering in the shopping centre that the book portrays, is therefore equivocal in generating a sense of place. As a basic mode of sensory experience of space, walking seems not to connect the subject to the environment, but amounts to various forms of inattention and emptiness.

CHAPTER 4

In their analysis of shopping environments in the UK, Degen and Rose (2012) argue that, regardless of the intentions of the designers and planners, the sensory experience of built environments is predicated on two types of mediation. Firstly, "it is mediated by bodily mobility: in particular, the walking practices specific to a particular built environment" (Degen & Rose, 2012, p. 3271). What follows is that "sensory accounts of the city thus have to take account not only of the sensing body, but of how the sensory body is moving through urban space" (Degen & Rose, 2012, p. 3283). Secondly, Degen and Rose add, "sensory experiences are intimately intertwined with perceptual memories that mediate the present moment of experience in various ways: by multiplying, judging and dulling the sensory encounter" (2012, p. 3271). In other words, the immediate bodily experience of place, enacted by physical mobility (walking), is marred by moments of "being carried away" by the invocations of another time and space, a certain "spacing out" or "partial absence of mind", that could be thought of as "distractions" in the proximate time and space (Morse, 1990, pp. 193-194). Attentive sensory engagement in space therefore incorporates several ways of inattention to the material, visible, and touchable elements of the environment one passes through. Such mental distractions are equally central to the flâneur's experience of space, who "typically lets associations and memories flow through him which are stimulated by the distractions and impressions of the moment" (Featherstone, 1998, p. 915).

Whether carried away by what lies beyond the physical environment – such as memories – or taken by the sensory stimuli present in the surroundings, the experience of the shopping mall contains multiple ways of not seeing and inattention to the surroundings. Degen et al. (2008) indicate that walking in the shopping mall entails variegated ways of looking – such as manoeuvring, thin unfocused looks or thick more engaged looks – and ways of not looking. The experience of being in the mall is not only about looking, but entails different intense moments in which the visual disappears. Degen et al. suggest that such disappearances occur mostly during interactions in the mall: "we found that when we started talking to each other – chatting, about the project or other things – we simply didn't see the mall any more." (2008, p. 1917) Degen et al. write:

> we found repeatedly that when we were with somebody else in the mall, we
> tended to focus our attention on the interaction with that person. Neither

person then seems to pay a lot of attention to other people or the surroundings. This is reflected in the go-along recordings in particular. Often, a more general conversation was interrupted by a moment of recognition or encounter in the mall, a focused looking at a shop or an item of interest. Little scraps of conversation were left and picked up again. A sudden whiff of smell or the sound of a song sparked memories and situated the view in a personal realm. (Degen, et al., 2008, p. 1912)

In Sina Dadkhah's story, however, the characters not only seem to not see the mall and not engage with it, but also seem to be unable to interact with one another. This strong inattention and impossibility of engagement clearly irritates Saman, who keeps telling himself that it is utterly bad to feel void instead of excitement while walking alongside Neda in *Golestan* – an otherwise dreamlike situation. Although Saman seems to be occupied with his thoughts himself, he blames Neda, who seems to not to be interested in anything, who walks with her hands in her pockets and her head facing forward, not even checking shop windows for the pair of boots that she had intended to buy. At some point, she even takes out her iPod and put the earbuds in her ears. After what seems like a long silence, Saman suddenly exclaims: "Look there! What an awesome boot!" (Dadkhah, 2009, p. 20) But, even then, Neda does not show any reactions or signs of interest. Exasperated by the silence that reigns over their walk-together in the shopping centre, Saman remembers that they had not only talked for quite a while on the phone the night before, but they had also laughed a lot. He thinks spontaneity is what is missing in their current situation and is needed for the smooth flow of words. Only a spontaneous interruption, he muses, can change the deadening silence and disengagement they are experiencing: "I hope the electricity runs out in Golestan and you scream out of fear" (Dadkhah, 2009, p. 29).

The moment of interruption finally comes when Neda's phone rings. This incident marks the only time that Saman intentionally and directly addresses Neda, to inform her (who has her earplugs in her ears) that her phone is ringing. Their evening together has to come to an end as Neda is summoned by her mother to go home. Rather than feeling unhappy for the lost opportunity to be with Neda, Saman feels quite relieved that the evening comes to an end. As the taxi moves away, Saman receives, in text form via SMS, the only words that Neda is finally able to utter to him

that night: "Sorry, and goodbye …" (Dadkhah, 2009, p. 34). Verbal interaction between them takes shape only in the form of a direct notification, rather than mutual communication. Saman and Neda's shopping experience ends in sadness and despair, as Neda leaves and Saman sits on the curb and reads her message.

The experience of the phantasmagoric shopping centre of Dadkhah's story is one of failure in communication. Yet, rather than walking around like zombies unaware of what they are doing, the mallers in this story are quite conscious of their situation in the shopping centre. Rather than absent-mindedly roaming the mall, Saman – and, by implication, Neda – are mentally agile throughout their otherwise non-communicative walk-together in the *Golestan* shopping centre. Saman and Neda are aware of what they want to tell to one another, but cannot put it into words. They know exactly what they should do in the mall, but fail to actualize it.

What I want to emphasize is that, in spite of the apparent failure of communication in the mall in Dadkhah's story, the experience itself is not totally futile. The eerie silence that the characters find themselves lapsing into denotes the inability and difficulty of a moment of transition. It encapsulates the liminal condition in which the normative and already accustomed modes of saying, seeing, and communicating are held at bay, waiting for a new order to be materialized. It also signifies the failure to be productive in moments of intense excitement. After all, in spite of all the disappointments, Saman is thrilled to bits to be walking alongside Neda, as his inner voice confesses: "Neda is here! Boy! Do you believe it? Next to you and shoulder to shoulder to you is she who is walking." (Dadkhah, 2009, p. 19) Their mutual silence addresses the impossibility of putting into words feelings that are profoundly complicated, intense, and hitherto unknown to the person. Neda and Saman finally get the opportunity to express their feelings towards each other at the very end of the book, for which that initial futile experience in the mall could be seen as a moment of transition. As such, I believe that the experience of the shopping mall presented in *Yousefabad, Khiyaban-e siyo sevvom / 33rd street, Yousefabad* persistently defies the reification of the existing norms, and puts relations into a state of liminality. I see value in the way in which the visual, verbal, gestural, and communicative regimes get suspended in this experience.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the conceptual, experiential, and structural bearings of the shopping mall by focusing on the practices of walking that it propagates and the scopic regime to which it is subject. I have explained that the visual regime of the shopping mall is suggestive of connections between the character of the maller – the stroller who hangs out in the shopping mall – and the figure of the flâneur/flâneuse, who takes pleasure in leisurely walks in order to see and, partly, to be seen. The maller, therefore, is not a consumer of commodities per se, but is someone who consumes the experience that the shopping mall offers, which entails a sensory experience that combines walking and looking. Functioning within the maller's field of vision, I have identified a variety of more or less prolonged looks – gazing, watching, and staring – as well as transient, slippery, unfocused, blurry, and thin looks. On that account, this chapter has in part attempted to respond to the question raised by Sean Nixon: "How are we to think of the incitement and exchange of looks – what can be thought of as a language of looks – that make up a large and often neglected part (within critical commentaries) of the experience of shopping" (1992, p. 153).

By exploring intricacies present in the scopic regime of the shopping mall, this chapter argues that a tension resides between the regimes of visibility that the shopping centre nurtures, and those public orders of the visible that it functions within and is designed to be fulfilling. For instance, unlike the implications of extravagance, shininess, and wholeness of the spectacle that suffuse the critical writing on the topic, fictional and visual works focused on the experience of shopping centres project rather drab aesthetics of everyday indistinctiveness. This chapter claims that the lived, narrated, and visualized experience of the shopping centre neither succumbs to the global tyranny of consumerism, nor does it propose an alternative local appropriation of it; rather, it undermines dominating scopic regimes of shopping, by providing conditions for the suspension – hence absence – of any definitive, normative and commodified visuality. Regarding the tightly structured orders of public presence in Iran, this chapter argues that similar conditions for the suspension of normativity are in place in the hugely popular Iranian shopping experience, rendering it ambiguous, uncertain and difficult to grasp.

In short, I have argued that the experience of the shopping centre creates a liminal condition that not only rejects fixed positionality in the orders of spatial, visual, and performative, but also defers the moment of fixation and rejects signification. Having analysed the interconnectedness of the visual, spatial, and performative in practices of shopping (walking, loitering, and flânerie), I see in the experiences of the shopping mall the suspension of orders that define what could be heard, said, seen, and looked at, and how such communication should be conducted. Fully aware of the vulnerability of this fluid condition to subjugation by alternative yet dominant (fixating) structures of the visible and new normative identity positions, I like to see in it possibilities for the endurance of the condition of suspension itself – a sort of sustained liminality, ripe with unnameable modes of being and performing to arrive.

Asef Bayat finds potential in the practices of everyday life in Iran in the way ordinary people strive for artful and tactical ways of "asserting collective will in spite of all odds, circumventing constraints, utilizing what is possible, and discovering new spaces within which to make oneself heard, seen, and felt" (Bayat, 2007, p. 202). One way of approaching the experience of the shopping mall would then be to consider the maller as the flâneur/flâneuse, who self-assertively makes himself/herself 'heard, seen and felt' by the crowd in the mall. Rather than overemphasizing the exhibitionist attitudes of the maller, in wandering in order to 'hear, see, and feel' others and to be 'heard, seen, and felt' himself/herself, I believe that the value of shopping flânerie lies in the ways that it complicates the grounds on which manners of seeing, hearing, and sensing are socially constructed and culturally meaningful. Therefore, I argue that the Iranian maller in effect fails to make himself 'heard, seen, and felt' in the mall in such a creative way, that it allows for the disarticulation of the framework in which the prevailing forms of identification based on certain normative orders are taking place. By failing to make himself/herself 'heard, seen, and felt', the Iranian maller poses critique on the ways is which one is to be heard, seen, and felt within the seemingly contradictory regimes that propel certain ways of hearing, seeing, and feeling, while rejecting others.

5. SPORTS
The Unrelenting Visibility of Wayward Bodies

The world of sport has provided the setting for the carnivalesque occupation of streets by the masses on a number of occasions in recent Iranian history. Most notably, following the decisive victories of the Iranian national football team in international tournaments, the streets of major Iranian cities were taken over in celebration by a jubilant crowd, whose genuine emotions and support for their national team proved to be far too strong to be contained in the privacy of their homes, in front of their television screens. This is significant, because to be outside in public in large numbers has been a rarity in the history of urbanity in Iran, an ambition that many social and political groups have cherished for a long time. Notwithstanding the bustle and chaos of the crowd of pedestrians and vehicles pouring in and out of streets in big cities – the swarming mobility of a hurried people on their daily business – it is rather uncommon in Iranian cities to see the formation in public of a solid mass of people with a particular identity, demeanour, message or demand. Although, in the first instance, the spontaneous and innocent outburst of ecstatic reactions to sporting events in such cases could be seen as sheer triviality – unsophisticated passionate reactions of devoted football fans – the public and social analysts share the view that, in the absence of non-governmental means of collective public expression in Iranian society, such a genuine way of collectively occupying the streets has a particular social and political significance (Chehabi, 2006; Gerhardt, 2002).

In the introduction to her study of the features of modernity in late twentieth century Iran, Fariba Adelkhah (2000) draws an analogy between the exuberance and the atmosphere of carnival experienced during the May 1997 presidential elections, and the expressen of excitement and joy that were seen on the streets of major Iranian cities a few months later, on 29 November, in celebration of the national football team's qualification to the 1998 World Cup. Adelkhah believes that both events, although dissimilar in their causes, produced quite similar effects that were without precedence in post-revolution Iran. The world was shocked with the elections, she suggests, not only because of its unexpected result (a huge victory for a reformist mandate from within the ruling Iranian political elite for the first time after the revolution of 1979), but also for the images of the passionate and cheerful supporters of the newly elected president – mostly women and youths – who had previously been

thought to be completely absent from the public scene in Iran. The overwhelming presence of the enthusiastic public on the streets and the unbridled way in which they let their emotions out is, Adelkhah believes, what connects the elections to the football celebrations. The two events were similar not only in that both presented an image of a different Iran that was dynamic, vibrant, public and full of hope, but also because they were heralding a new way of corporeal presence and emotional expression in public.

In addition, and more importantly perhaps, Adelkhah believes that such euphoric "mass reactions" – and the fun-to-watch images that were distributed of them – carried weight because of the "disturbing" and unsettling effects they left behind (2000, pp. 1-2). They were disturbing for the Iranian authorities, which were afraid of any system of "popular mobilisation" that would potentially undermine their authority and breach the governmental systems of control (Adelkhah, 2000, p. 1). They were also disturbing for the social and political commentators, who saw a disjuncture between such public events and the vision they had in their minds of a tightly regulated and grim everyday life under a totalitarian regime. They were therefore unable, or unwilling, to let their critique of the regime come to terms with the idea that "the Islamic Republic of Iran had more to it than a simple system of control and repression" (Adelkhah, 2000, p. 1). The shock of the new visibility that these events brought forward could therefore be said to have had two contradictory effects: the emphatic visibility of the previously unseen scenes of cheerful people in public generated a sense of determination, an evidence of the existence and vigour of a forgotten and silenced public; and at the same time the scale of bodily presence and the intensity of emotional release during such celebrations unsettled the commonly held notions of a grim and dull life, and showed more than anything the ambivalence and unpredictability of public life in Iran.

Such public celebrations have not faded away over the years, but grown to form a pattern of reclaiming streets. In the summer of 2013, Iranians experienced an almost identical set of events to those of 1997, discussed by Adelkhah. The celebrations on the streets after the Iranian national football team's qualification to the 2014 World Cup took place just a few days after the enthusiastic supporters of the 2013 presidential elect, the reformist Hassan Rouhani, took to the streets in large numbers. Similar in spirit to the events of 1997, the public outburst of emotions on the

streets in both 2013 cases shows unstoppable jubilance and vigour for reclaiming the public space (see Figures 5.1-2). Two years later, in 2015, similar performative patterns were once again passionately practiced in large numbers on the streets of Tehran, in celebration of the pivotal nuclear agreement reached between Iran and the world powers (see Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.1. Celebrations following qualification to the World Cup, 4 July 2013.

Figure 5.2. Cheerful supporters of president elect Hassan Rouhani, 16 June 2013. Photos credits: Atta Kenare/AFP/Getty Images (left) and Yalda Moayeri/Reuters (right)

Figure 5.3. Celebrations following nuclear agreements between Iran and the world powers, 2 April 2015 (left), and 15 July 2015 (right). Photo credits: Ebrahim Noroozi/AP Photo

The socio-political valence of such events, regardless of their specific cause, is contained precisely in the multiple social and political implications of a moment of

(mass) eruption. It is the discharge of social and political energy contained in such events that is rare, and therefore valuable for critical examination. Marcus Gerhardt (2002) suggests that the subversive energy contained in such eruptions of euphoria is reminiscent of the events during and following the Islamic revolution of 1979. The allusion to revolutionary sentiments suggests that the public eruptions related to sporting events have more to them than mere absentminded jubilance. They are occasions for the discharge and release of a whole range of complicated and interrelated emotions – aspirations, disappointments and frustrations – which transcend the common social and political means of expression and communication.

In his comprehensive study of the politics of football in Iran, Houchang Chehabi (2006) recounts a complex case in which, unlike the examples explained so far, the outbursts of emotions in reaction to sporting events were expressed in anger and bitterness, and had more complicated political implications:

> In the autumn of 2001 the Iranian national team fared badly in the qualifying matches for the 2002 World Cup. Again people poured into the streets, this time to vent their frustrations. Disappointment over the team's loss mingled with disappointment over the stalled reform in Iran, and, fuelled by Persian-language radio broadcasts from Los Angeles, rumors circulated that the government had deliberately instructed the national team to lose so as to prevent a repetition of the celebrations of 1998. (Chehabi, 2006, p. 251)

What I am suggesting is that such eruptions of public sentiment create genuine occasions for uninhibited public presence and the realization of a diverse range of embodied performativities in public. What is most disturbing for the apparatuses of control in these events is the displacement or extension of the bounded space of sports – the stadium – and the individualized space of sports spectatorship through television – private space of the home – to the open of the street. The dislocated bodies carry with them the emotions and behavioural patterns of their allocated settings and form a corporeal collective whose assertive performativities disrupt the public orders of the visible.

My analysis in this chapter is therefore concerned with the ways in which sports provide possibilities for alternative ways of bodily presence that are not

bounded to the sporting fields, but expand to diverse geographies of everyday life. By the end of this chapter I wish to be able to substantiate the claim that the significance of sports to Iranian society lies not only in the possibilities that it offers for public participation and engagement in the formation of a collective discourse, but also in the various ways in which it produces conditions for social and cultural critique, by instigating what I call moments of wayward visibility – instances in which deviant appearances and ways of conduct become visible and encroach upon the public orders of visibility, although momentarily and inadvertently. Such moments of waywardness occur within a wider language of hypervisibility that media sports are globally concerned with – a distinct aesthetics whose objective is to make visible every detail of sporting practice and magnify its visual effects. Key to the creation of this language of hypervisibility is the interdependence of actual sport and its mediated forms in modern society – the cultural complex of media sport. I will argue that, similar in their effects to the event-like celebrations discussed above, the politics of everyday presence and visibility that the structures of media sport instantiate generate in everyday lives a plethora of moments of outburst of emotions and embodied performativities, with disturbing and subversive effects.

To make my point clear concerning (media) sport's paradoxical effects of hypervisibility, I want to briefly recount a different case of public gathering that, even though it occurred on a much smaller scale and was generally experienced in calm rather than with loud emotional release, created comparable effects of eruption in the domain of public visibility. On 25 August 2015, groups of people gathered in specific spots in Tehran to commemorate and mourn the death of the Iranian and world champion bodybuilder Baitollah Abbaspour. His death from a rare disease at the age of 36, not long after his championship on the world stage, was especially touching since the image of his perfect body had not yet disappeared from the collective memory of bodybuilding fans in Iran. It is not the idea of mass occupation of space that is my point here, as neither the scale of occupation nor the intensity of emotions expressed in this case are comparable with the celebrations that I have mentioned above. However, what interests me is the way in which such an occasion provided a rare but sound condition for the aesthetized image of Abbaspour's naked body, perfectly posed and displayed with the Iranian flag over his shoulders, to find its way into the public space, hoisted on the shoulders of the mourning fans (see Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4. Baitollah Abbaspour's picture raised over the shoulders of his mournful fans.

To begin with, this image of Abbaspour on the world championship stage far exceeds the limits of nudity, bodily exhibitionism and sexual appeal that public orders of the visible in Iran permit, and therefore attracts extra attention and gains extra visibility. The effects of hypervisibility are even more emphasized in this scene through the narrative of the scene – the event of paying respect to the deceased, whose image asks to be looked at and stands for the way he is to be remembered – and its mise en scéne – the contrast between Abbaspour's naked body held above the shoulders to be seen and the darkly dressed mass of supporters on the ground. The unabashed way in which such an image is displayed in public, and even has risen to stardom, poses a certain type of critique and carries a subversive undertone. In this chapter I wish to discuss and analyse the nature of such a subversive potential, contained in sport's trigerring of moments of hypervisibility. Such a wayward visibility would have not entered the realm of the public in Iran – would have not been seen, experienced, and lived with – had it not been related to sport, had it not been constituted within the discourse of sport.

The question remains, then, that if such an image is incompatible with the public orders of the visible in Iran – as my claim for the creation of a paradoxical moment of wayward visibility in the public suggests – how is it that it does fit within the image politics of sports? Is it not true that, after all, this image is an evidence of the fact that Abbaspour did pose his barely clad body in sporting events, and that sports cannot be dissociated from bodily display altogether? Do the disturbing effects of this image then emanate from the conditions of its production or consumption? Are

there certain exclusive geographies of sport that allow and naturalize the naked body in action? Or, are there any specific geographies of spectatorship, for the images of bodies in action to be looked at? In that case, how is the relation between doing sport and being a spectator sustained in the expanded field of sports in the media-saturated everyday lives today? It seems to me that there exists a disparity and contradiction between the orders of the visible in sports and in the public, and between the geographies of doing sport and watching it.

Responding to these questions, my argument is that in sports bodies and subjects find settings for asserting their presence in recalcitrant ways. Instances of critique are caused by the enhanced visibility of bodies doing and watching sports, provided with the magnifying lens of televised sports. In the first instance, such a wayward visibility stands in contrast to the general conditions of non-visibility that I have argued for in previous chapters: the transient, embodied and mobile assemblage of the car-driver; the dark, silent and leftover aesthetics of the rooftop practices; and the unrepresentable, uncertain and contradictory scopic regime of the stroller in the shopping mall. However, my argument is that the conditions of hypervisibility are only realizable because of the normalizing effects of the discourse of sport, which constructs a specific visual language that normalizes aberrancies – the (partial) nakedness of bodies for instance – so that the viewer would not normally notice and see the disparities of the field of the visible, so long as they reside in the field of (media) sports. It is in this way that the hypervisibility of media sports is embedded in a language of non-visibility. However, the implications of non-visibility that the familiarization of sporting bodies and the reduction of the shocking effects of their disclosure instigate are highly unstable, since the geographical and visual constituents of sport's normalization processes are highly ambiguous and contested in modern societies. Moments of eruption, disturbance, and critique take place exactly in these liminal moments of uncertainty.

Sports and Everyday Life in Iran: A Short History

In modern societies, David Rowe observes, "sport has insinuated itself into the wrap and weft of everyday life" (2004, p. 2). Even though modern sport is largely developed as a set of strict rules of the game that only apply as long as it is played in demarcated sports fields (centres, courts, stadiums, etc.), Rowe (2004) explains that,

in modern societies, the threshold separating such a closed universe and the society at large is broken in multiple ways. "Once out over the threshold, public space is suffused with signs of sport – much to the chagrin of dedicated sports haters and to the mild irritation of the merely indifferent" (Rowe, 2004, p. 2). Not only is the everyday suffused with 'data' about sports, but also "the sights, sounds and 'feel' of sport are everywhere – shrilly piping out of television and radios, absorbing acres of newsprint, and decorating bodies" (Rowe, 2004, p. 4). As a result of this ubiquity, sport in modern societies is increasingly indistinguishable from 'sports media' or 'sports culture', building an interrelated web of "the media sports cultural complex" (Rowe, 2004, p. 4).

What increases the cultural effects of sports in society is the expanded reach of the media that pertain to its production and dissemination. In modern societies, sport extends over a variety of specialized and non-specialized media – such as newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, and internet – and takes up different formats. For example, the live broadcasting of a particular type of sporting event (such as a football league) constitutes only a portion of the whole package of weekly sports programmes on any media (radio, television, and the Internet). Sporting event coverage (of a football match, for example) extends far beyond the actual time of the match on television and occupies such extra, but by no means secondary, sections as pre-event introductions and interviews, mid-game analysis, and post-game highlights and extras (Goldsmith, 2009). Even more extensive than live coverage are diverse ranges of entertaining programmes that feed on sport in indirect ways, such as sports news, journals, roundtables, and quiz shows.

Like in many societies around the world, the media sports cultural complex is hugely influential in Iranian society. Sports programmes occupy a major section of the airtime of the Iranian national television. In 1993, Iranian national television introduced a third Channel, *Shabakeh Se* (Channel 3), that was dedicated completely to sports. Since then, sport has increasingly taken up TV programming in various forms, on *Shabake Se* and beyond. The number of print media on sports is also strikingly large in Iran. Gerhardt (2002) observes that, when the first reformist government after the revolution was formed in the late 1990s, sport took advantage of the slight liberalization of the press, as the number of publications devoted to sports increased dramatically, far bigger in proportion than any other type of publication. He

believes that such large numbers of publications and programmes devoted to sports on audio-visual media, with their vast network of supporting practices and cultural associations, are per se "signs of a strengthening civil society", "a precursor to a more mature and outspoken media (and society)" (Gerhardt, 2002, p. 45). From a slightly different point of analysis, Adelkhah believes that the overwhelming craze for sport in Iranian media accounts for "the creation of a real public space, if not a civil society", and therefore plays a constitutive role in Iranian society's move to modernity (2000, p. 1).

Sport in Iran has indeed created a discourse within which multiple social, cultural and political issues are brought into discussion and disputed in public. The weekly, live, late-night TV football programme *Navad* (Ninety), probably the most popular show in the history of Iranian national television, is a good example: heated debates take place where not only such details of a football match as the play strategies of the teams, the performance of the players, the decisions of the referee, and the pre- and post-match facts and figures are closely examined, but also many different sorts of social, cultural and political associations that accompany football are brought to light and deliberated on. The discussions and interviews on *Navad* most often acquire a political edge, dissimilar in scope and intensity to any other programme on the Iranian national television. The quest for understanding football transforms into an interrogation of particular top-down appointments, managerial decisions, financial interactions and all sorts of power relations that suffuse the world of football. Far from a cool moment of being on air, to be interviewed live on *Navad* (whether in the studio or via phone) is a challenging moment for the interviewees, who range from top politicians and managers who get asked to respond to accusations of wrong-doings and mismanagement – a very rare form of exchange of information on Iranian TV, because of its high risk of exposure – to players who are asked to justify tiny bits of their behaviours on and off the field.

In addition, and particularly significant for a society that is usually considered to be lacking effective and strong democratic means and institutions for participation in civil society, in *Navad,* the public are frequently asked to join in the discussions by voicing their opinions via text message. The immediate way in which the results of people's votes are exposed live on TV, with occasionally controversial outcomes in defiance of the visions and decisions of authorities, accounts for probably the most

direct and effective way of public expression in Iranian society. Furthermore, under the cover of football, social and cultural taboos are frequently checked and enquired into in the discussion forum of *Navad*. For instance, serious public discussions over issues of identity, ethnicity, and race were brought up in *Navad,* in response to the very real and tangible issues raised by the decision of the Iranian national team's Portuguese manager, Carlos Queiroz, to invite to the national football squad (and later use in key positions in the team) a number of young talented players of double nationality, raised outside Iran by Iranian parent(s), who looked different, spoke Farsi poorly, and did not live (and some of them had never lived) in Iran. The huge popularity of Queiroz and those players stood in contrast to the unspoken racism, conservatism and nationalism of many sports fans and commentators. The tangible effects of such an internal paradox to many sports fans in Iran had the consequence of stirring heated discussions over the implications of racism in Iranian society – in ways that the decades-long racism against Afghan immigrants had not, for instance.

However, this firmly established and in some ways unique position of sports media in Iran has had a bumpy and vulnerable history of development. Chehabi (2006) explains that in the first decade after the revolution of 1979, at the time when the new regime was either scornful of spectator sports (as a form of depoliticization of the masses) or at best indifferent to it (because of it's worldly and non-spiritual bearings), what led to the expansion of sports was a huge public demand that showed itself in urban space, as people increasingly transformed street corners and alleys into tiny replicas of the football field and played *Gol Kuchik* – literally translating as 'little goal' – on the streets. In the grim decade of the 1980s, writes Chehabi, when city life was to a large extent devoid of entertainment due to the harsh realities of life after the revolution and during times of war with Iraq, the spread of street football was a sign that "young men wanted to play", and that sport was "one of the few remaining leisure activities for men" (2006, pp. 245-246).

In Chehabi's account, there was a hidden message in such a craze and thirst for sports that said "playing football was more fun than listening to preachers" (2006, pp. 245-246). He writes, "the popularity of these games in neighbourhoods inhabited by people who formed the social bases of the new regime worried the new men in power, who would have preferred to see youngsters in the mosques rather than on the playing fields" (2006, pp. 245-246). However, for fear of antagonizing this new

revolutionary populace, the regime finally gave in to the public demand for sports (as entertainment) and decided to not only expand and promote sports, but also take control over it, patronage it and finally generate revenues from it. Chehabi (2006) believes that from the first years after the revolution until today, sport in Iran has contained this political edge that concerns the authorities' fear of the excitement generated by sport, and their subsequent attempt to hold the excitement.

Such a history of the spread of *Gol Kuchik* on the streets in Iranian cities, and the regime's endorsement of it, points to sport's potential for laying claims over the public space and offering a powerful leverage against authorities. In the recent period that sport has suffused the physical and virtual public space in Iran, issues of women's claim on public presence has been enacted collectively through sport. Asef Bayt believes that, in addition to public realms such as work, education and arts, sport has been one of the realms of "mundane daily practices in public domains" through which women have been able to assert their presence in Iranian society against all odds, "imposing themselves as public players" and therefore shifting, even if a little, the gender prejudices imposed on them (2010, p. 97). More specifically, the issue of women's access to sports events and venues has become one such occasion of the creation of public demands and agendas for social transformation. The world of sports in Iran remains strictly gender segregated, with opposite sexes being banned from attending the sporting events of one another. Although the creation of gendered spaces could be said to have had encouraging effects for women to do sports in Iran, the issue of female live spectatorship of male sporting events remains unresolved. Even though in globally standardized structures of professional sport, men and women almost never compete with or against one another (except for rare categories such as mixed double tennis), such a gender divide does not apply to spectators in most parts of the world.

In Iran, however, women are barred from entering stadiums to watch football matches, on the basis of the improperness of the vulgar feel of the stadium for women spectators. As a result, sporting venues such as football stadiums have turned into exclusively male spaces. This has become a matter of public attention and social mobilization, generating several civil campaigns to grant rights of live spectatorship for female fans, especially to be able to support their country in international competitions (Hoodfar & Sadeghi, 2009, pp. 218-210). It is specially in light of such

matters of gender segregation and the inaccessibility of the stadium to women spectators, that the celebrations after the historic victories of the Iranian national team are significant, since in those occasions women, barred from entering the actual stadium, were able to assert their bodily presence in the subsequent celebrations on the streets, shoulder to shoulder with the male supporters.

The issue of women's access to do and watch sports in Iran highlights the complex intertwinement of the gender and geography of sport with matters of visibility. Such a complex relation is symbolized in the placards that female fans hold in protest outside the doors to Azadi stadium in Tehran, which cry out "We refuse to remain off-side" (Fozooni, 2008). Off-side here is simultaneously indicative of spatial and visual boundaries – being off-limits and out of sight. The interrelatedness of the spatial and the visible, the border and the frame, the conditions of being in place and seeing the place – and their ambiguities – are the focus of the next section.

Geographies and Visualities of Sport

In her *Zourkhaneh/Bodyless* (2004) series of photographs, the female photographer Mehraneh Atashi depicts the exclusively masculine space of the traditional sport of Zourkhaneh, by self-consciously highlighting the spatial and visual boundaries that are crossed by her body's presence and her act of looking (see Figure 5.5). Zourkhaneh, literally translating as 'the house of strength', could be said to be the traditional equivalent of the modern day gym, with the distinction that the physical workout and bodily perfection in Zourkhaneh are in place to uphold, in a ritualistic choreography of moves, the spiritual development of masculine ideals of virility and chivalry. Zourkhaneh therefore exudes a sense of sacredness, a sanctuary whose spiritual integrity is to be kept safe from degrading intrusions from the outside world. The presence of a female photographer in this exclusively male space is therefore a crossing of borders in itself. Rather than striving to portray a real, first-hand, feminine view of the inside of Zourkhaneh, Atashi decides to make the incongruity and shock of the sheer presence of her own photographing body the focus of her project.

Figure 5.5. *Zourkhaneh/Bodyless*, Mehraneh Atashi, 2004.

In the introduction to her project presented in the publication *Iranian Photography Now*, Atashi explains her artistic strategy succinctly:

The first day I entered a *Zourkhaneh*, I suddenly found myself in front of some big, strong, and religious men. It was hard to gain their trust and consent to pose half-naked in front of me. I made sure to be present in each photo as a subject among the heroes, even though tradition forbids 'the breath of women' in the *zourkhaneh*. I played with mirrors in order to transform the gaze of my lens and create a specially designed choreography. (Issa, 2008, p. 30)

In this way, Atashi's pictures highlight a number of oppositions between the bodies of the sportsmen and her own in terms of gender (male and female), body coverage (half-naked and fully covered), dress code (colourful and dark), movement (in action and static), type of activity (doing sport and observing/photographing), and the direction of gaze (being looked at and looking). The virile integrity of space is broken not only because of the intrusion of a female body, but also since her position as an observer stands in contrast to the spirit of pure sports for the development of body and mind, rather than a spectacle to be nonchalantly looked at, that Zourkhaneh stands for.

In other words, by including the spectator in the scene, Atashi's photographs take a stance that is more in tandem with the development of modern sports. Indeed, modern sport has developed on the basis of an economy of spectatorship. Sport today is not only a physical exercise, a training to do, but also an activity to follow (check the news) and a spectacle to watch (on TV or in the stadium). Spectators are also integral to the pleasures of media sports, as the coverage of a football match on television, for instance, would not have the same effect without the presence of the crowd in the stadium, without hearing the hum of the crowd and seeing the occasional close-ups of the faces of the spectators on television. By insinuating her own dislocated position of female spectatorship, Atashi positions the spectator as an element of the scene of sport to be looked at.

In this set of photographs, Atashi highlights the specificities of the medium itself by stressing the composition of the frame, the presence of the camera, and the persona of the photographer caught in the act of taking photographs. Coalesced in the female figure depicted in these photographs is the passive spectator, whose gaze is frozen onto the scene she observes, and the active photographer, whose mobile gaze produces material to be looked at. Similar to the mirrors that reflect the image of the photographer, the camera reflects the gaze of the general public watching the photographs. The feel of spectatorship is insinuated into the image by the connections that the viewer makes between his own act of observing the image, the artist in the scene and the lens of her camera. As we see through the lens of the camera the photographer seeing the scene, we feel ourselves being part of the scene.

In fact, what is missing in these photographs is Atashi's spectator self. The figure of the photographer and the disembodied gaze of her camera supplant the passionate eyes of a spectator. Rather than the vigour and avidity of the sports

spectator, the disembodied public eye of the camera stresses the problems facing the depiction of the spectators' bodies and their emotional release. Unlike the bodies of sportsmen that have become visible in their bold gestures, the spectator gains a ghostly position as her presence is felt, but the whole range of her bodily capabilities are downplayed and substituted by the solemn performance of a photographer. And yet, it cannot with certainty be said that the subject matter of these images, the object on which the look of the audience rests and seeks to connect emotionally, is the sportsmen rather than the spectator/photographer. It is a correct representation of womanhood in the proximity of such a conspicuous masculinity that is contested in these images.

To indicate the complexity of the issue of the representation of the female body in the expanded field of sport in Iran, Gertrud Pfister (2010) recounts the controversy that was raised in Iranian media over the opening ceremony of the 2008 Olympic Games in China, during which the Iranian flag was carried by a female member of the Iranian rowing team, Homa Hosseini. By granting a woman athlete the highly symbolic position of representing the nation during the opening march, the Iranian Olympics committee had aspired to show to the world, against all doubts and criticisms from international organizations, its appreciation of the special significance of women in sports in Iran. In spite of its politically correct message, the Iranian Olympic committee's decision sparked contradictory reactions within Iran. Pfister writes that, while many interpreted Hosseini's role "as a symbol of Muslim womanhood and proof of the high social status of women in Iran", strict Islamists believed that the sheer gesture of the march of a woman in front of the global audience, however correct her dress and attire, was in opposition to religious values of modesty that the nation appreciated and sought to represent (2010, p. 2938).

To understand the geographies and visualities of women's sport in Iran, one should take into account multiple ways of relating to sport. Sports federations in Iran have been successful in recent decades in promoting women's sports, and Iranian women sports teams have triumphed in international women's events. In the 2014 Inchoen Asian Games, for instance, 16 out of 57 of the total medals acquired by Iranians were in women's sports, which show a high percentage for an Islamic country. To make space for the participation of Muslim women in international sports, Iranian sports authorities set up the ambitious Women's Islamic Games, an

exclusively female international competition, held in Tehran in 1993, 1997, 2001, and 2005. Discontinued today, these games received contradictory reactions, writes Pfister, as some expressed their appreciation of the possibility that the games provided for Iranian women to be able to compete with women of other nations in a safe environment; while others, among them many top athletes, "pointed out that events of this kind would confirm and legitimize the exclusion of women from the 'real' world of sports", and stopped participating in them (2010, p. 2950).

The most compelling point of criticism of the event, however, concerned its media coverage. Pfister explains that, as no male spectators were allowed to the event's venue and no media coverage was broadcast of the event, ostensibly to protect the feel of physical and visual safety for female participants, a further problem for many women athletes competing in Games was precisely "the lack of an audience and media coverage" (2010, p. 2950) – i.e. the aura of sport. What is being disavowed in such circumstances is the full range of spectatorship. It is not the right to do sports that is being limited here, but the right to watch sports and to be watched doing sport. The Iranian sports media cultural complex has somehow resolved the problem of male spectatorship of women's sports by prohibiting physical or visual contact between the two, promoting exclusively female sporting spaces with no media coverage. However, women's spectatorship of men's sports is an unresolved issue and a site of contestation over the right to space and visibility.

Chehabi (2006) gives an account of the challenges that the issue of female spectatorship imposed on the development of sports in Iran after the revolution. He explains that, although in late 1980s the Iranian government began to promote sport as a legitimate form of entertainment, the expansion of television brought forward new concerns over the appropriateness and suitability of televised sport programmes for the general public. He writes: "Iranian television was hard pressed to produce programmes that people actually liked, and sporting events seemed innocuous enough, except that neither football players nor wrestlers cover their legs between the navel and the knee." (Chehabi, 2006, p. 247) A conflict was provoked between the conservatives and more moderate fractions regarding national television's coverage of men's sports, which bore similarities to the heated debate that was raised at the time over the suitability for Iranian viewers of non-Iranian films and TV programmes in which women were not dressed properly according to Islamic conventions. This

conflict was only solved by a fatwa in 1987 issued by Ayatollah Khomeini, the supreme leader, which authorized television "not only to broadcast films featuring not totally covered women, but also sports events, provided viewers watched without lust" (Chehabi, 2006, p. 247).

Indeed, there exists an element of erotic desire in the "kaleidoscopic pleasures" of televised sports, suggests Margaret Morse, which is concerned with the "eroticization of the male body" (1983, p. 58). "If athletic bodies are the commodity of sport", writes Morse, "the *look* at the image of male bodies in motion is what television has to offer the viewer" (1983, p. 59). In fact, televised sports is one of the very few global cultural domains in which male bodies are customarily presented as "*object* of scopophilia" for male and female audience to take erotic pleasure in gazing at them (Morse, 1983, p. 45). It is as if the discourse of sports "can license such a gaze and render it harmless", by conflating issues of statistics, performance, display, and play (Morse, 1983, p. 59). However, such innocuousness does not completely remove the emasculating effects of an objectifying gaze posed upon the male body. It is the power contained in the position to own the gaze, Morse believes, that explains "the strong cultural inhibition against the look at the male body" (1983, p. 59). In public discourse in Iran, the debilitating effects of the uninhibited gaze on the male body are overwritten by the harmful and contaminating effects that such a gaze is thought to have on the beholder of the gaze – the female spectator.

Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa certainly served to validate the televised sports, but did not fully resolve the difficulty of female spectatorship. In fact, it endorsed a notion of dis-eroticized sports spectatorship, which is untenable as suggested by Morse. As a result, confusion and uncertainty remains in Iran over the intensity of lustfulness being evoked by the images of sport. Today popular sports such as football and volleyball are not generally considered improper for female spectators to watch on TV, even if the bare legs of sportsmen would be considered improper, and even punishable, in other public contexts, such as the street. However, the issue is more complicated in the case of equally popular sports, such as swimming and wrestling, in which the level of nudity, the shape of the sportswear, and the choreography and performance of bodies in motion are far too clearly suggestive of erotic overtones to be disregarded. Even though wrestling is key to the identity of sport in Iran – it is considered 'the national sport' where Iranian wrestlers have historically triumphed on

international podiums – and carries an aura of virtuosity that is quite exemplary in the age of professional sport – wrestling champions have historically been looked up to as heroes in Iran – conservative voices occasionally express their discontent over its broadcasting on television, stating that the content of such programmes are not appropriate for women spectators. However, to find a solution for the problem, such discontent voices usually cannot decree anything other than putting the burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the women audience at home, asking them not to renounce their support and appreciation of wrestling altogether, but to turn their eyes away from the television screen and avoid watching wrestling competitions – in short, to see the competition without looking at improperly dressed male bodies (Entekhab, 2011).

Regarding issues of nudity, an interesting case is the state of the sport of bodybuilding in Iran. The level of nudity and bodily exhibitionism in bodybuilding is clearly in violation of the public orders of the visible and Islamic virtues of modesty, as a result of which the activities of the Iranian federation of bodybuilding remain mostly hidden (some would be shocked to know that such a federation actually exists in Iran). The Iranian federation of bodybuilding has made a choice not to televise its events on national television, but remains undecided about the circulation of images of its public events in other media.

The self-contradictory visual strategies of the federation of bodybuilding could be seen in its photographic report, which is published on the federations' official website, of the Iranian national league championships, held on 18 February 2015 in Rasht (see Figure 5.6). Images of the event are added to the reportage in order to make it visually available for the public to see; however, to comply with the public orders of the visible, the federation has had no other choice than censoring its own images. However, one might argue that, not much is concealed after all in these images, since the clumsily added black squares on the groins and nipples of the athletes do not exactly reduce the effects of their revealing posture. In fact, such an ostensible modification is only self-revealing in that it draws extra attention to the excluded body parts (what is wrong with seeing nipples, one might ask), and keeps reminding the viewers of the profound effects the censored body parts might have had, or in fact should have had, on their psyche.

Figure 5.6. Images of the 2015 Iranian bodybuilding championships, presented on the website of the Iranian Bodybuilding Federation. Source: http://www.iranbbf.ir/dpic.asp?id=373

Seen in these images is also an audience, seated in close proximity to the podium, which constitutes a different kind of public that not only has unmediated access to the scene, but also enjoys the possibility of creating and circulating its own visual material through personal digital cameras. The pictures taken by the mobile phones of present public (seen in Figure 5.6) would not only lack the black squares, but would also be distributed among a diverse set of intimate publics, quite distinct in its scale and structure from the public to which Figure 5.6 speaks. It is neither a general inhibition of visuality in sports nor the specific non-visibility of the bodybuilders' bodies that I am trying to suggest, but rather that sport in Iran remains a highly visual domain, in which its conditions of visibility vary considerably according to a particular category of sport, and the entwined relationship between the media and geographies of its practice and spectatorship. Although sporting events are held in demarcated spaces and follow the orders of the visible particular to their own discursive construct, the geographies and visualities of spectatorship are quite diverse and complicated. Most importantly, it is the position, ethos and identity of the real or imagined female spectator that accounts for the challenges that this multiplicity of positions is capable of posing in the discourse of sports in Iran.

It could be said that the politics of female spectatorship in Iranian sport is ruled by an idea of distanciation. Women spectators are not allowed the geographical proximity of the spectators' seats in stadiums (during male sporting events) and are presented a second- or third-hand view of the game through the intermediary of the narrative and visual media. They are also asked to further distance themselves from the images and videos of sports they watch at home, in order not to get deeply excited by them. Such measures of distanciation are reminiscent of a particular scene in

Offside (2006), Jafar Panahi's real-time story of a group of cross-dressed girls' failed attempt at entering the Azadi stadium in Tehran to watch the decisive play-off between Iran and the Republic of Ireland, in which the girls are kept in custody in a small enclosure outside of the walls of the stadium. Having been barred access to the event both spatially and visually, the girls are nevertheless able to follow the match through the passionate report one of the guards makes for them from the adjacent barred gate to the stadium (see Figure 5.7). A football fanatic himself, the shouts of joy or despair and the body language that accompany the guard's idiosyncratic blend of commentary and analysis communicates the event to the girls while keeping it distant. Despite the constant warnings of the head officer to the girls to keep their posture and not to show immodest gestures of emotional release, the girls in effect find ways to follow the match passionately, join in its excitement, and feel its pressure without seeing it.
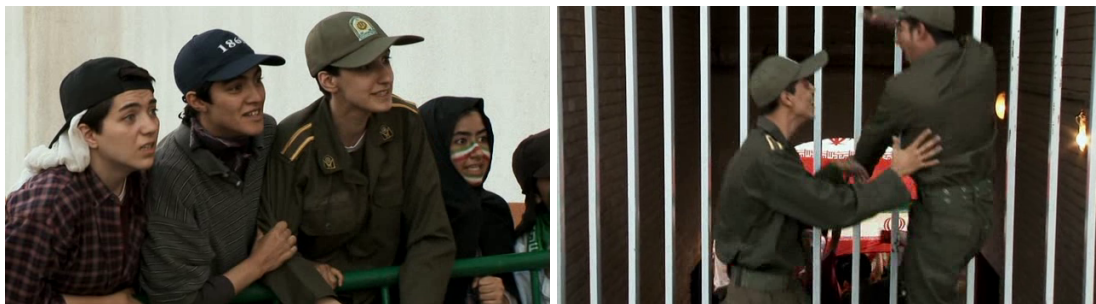
Figure 5.7. *Offside* (2006)

Referring to this scene in *Offside*, Kim Toffoletti uses the metaphor of "long distance love" to explain the "manifestation and performance" of Iranian women's fan identity, which is not per se inferior in intensity or authenticity to the fan identity of their male counterparts (2014, p. 83). Such culturally maintained forms of distancing do not decrease the women sports fanatics' passion, Toffoletti indicates, as the reactions of the girls in the film show. Rather than the fan identity of the girls, it is their spatial and visual connections to sport that get disturbed. What happens in the film is that the group of girls neither get to the stadium, nor do they – or the audience of the film – ever get to see the match. It is frequently alluded to throughout the film that such distancing is for the sake of the preservation of the virtues of womanhood, to keep femininity safe from contamination by the excitement of the crowd. Or, conversely, it can also mean that the distancing serves as a strategy of control, to

134

reduce the disruptive effects that female spectatorship could have on the public structures of space and orders of the visible.

The spread of television sports programming has been instrumental in modern times in achieving the spatial, visual and emotional measures of distanciation. While keeping the spectatorial momentum alive, television sport relegates the emotional release of the spectators to the disconnectedness and invisibility of their private homes. However, far from keeping the disruptive features of sport under control by keeping the unpleasant spectators at bay, television creates its own modes of emotional engagement with sport. As Garry Whannel, a leading scholar in media sports, writes, "By bringing live pictures to the home, television brought immediacy and uncertainty from the public domain to the domestic space" (2009, p. 206). As I will argue in the following section, the aesthetic and narrative constituents of television sports paradoxically highlight the visual and intensify the emotional engagement of the viewer with it. Television sport creates hypervisibilities and intensities, and trains the eyes of the spectators to take pleasure in closely looking and interrogatively detecting the visual beauty of the game and the athletic bodies in motion.

The Hyper Visibility of Television Sports

"For most of us, for most of the time, sport is television sport".

(Whannel, 1992, p. 3)

Television has shaped the mode of everyday engagement with sports around the globe, as Garry Whannel already noted in 1992. Not only the imaginaries of sport are shaped by, and carry with them the elements of, the visual and narrative structures of televised sport, but also "the political economies of sport and television are now so closely intertwined that it is difficult to imagine life otherwise" (Miller, 2010, p. 105). On the one hand, television itself has benefited enormously from sports to produce a wide range of sport programmes that not only constitute a major part of its airtime but also absorb a distinctively large number of audiences – in effect, rendering the growth of television unimaginable without the impact sport has had on it. It is noteworthy that the most popular and widely watched programmes on TV today are mega sporting events such as football World Cup and Olympic Games, which attract millions of

viewers worldwide even in the unpopular airtime slots. On the other hand, television has had a major influence on the development, expansion, and popularity of sports globally, and has affected the format and arrangement of particular sporting events according to its own economic concerns – for example, in the way a football league is scheduled to suit the needs of the broadcasters (Whannel, 2009, p. 215).

By "stage-managing" the spectacle of sports to its own audience, television could be said to have transformed sports by way of fostering a culture of "television sports spectatorship" (Whannel, 2009, p. 216). If, before television sports, the experience of live spectatorship in stadiums had an "aura of uniqueness, of authenticity", writes Whannel (2009, p. 216), that air of originality is eroded to a large extent today, not only because sporting events are covered fully by television, but also because television sports itself has come to create an authentic sense of television sports spectatorship. The visual and narrative innovations particular to television programming – such as replays, relays, close-ups, live commentaries and studio discussions – have provided its audience unique material, inaccessible to the spectators in stadiums. Paradoxically, in today's culture of sport spectatorship, "live spectatorship, with a distanced view and lacking replay, could seem to be missing an element" (Whannel, 2009, p. 216).

The experiences of live and televised sports spectatorship, Whannel (1992) suggests, differ from one another in their commitment to satisfaction and certainty. To count as a successful TV programme, television sports need to be entertaining in the first place, and to leave in its audience a sense of pleasure and satisfaction in watching the TV programme itself, regardless of the dissatisfaction a section of its audience might get from the result of the game or the performance of the players in the field. A major task of a television sports programme is therefore to avoid succumbing to the possible tediousness of the sporting event by adding charm and glamour to it. Therefore, Whannel believes that there exists in television sports a "contradictory interface" between its "commitment to realist conventions" of a practice of journalism, which is concerned with a transparent and truthful portrayal of the sporting action to the viewer, and "the conventions of entertainment" that shape "the structure of its programmes, its modes of representation and modes of addressing its audiences" (1992, pp. 81-97).

The quest for maximum transparency and the aspiration for highlighting pleasure in television sports conjoin in fostering a visual language of hypervisibility. The charm of a sporting event is retained in television through highlighting, repeating and dramatizing those moments, movements and incidents whose disclosure is crucial for a candid and comprehensive documentation of the event. Television sport's infatuation with the use of such techniques of over-exposure as close-ups, replays, and slow-motions, respond to an urge for full coverage of the event – alluded to in this typical announcement of the presenters, "stay with us, you won't miss a second of the action…" (Whannel, 1992, p. 98) – but has the corollary effect of fetishization of the action and the image. By making use of such techniques as keeping up the pace of cutting, cutting between mid-shots and close-ups, using multiple viewpoints (that are available to the multiple cameras placed around the field) with possibilities for rapid and instant changing of perspectives and zooming-ins on the event and players, television sport's goal is to obtain an effect of "maximum action in minimum space" (Whannel, 2009, p. 89).

It is such hypervisibility that feeds the voyeuristic desires of viewers to obtain erotic pleasure from television sports, as it effects "the visual maximization of the ideal body-in-motion" (Morse, 1983, p. 64). As I have described previously, this aspect has been the cause of disapproval and uncertainties in Iran regarding the suitability of television sports for female spectatorship. However, a slightly different consequence of the over-exposure of the field of action and the maximization of time and space in television sports is the dramatization of actions and the intensification of emotions – that which leads to establishing "engaging viewing experiences" (Whannel, 2009, p. 210). "Rather than emphasizing a voyeuristic and objectifying gaze", Rose and Friedman suggest that "television sports seems to invite the viewer to engage in a distracted, identificatory, and dialogic spectatorship" with the drama of the game, in ways similar to the experience of watching a soap opera (Rose & Friedman, 1997, p. 4). Television sports' techniques of hypervisibility, in conjunction with the discursive exchange of commentaries that speak to an ideal spectator, engage the sports fan "in the participatory reception characteristic of sport viewing: inviting him to call the plays, argue with the referees, and coach 'his' players from the simulated sidelines" (Rose & Friedman, 1997, p. 6). This leads to the television sports

spectators' emotional engagement with the image – their participation in reading the emotions of sportsmen and reacting to them empathetically.

Beyond gaining voyeuristic pleasure from the spectacle and partaking emotionally in the drama of the scene, television sport's techniques of hypervisibility invite viewers to scrutinize the image, look for evidences for truth in the image, and to objectively evaluate the actions of sportsmen (Morse, 1983; Stauff, 2011). Morse suggests that the effect of all the "spatial compression and temporal elongation and repetition" is to point to the "action and body contact", not only to be appreciated, but also to be closely analysed by the viewers in a quasi-scientific manner (1983, pp. 48-50). By being given the possibility of seeing the scene from different angles and in different scales and speeds, the viewer is propelled to see how things unfolded in a single scene and to outguess the referee and find out (see) what "really happened" (Morse, 1983, pp. 48-50). Embedded in "a hermeneutic process of scientific discovery", the audience is constantly presented with numbers, graphics, data, and statistics that aid them in their inquiry into the action on the screen (Morse, 1983, pp. 48-50). Television sport's quest for the "analysis of controversial decisions and dramatic incidents", its ability to "dissect and analyse sporting moments", is fundamental to the culture of spectatorship that it adheres to (Whannel, 2009, p. 210).

The scrutinizing gaze of the viewer gains social and political potency in the way in which, in order to understand what really goes on on the pitch, it seeks to read, interpret and evaluate behaviours and emotions. Markus Stauff (2009; 2011) suggests that viewers understand a foul, for example, not only by seeing the clash between the players, but also from reading the expressions of confidence, surprise, anger, or vulnerability on the faces of the players, their teammates, the support team, and the referee. Such emotions and bodily gestures neither lend themselves to interpretation easily, as one cannot with certainty assert the honesty of the players from the expressions they show in the moment of a foul, nor always fit their actions into normative categorizations of right and wrong behaviours. In the constant interpretation and assessment of actions and reactions that television sports encourage, Stauff (2011) finds grounds for the close assessment of socially held norms and values. By highlighting in close-ups facial gestures and emotional reactions of sportsmen, players, managers, referees, and spectators, television offers to its audience the otherwise socially awkward (publicly disavowed) emotions, such

as crying and anger, and renders them simultaneously innocuous and challenging for the scrutinizing eyes of viewers (Stauff, 2009).

Television sports spectatorship in Iran similarly faces the challenges posed by the "augmented visibility" (Stauff, 2009) of unruly bodies, erratic behaviours, and volatile emotions that cannot be easily forgotten or disavowed once introduced to the scrutinizing eyes of the viewers. The point that I want to make regarding sports in Iran is that genuine possibilities for cultural and social critique reside in Iranian television's unwitting endorsement of the production, and reproduction, of knowledge and sentiments that are socially, politically, and culturally disturbing. Therefore, rather than the often-cited fear of erotic temptations aroused in male observers, what inhibits women's sports from being broadcast on Iranian television is the interrogation and re-evaluation of a whole range of cultural norms and values regarding the shape, content, and place of women's emotions and body movements that the hypervisibility of television sports affords the interrogative eyes of the public. While the range of women athletes' bodily exposure and expressivity are hugely curtailed in Iran due to their head-to-toe covering, loose, and unrevealing outfits, their facial and verbal expressions could be open to exposure and intensification within the diegesis of television sports.

It is noteworthy that, despite inhibitions on live coverage of women's sporting events on television, images of Iranian women athletes (especially in competition in international podiums) do get reproduced in other forms of visual media (see Figure 5.8). These pictures usually tend to decrease the possibilities for channelling the excitement of the game by closing the frame on medium-long shots, depicting the collective sporting action rather than single bodies, avoiding close-ups of faces and cutting off the sight of the crowd. In addition, by controlling their format, quality and size, strategies for media reproduction of these images strive to control the viewers' possibilities for close engagement with the image. Shunning television's techniques of maximization of movement, space and time, these images strive for a pure representation of women's sports to be seen but not enjoyed, engaged with, or scrutinized. It is particularly the hypervisibility afforded by the format of television sports that renders women's sports harmful to watch as a cultural product in Iran.

Unlike women's sports, men's sports do not face similar restrictions for broadcasting on Iranian national television, and is therefore impervious to the

subversive consequences of its moments of hypervisibility. Notwithstanding concerns over the sexual charge of the male exhibitionism for a female spectatorship, it is the exposure and hypervisibility of expressions of emotions, such as anger or ecstatic jubilation – sometimes in conjunction with quite inappropriate levels of nudity – that renders men's television sports disturbing for the collectively held values and orders of the visible in Iran. For instance, even though punishable with a yellow card according to FIFA regulations and strongly discouraged in the Iranian football federation's guidelines for ethics in football, it is not uncommon to see a player take off his shirt in ecstasy after scoring a goal (see Figure 5.9). In such instances, not only television sport's mandate for transparency dictates a full coverage of the scene from a good angle, but its quest for entertainment also asks for the highlighting of such moments of eccentricity in repetition and close-ups. For their potential in arousing excitement in the audience and keeping up the momentum of the game, scenes of celebration on the pitch are too invaluable for television sports to ignore.

To offset the culturally inappropriate effects of such behaviours, the television programme is left with no other option than announcing to its audience the distastefulness and incorrectness of the actions that are visually presented to them. The commentator and analysts of the television programme repeatedly denounce the actions as not only contrary to the spirit of sports, but also non-ethical and distasteful according to accepted codes of behaviour in Iranian society. A contrast is therefore sustained in such instances between the verbal denunciation of the action and the accentuated visual presentation of it, which poses questions about the social and cultural pretexts that present such incongruity as innocuous. Such erratic performances and expressions of emotions are usually treated with additional equivocality when performed by the members of Iranian national teams in international competitions, since their assumed incorrectness stands in contrast to the cherished feelings of patriotism and national pride that they simultaneously evoke (see Figure 5.10). Therefore, any attempt for visual censoring or verbal correction of the actions would not only run the risk of losing the momentum and excitability of the game, but also undermining or hurting the spectators' collective feelings of national pride.

Figure 5.8. Iranian women's Kabaddi team in Asian Games 2014, Inchoen, South Korea. Source: ISNA

Figure 5.9. Omid Aalishah taking off his shirt after scoring a goal for Persepolis, Iranian Football league 23 Nov 2014.

Figure 5.10. Iranian squad's celebrations following their decisive victory over South Korea in Seoul, World Cup 2014 qualifiers.

CHAPTER 5

Iranian television sport is not different from sport programmes in other nations in bringing to public attention and deliberation erratic behaviours and foul language being expressed on and off the pitch. However, in the tightly controlled and regulated structures of public discourse in Iran, where such possibilities for direct visibility are rare, television sports' potential in raising cultural, social, and political issues based on such visibility is quite unique. I need to make it clear that such moments of exposure and unchecked visibility do not, therefore, always lead to productive critique of cultural normativities and their re-evaluation, but can also result in the reiteration and even consolidation of existing cultural norms. Most importantly, the exposure to an uncritical reproduction of cultural norms could have devastating consequences for the players whose incorrect behaviours get heightened visibility on the screen.

An example is the incident during the match between Persepolis and Esteghlal in the 2010-11 Iranian football league, where the footage of the excitement of footballers after scoring goals, captured twice after the goals and repeated several times during the live coverage of the match, showed from a clear angle actions that could be interpreted as one footballer (jokingly) 'fingering' his fellow jubilant teammate from behind. The result of repeated categorical denunciation of the action by commentators on the media – as being utterly distasteful, shameful and alien to the ethics of sports and Iranian society – and the hateful remarks and jokes that were distributed in social media on the incident, was the public shame put on the shoulders of the two players involved in the action and the severe penalties and prohibitions they received subsequently from the football federation. It would be naïve to assume that the homophobic public discourse changed overnight by this incident.

However, the sheer energy contained in such moments of hypervisibility, in dire contrast to the general politics of invisibility, has transformative effects on the sphere of the public in Iran. It is sport's potential for sustaining that contrast, and therefore creating liminal conditions for vulnerable yet assertive visibility, that has to be acknowledged. However unwanted or unproductive, the hypervisibility of such erratic gestures within the seemingly innocuous discourse of sport interrupts the public orders of the visible. There exists in such interruptions an enduring force for subversiveness and criticality in everyday life, that feeds on the liminal condition of uncertainty in the simultaneous assertiveness and vulnerability, assuredness, and insecurity of the wayward instances of visibility.

To control the unfavourable consequences of constant exposure of sportsmen to television cameras, the Iranian football federation has introduced specific guidelines for the general conduct, behaviour, and bodily bearings of Iranian footballers on and off the pitch. According to the guidelines, Iranian footballers should self-discipline their behaviours, social conduct, and bodies – the style of their haircut, beard, and body attachments such as rings, earrings, and tattoos – to comply with a certain level of decency particular to Iranian society, and avoid being exposed to the media if not in conformity with such guidelines (Fars News Agency, 2008). But the feasibility of such measures of control are matters of uncertainty. Indeterminacy in action against the misconduct is seen, for instance, in the treatment of tattoos, argued by authorities to be alien to the ethics and body politics of Iranian society, yet increasingly spreading over the bodies of Iranian footballers (probably under the cultural influence of the tattooed bodies of prominent world football players). The problem arises since tattoos, unlike haircut or earrings, cannot be easily removed or modified. Once inscribed on the athlete's body, tattoos become magnified in television sports' augmented visibility and present themselves to the viewers assertively, even if unwittingly. To control that visibility, authorities have announced that tattoos would be tolerated as long as they are covered and not seen. Covering tattoos under sportswear is feasible for most of the Iranian footballers, whose tattoos are already placed in less exposed body parts so as to keep them hidden from exposure in public under their everyday clothes. However, unwanted moments of brief disclosure occur in football matches, on and off the pitch, which then give rise to speculations over the exact shape of the tattoos and discussions over the meaning and appropriateness of them in public forums and social media (see Figure 5.11).

Figure 5.11. Arash Borhani's tattoo, normally covered under his socks, disclosed unwittingly.

In recent years, the issue of tattoos has become foregrounded as a complex problem that is more difficult to settle than by simple covering. Some of the key members of the Iranian national football team – such as Reza Ghoochannejhad, Ashkan Dejagah, and Sardar Azmoon – have tattooed bodies that do not necessarily stand in contrast to the body politics of their respective countries of residence – Belgium, Germany, and Russia – but cause problems in Iran, as their adorned body parts are not easily coverable (see Figures 5.12-13). While Ghoochannejhad has devised creative ways to cover his right arm's tattoo, Dejagah's fully covered arms have remained difficult to cover, unless under a second layer of sleeved shirt that does not really work for the footballer during a heated match of football. In effect, Dejagah has given up trying to cover his tattoos – and Iranian authorities have reluctantly accepted that as an unspoken exception – and Ghoochannejhad's attempts for concealment have at times been proven futile in the heat of the game.

Figure 5.12. Ashkan Dejagah (left) and Reza Ghoochannejhad (right), covering their tattooed arms during training for the national team in Iran.

Figure 5.13. Reza Ghoochannejhad's futile attempt to cover his right arm's tattoo during a 2014 World Cup match with Nigeria.

Just like erratic and aberrant actions, nonconformist bodies highlight the conflation of Iranian national television sports' imperative for transparency and augmented visibility, with their capacity to preserve public ethics and nationally held values. The issue of an Iranian identity and the need for the preservation of its values and visibilities, as disparate from the values and visibilities attached to bodies of other identities, come into play in television sports in Iran. It is particularly the visibility of the aberrant 'Iranian' bodies that is deemed inappropriate, and therefore in need of visual minimalization and verbal denunciation on Iranian television. Similarly disagreeable bodily features of non-Iranian footballers receive rather favourable comments by the commentators of Iranian television as they describe, sometimes in shocking detail, the features of a new tattoo, earring, or hairstyle of a particular player. As a result, the uncurtailed visibility of the bodies of non-Iranian footballers has had immense cultural effects on Iranian television viewers. Chehabi explains that even in the 1980s and 1990s, during the times that Iranian society was more strictly controlled than today, in terms of adherence to Islamic codes of conduct, and Western symbols were strictly banned from the public space, the cultural influence of sports was noticeable in cities in Iran in the way in which "Maradona's earrings, Chris Waddle's haircut and the German national team's uniforms were all imitated, much to the chagrin of regime hardliners" (2006, p. 247). While Iranian authorities strive to impose certain levels of control on the aberrant visibilities of Iranian players, the hypervisibility of world sports on television and its cultural effects remain uncontrollable.

A further challenge of hypervisibility concerns the uncontrollability of the crowd, the live spectators in stadiums, an incoherent mass of bodies whose actions, behaviours, and appearance are much less tightly regulated than those of the athletes and sportsmen. This is significant because spectators play a key role in the creation of the feel of the game in television sports. A typical televised sporting event consists of numerous moments of zooming in and close-ups of the faces of the crowd, granting high visibility to their emotions and bodily gestures. "The most realistic aspect in the 'look' of the game is the crowd with its motley colors and with its faces in close-up and reaction shots" (Morse, 1983, p. 50). "I maintain that the crowd is part of the diegetic world of televised football. The look of the crowd in reaction shots is seldom well matched with the shot of the field. It seems more importantly to function as a

visual identity for the phantom crowd invoked by the soundtrack." (Morse, 1983, p. 65)

Here again, a dividing line is drawn between the Iranian and non-Iranian spectators, who adhere to different orders of public conduct. While the restrictions on women spectators' presence in stadiums in Iran could be seen as a move to control such possible moments of exposure on television, a typical crowd in countries other than Iran includes women whose clothing might not match the orders of the visible in Iran. Live broadcast of international games are usually delayed with a few seconds on Iranian TV in order to give time to the censors to edit out the improper crowd and to replace them with stock footage of an appropriate one. But this process does not always work out smoothly and moments of incongruity occur frequently, as a result of which the act of censoring itself becomes visible. For instance, Gerhardt explains that during the live broadcast of the 1998 World Cup on Iranian television, "the cheering summer crowds in the French stadiums were replaced by prefilmed coverage of spectators in winter jackets and coats (spectator coverage from a winter game had been used) so that the Iranian public would not see the scantly clad (by Iranian standards) female spectators" (2002, p. 45). And there always lurks the danger of moments of inappropriateness skipping the eyes of censors. Controversy was raised during the broadcast of the 2014 World Cup when a very brief glimpse of an inappropriately dressed woman was detected on Shabake 3 by vigilant spectators and identified as Shakira, a figure of Western cultural corruption according to the official jargon of the Islamic Republic of Iran (see Figure 5.14). The incident was subsequently reproduced on social media, its news was spread like a popular joke among Iranians, and the head of Iranian national television, Ezzatollah Zarghami, was summoned to provide an explanation for it (Kamali Dehghan, 2013).

Such moments of wayward visibility of an indecent crowd are more seriously disturbing for Iranian television in the occasion of the live televised coverage of the Iranian national teams' competitions abroad. Highly unsettling and disruptive of the official codes of visibility are the Iranian team's fans, mostly consisting of immigrant or second generation Iranians, residents of the country where the match is being held, who use this public occasion to present to the cameras their nonconformist selves – as unhindered by the public dress codes of the Islamic Republic of Iran and undisturbed by the political identity that is represented of them in the official public discourse in

Iran. Iranian fans around the world use such sporting events to show their defiance and unruly conduct and to send a political message to the world by living and performing an otherwise ordinary act of sports spectatorship – rather than acting particularly politically. The interaction between the cheerful Iranian fans, physically present in the stadium, and the national television's programmers is therefore a game of catch and mouse. The spectators fill the stadiums in their support for the Iranian team, and willingly present themselves to the cameras to grant their erratic performances of sports fandom visibility. In this way, not only the images of unveiled Iranian women standing joyfully next to their (most probably unmarried) male companions, captured on the camera and magnified to a large scale on the stadium's score board, stands in contrast to the orders of the visible in Iran, but also their otherwise customary act of kissing on the lips subsequent to being spotted on the camera stands as an embodied act of defiance and disobedience (see Figure 5.15).
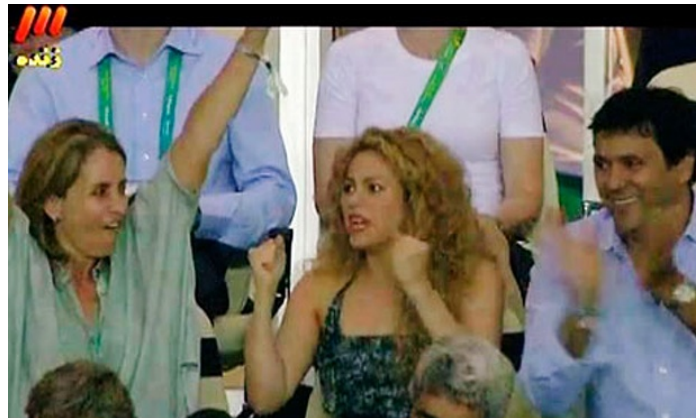

Figure 5.14. Shakira as spotted on Iranian television's live broadcast of Spain-Italy football match in 2014 World Cup, Brazil.

Figure 5.15. Iranian Fans spotted on camera during the 2014 World Cup, 16 June. Photo: Behrouz Mehri/Getty Images/AP.

Yet the fact remains that the televised coverage of such events cannot fully do away with the images of the Iranian fans, because to convey the feel of the cheering crowd and to boost the sentiments of national pride it needs precisely to make use of the emotional energy emanating from the Iranian supporters in the crowd. Here, a reverse mechanism usually occurs in which the footage gets censored in the televised coverage of the event on the national TV, while the commentator explains verbally to the audience the passion and energy that Iranian fans exert in the stadium (based on the footage that is available to him, but not to the viewers). The more television cuts out images of the crowd and renders their presence invisible, the more viewers notice those interruptions, feel their absences and get vexed for being deprived of the footage, and the more they get assured that a collective act of political and cultural defiance is taking place that connect their own anger and unrest to the disruptive acts of the physically present nonconformist spectators in the stadium. There is a close relation between the physically present bodies and a virtual collective that the reception of their images creates.

The Spectral Community of Television Sports Spectators

"In a future in which people compose their own viewing schedules from a large range of instantly downloadable sources, major live sport may just be the last bastion of the experience of simultaneous communal viewing". (Whannel, 2009, p. 216)

Television not only creates an entertaining spectacle of sports for its viewers to watch and engage with, but also constructs its own specific audience, a virtual community of television sports spectators. Through its blend of a narrative of "visual and verbal communication" (Barnfield, 2003, p. 326), television sport orients the viewers' emotional reactions and modes of engagement with the programme, and frames their grasp of and stance on the event. In addition to its visual techniques, the verbal commentary is instrumental to television sports' production of knowledge and stirring of emotions (Barnfield, 2003, pp. 331-335). The commentator not only guides viewers' eyes to particular actions or events to follow, but also informs viewers of what they might have missed on or off screen (Barnfield, 2003, pp. 331-335). Furthermore, the commentator speculates on the final score of the game – produces

"in-game hype" – by making connections between the event that is being broadcast and other concurrent events, happenings in the field and off the field, and the past and present incidents (Barnfield, 2003, pp. 331-335). The viewer of the television sport programme absorbs the information provided by the commentary and is further entertained by actively participating in the making of such connections, associations, and speculations.

Whannel suggests that a key part of the discourse of television sports, and its pleasure, is constituted through the mechanism of "direct address" – whereby sports presenters directly address the viewers as a 'you' (1992, pp. 100-106). At first it seems that the 'you' (the audience) is positioned firmly as the recipient of the programme that a 'we' of the production team offers. However, continues Whannel, this one way relationship gets confused as the 'we' of the 'production team' joins the 'you' of the audience to construct a collective of sport fans, enacted in such expressions like "we're going to see one or two of the highlights now", or "we've already seen …" (1992, p. 103). The implication is that "just as the home audience get comfortable to watch their sets, so the presenter is doing the same thing in the studio. In a sense, the presenter becomes a personification of the audience as a whole – just as pleased to be a recipient as the rest of us should be – we enjoy along with the presenter" (Whannel, 1992, p. 103).

This shift in the relation between 'we' and 'you' occurs when reference is made to 'our' shared experiences of watching sports on television. A collective 'we' is constructed rhetorically, which adheres to shared ways in which sentiments and emotions are aroused and satiated amongst viewers, the production team, and the sports fans at large. This 'we' builds a feeling of togetherness of a discursively constructed sports crowd, within which distinctions of gender or age usually do not hold (unlike in live crowds in stadiums in Iran), and which usually rests on specific ideological assumptions, such as that of the nation. To sum up, "the rhetoric of presentation" is to construct a discursively bound and ideologically committed collective of the viewers, the production team, and the world of sport at large.

One of the reasons why television sports have remained central to the experience of media sports spectatorship, despite the growth of more flexible new digital media, is its ability to not only 'spark the attention' of an extraordinarily large number of people globally, but also to make that mass "feel part of a collective (a

national community)" (Stauff, 2011). With "the mobilisation of patriotism" in national sports, writes Whannel, television sports do not simply make reference to an identity, but rather "in framing the event, in summing it up and in providing closure, presenters are also offering a position to inhabit" (1992, p. 104). The collective national 'we' is therefore constituted in television sports in the way in which "in the nicest possible way, we've been told how we should feel, how we should behave and where we should be on Saturday" (Whannel, 1992, p. 104).

By highlighting the communal nature of the experience, the rhetoric of presentation raises awareness in viewers that their experience is shared by a large number of viewers of the same sports programmes around the world. Contrary to Margaret Morse's suggestion that "television sport is one of those solitary pleasures like novel reading, cut to the measure of the individual and not the mass" (Morse, 1983, p. 48), the television sports spectator is propelled to feel part of a community of spectators – a virtual crowd – that the rhetoric of the presentation establishes. In being contingent upon the discursive construction of a specific television programme, this community does not adhere to certain geographies or modes of reception, but traverses the boundaries of such constructs in establishing a virtual unity, which could be said to be symbolized by what Morse calls "the evocation of phantom crowd on the soundtrack" (Morse, 1983, p. 48). The 'spectrality' of this community of spectators, whose presence is felt throughout a televised sporting event but not necessarily seen, therefore evokes links to the cultural and social construction of visibility and vision, "to that which is both *looked at* (as fascinating spectacle) and *looking* (in the sense of examining)" (del Pilar Blanco & Peeren, 2013, p. 2).

Because of the constitutive role of the commentary in fostering this collective feeling, TV channels, specifically national broadcasters, gain in significance in constructing a distinct set of collective sentiments and identities. While, to transmit a live sporting event, different broadcasters make use of the identical set of original visual material in its complete format that is provided to them by the official local organizers – with close-ups, cuts, and replays already in place – they do produce their own exclusive commentaries and analyses of the event, and therefore speak to distinct sets of audiences. From a number of different choices for watching a televised sporting event, television sports spectators always turn to the specific broadcaster in whose rhetoric of presentation they feel addressed. This explains the otherwise

unreasonable choice of many Iranian viewers to keep watching censored sporting events on Iranian national television, while other full versions of the same event are available to them through satellite transmission of non-Iranian channels (some of them already in Farsi, such as BBC Persian).

The wayward moments of hypervisibility therefore carry disruptive and critical force so long as they perform within the discursive construct of the collective address of Iranian national television. The interesting point is that the conjunction of such moments of visual interruption accompanied by the (sometimes funny) explanatory remarks of the live commentators shape a repetitive pattern that over time has become engrained in the rhetorical construction of that particular collective. In other words, a part of the pleasure of television spectatorship, and constitutive of the collective feeling of the virtual crowd for Iranian audiences, lies in looking for such moments of interruption during a live televised broadcast of a sporting event, anticipating the commentator's reactions, getting simultaneously angry for the censorship and excited by being able to detect it, quickly checking other television channels or the Internet to see the original version of those moments, and subsequently comparing the two versions in detail. The potential for cultural and social critique is engrained in Iranian television sports precisely for the embeddedness of such disturbing instances of exposure – which national television paradoxically disavows – in the collective experience of sports spectatorship in Iran.

That is why the emerging new media – with multiple possibilities for producing information about and generating modes of engagement with sport – do not play down the significance of television sport for creating and sustaining spectral communities of sport spectators, but feed off it and add new dimensions of embodiment and performativity to the otherwise disembodied and spectral character of its spectators. The relation between new media and television can be explained by what Whannel calls television sport's "vortexual" character (2014, p. 773).

In an age of electronic and digital communication in which various media "feed off each other" in a rapid fashion, Whannel suggests that mega sports events perform as a vortex that "suck in media attention", a centre of gravity that "dominate[s] the headlines to such an extent that it becomes temporarily difficult for columnists and commentators to discuss anything else" (2014, p. 773). Such a process of being "drawn in, as if by a vortex", he continues,

is greatly enhanced by the rise of texting, smartphones, sport-based websites, and the social media generally… Now, the first reports of news events and incidents will often come via mobile phones. People around the world can discuss events as they happen by texting. Social media such as Twitter have enabled instant response to events as they unfold. (Whannel, 2014, p. 773)

The new media not only provide multiple possibilities for emotional engagement with sport, but also help the dissemination of knowledge produced by the scrutinizing eyes of the television viewers – in effect, enhancing the hypervisibility of television sports. Whannel recounts an incident during a football match in the English Premier League, in which racially abusive words that were uttered by one of the players but were not heard by anyone, and therefore did not get any reaction during the game from the referee or the recipient of the malediction, were finally detected online "only when a lip-reading viewer posted the words", which were subsequently read by the friends and family of the 'victim', disseminated widely and instantly on social media, and raised as a highly controversial issue in public media (2014, p. 773). This incident in Whannel's view points to

the strange characteristic of modern media audiences – in which there are those physically present and those who are virtually present. In addition, being physically present does not preclude virtual and interactive involvement – crowd anger at incorrect decisions by referees can be seen to escalate as crowd members receive tweets from television viewers who have seen the slow-motion replays. (Whannel, 2014, p. 773)

Viewers therefore participate in the construction of the collective experience of the sporting event by supplementing – rather than replacing – the television's commentary, and in doing so they 'perform' their collective practice of spectatorship, rather than only 'be' subjected to the constructed experience of television spectatorship. Apart from the multiple possibilities for production of knowledge and sentiments, the interactive involvement of spectators in social media shifts the character of the collective community of the spectators from a formless mass of

spectral crowd, whose presence is understood collectively by the rhetorical address of television's commentary, to an interactive network of embodied practitioners, whose distinct presence is felt and understood as they leave the marks of their presence in the mundane spheres of communication transcending television's professional structures of production.

In addition to text messages and tweets, selfies have become a central form in which the performance of sports fandom is disseminated, shared and communicated among the community of spectators, and has become a constitutive element of the experience of sports globally. Just like all athletes and celebrities around the world, members of the Iranian national sporting teams are increasingly caught in selfies of their fans, taken right after a competition in the sporting venue, during the training, or just on the street. While such images of athletes amongst their fans taken inside Iran (see Figure 5.16) are tolerated and even celebrated as exuding a feeling of the strong bond between athletes and the public – a sign of the humbleness of professional sportsmen who see virtue in connecting with people – selfies of fans accompanied by Iranian sportsmen taken outside of the country, during international competitions, have sparked controversy in Iranian public discourse (see Figure 5.17).

Figure 5.16. Fans taking selfies with Hamed Haddadi following the final match of the Iranian Basketball Super League, 2015, Tehran. Source: IRNA (left) and ISNA (right)

Utterly disturbed by the immense number of uncontrolled and uncontrollable selfies produced and disseminated once Iranian athletes put their feet outside the national borders, Iranian authorities have strived to demoralize the act on the basis of its triviality, and have decreed that Iranian athletes avoid selfies abroad. Clear in its message, the demand remains impractical and unrealistic for professional sports. Although at first glance the officials' bitter resentment could be said to be harboured

by the intrusion of non-conformist bodies of spectators in such images – similar to the moments of wayward visibility of spectators' non-conformist bodies on television – it is the selfies' aesthetics of embodied intimacy, incorporated in its processes of production and dissemination, that is most discomforting for authorities.

Figure 5.17. Selfies of fans with Iranian sportsmen overseas, gone viral on social media.

Such selfies not only depict intimacy, as bodies rub shoulders and touch one another to a degree that crosses the limits of appropriate distance between male and female figures in the public orders of the visible in Iran, they also transmit a feeling of intimacy and closeness in the practice of taking selfies itself. The images embrace

tactility in their production, as people usually get very close to one another for a second to fit in the frame of the image that is being taken from such a short distance, and phones even change hands between the photographer and the photographed to find the best possible frame. This in turn excites the tactile participation of the viewer, enacted by the extended hand of the photographer towards the camera/viewer that is usually visible in selfies. The image transmits a feeling of tactile intimacy, as the distance between the camera and the subjects remain literally at an arm's length. Unlike the zoomed in, telescopic, and flat images captured of spectators in stadiums, selfies usually embrace a depth of the field of vision in which the prime subjects, even if slightly out of focus, are positioned right in front of the camera.

The affective force of such selfies, and the subversive power contained in them, also arises from their being embedded in ordinary practices of everyday life. Taking a selfie is usually unplanned and spontaneous, and could be said to be an embodied everyday act, as its production and dissemination are not dependant on extra care or gadgets other than common smartphones, which constitute not an embellishment but a somewhat necessary component of our daily lives and an extension of contemporary bodies (Larsen & Sandbye, 2014, p. xxv). It could be said that in its everydayness and intimacy, the fans' taking selfies with favourite sports personalities stands as the contemporary version of asking for an autograph. However, unlike the autograph that only contains the personal mark of the star for the fan to embrace, in a selfie there also exists an element of self-celebration and self-assertion on the side of the sports fan. In all its modesty of production and dissemination: selfies could be seen as quite an indecorous, self-absorbed and immodest way of presenting oneself. The political valence of the selfies of Iranian sports fans partly resides in such narcissism, since, as Khosravi suggests, in contemporary Iran "'self-assertion' has been seen by the authorities as a sign of defiance and insubordination" (2008, p. 162).

Such selfies serve not only as a direct and assertive indication and evidence of presence – an authentication and manifestation of presence that decry "Hey, I am here right now" (Villi, 2015) – but also as an embodied form of engagement in the production and dissemination of the collective experience of spectators. Their agency does not only reside in their provocative representation of wayward bodies and conduct, but also in the waywardness of the practice of taking selfies itself. Stressing

the centrality of the idea of practice, Larsen and Sandbye write that in digital photography "technology cannot be separated from issues associated with performative practices of taking, editing, distributing, uploading and exhibiting photographs" (2014, p. xxv). This is crucial for understanding the performative role of such selfies in the construction of sports spectatorship. As Shanks and Svabo suggest, "mobile media photography marks a shift in orientation from the image towards photography as a *mode of engagement*" (2014, p. 229; emphasis in original). Selfies invite embodied and interactive forms of engagement, rather than purely visual ones. The "inscription of bodily gesture into a still image" summons the viewer to do more than look, it invites viewers "to make conspicuously communicative, gestural responses" – to 'like', 'retweet' or 'comment' on it, for example (Frosh, 2015, p. 1612). Bodily gestures of the photographer/photographed selves in selfies, writes Frosh,

> invite the viewer to infer and adopt a physical position in relation to the photographer. Manifested in the suggestion of bodily contact, the gestures propose a particular kind of sociable interaction: the act of accompanying and the subject position of companionship. (Frosh, 2015, p. 1617)

The representational aspects of the mediality of the photograph in digital and smartphone photography recede into the performative nature of the networks of practice that sustain them. Selfies therefore demand a practice based approach to understanding their mediality that suggests that "media are not 'media' per se – coming between, mediating units that are given, a posteriori, primacy – but are intimate aspects of the fabrication of the social and cultural" (Shanks & Svabo, 2014, p. 237). Talking about selfies in particular, Paul Frosh suggests that "the selfie as an index is less the trace of a reality imprinted on the photograph than of an action enacted by a photographer", and in that way it "exploits indexicality in favor of connective performance rather than semantic reference" (2015, p. 1609).

Over and above what one might read and interpret from seeing non-conformist bodies and conduct depicted in selfies of Iranian fans and sportsmen, it is the participation of the spectator and the sportsman in the act of making selfies that is of significance. Selfies foreground the relationship between the image and its producer,

because their "producer and referent are identical" (Frosh, 2015, p. 1610). In that way, selfies enhance performativity by enacting "a field of embodied inhabitation" in which spaces of production and depiction are unified (Frosh, 2015, p. 1612). A selfie, Frosh suggests, "says not only 'see this, here, now,' but also 'see me showing you me.' It points to the performance of a communicative action rather than to an object, and is a trace of that performance" (2015, p. 1610).

In short, selfies capture modes of bodily engagement and relational enactment in its production and consumption that transcend conventional systems of visual production and reproduction of sports in media. The selfies of Iranian fans with their heroes not only subvert the tightly held structures of public visibility in Iran, but also interrupt the spectators' conventional modes of engagement with sports and produce traces of embodiment of the otherwise spectral community of spectators. These images are particularly disturbing for Iranian authorities because of the empowering effects that the marking of the presence of wayward bodies on selfies has on pushing the otherwise spectral community of spectators to active participation, performative action, and embodied engagement in the making of a vibrant and genuine form of everyday sports spectatorship. The embodied spectatorial position of this networked population transcends the limitations of geography and scopic regimes of the established modes of sports media, such as television, to create an interactive system that paradoxically stresses the vortexuality of the established television sports. It not only stresses television's moments of hypervisibility and produces additional moments of exposure based on them, but, by adding an embodied performative dimension, also makes the bodily presence of the greater public felt in the discursive construction of sports spectators.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that sport provides popular grounds for the emotional release of a large community of spectators and their active engagement in the creation of public sentiments and knowledge, in ways that transcend the norms of public presence and visibility in Iranian society, while paradoxically performing within it. In my analysis, I have focused on media sports as establishing a "structure of feeling" (Williams, 1977) that shapes the lived experience of sport for a greater public. In doing so, I have followed Rowe's suggestion that institutions of sport and media have

become "mutually indispensable" in contemporary societies, as "it is almost impossible now to 'imagine' sport without the mind's eye conjuring up replay, slow motion and multi-perspectival images, accompanied by the inner voice of phantom sports commentators" (2004, p. 13).

I have spent a large section of this chapter on the unique role of television in constituting the everyday experience of sports. I have argued that, by paradoxically making its viewers see what might remain invisible to the live spectators, television sports create a culture of hypervisibility and exposure. In discussing this aspect, I have explained that television sport's techniques of "augmented visibility" (Stauff, 2009) ask for the scrutinizing eyes of the viewers to look at the image intently and to uncover moments of truth from it. I have argued that, in the controversial moments in which aberrancies are unwittingly exposed on the screen during televised sport, the scrutinizing gaze of the viewer propels the re-evaluation and critique of the commonly held values and norms of social conduct. I regard the "unashamed gazing" that television sports promotes (even if with voyeuristic implications) as radically disjunctive "in a culture where gaze-aversion is sanctioned in moralistic terms" (Fozooni, 2008, p. 119).

In the final section of the chapter, I have turned my attention to the study of the culture of spectatorship that television sports foster. I have argued that spectators tune in to the augmented visibility of television's sport programmes and partake in the discursive construct of a spectral community of sports spectators that television commentary actively creates. Television sport commentary, I have explained, constructs a collective identity in which, on the one hand, hegemonic notions such as stereotypes of national identity, race, and ethnicity, as well as historically developed notions of beauty or morality get reproduced, reconstructed, and re-confirmed; while, on the other hand, the conjunction of such hegemonic notions with aberrancies of moments of wayward visibility on television provide conditions for counter-discourses to emerge. I have subsequently argued that, with the development of new media, spectators find ways to participate actively in the creation of the collective feeling of spectatorship and to develop strong counter-discourses that supplant, and disrupt, television's often hegemonic construct.

6. CONCLUSION
Resisting Visibility, Joining the Everyday

In this PhD dissertation, I have studied the non-visibilities of everyday presence in Iran as developed through the social and cultural formations of the car, rooftop, shopping centre, and sports. With these four particular case studies, I have sought to give an account of an Iranian "urbanism of the everyday", which is concerned with "recurrent phenomenological patterns" (Amin & Thrift, 2000, p. 7). I claim that cars, rooftops, shopping centres, and sports shape common patterns of practice and affective registers for being public in Iran. Spread over space and woven into the rhythms of daily life, they shape collective sentiments and orient everyday modes of perception and communication. Rather than looking for completely new structures and ways of living, my analysis has focused on the liminal conditions of expressivity within the contours of the established patterns of social and cultural practice. I have argued that, as well as offering possibilities for critique and resistance to the dominant orders of visibility, such liminal situations usually play an instrumental role in the sustenance of those patterns, and are necessary to their advancement and popularity. Therefore, the deviancies and non-conformities that emerge from these liminal moments and spaces are to a large extent insulated against the controlling apparatuses: in countering them, these apparatuses risk putting the whole patterns and systems of cultural and social production (in which they perform and to which they contribute) in danger – systems which in most of the cases are additionally protected by the interests of the market or the state.

In this way, I have taken the routine, rhythmic, habitual, familiar, unnoticed, and ordinary premises of the everyday, and read them as replete with possibilities for non-confrontational modes of resistance and social critique. Integral to the resistive forces contained in the everyday practice is their ability to evade being registered by the panoptic gaze of the policing apparatuses of the dominant power, as a result of their invisibility and unmarkedness (Gardiner, 2000, p. 16). Such resistance is contained in a plethora of uncontrolled and uncontrollable moments of corporeal interaction in space, that might be ephemeral, but intense in affect (such as a look or a bodily movement) (Hubbard, 2006, p. 107). It spans the "polysemy of gestures and symbols" that constitute the everyday, the myriad but fleeting expressions of passion and emotions that – despite their banality – could subvert the "total commodification

and homogenization of experience" that the dominant forces cater for (Gardiner, 2000, p. 15). The subversive potential of the everyday is therefore contained in those "less visible and non-confrontational" moments and ways of being that escape being noticed – and therefore punished – but maintain a momentum which could have great transformative effects over time (Gardiner, 2000, p. 171). I have argued that cars, rooftops, shopping centres, and sports contribute to such non-confrontational modes of resistance.

This way of thinking about everyday resistance entails a conceptual rethinking of the opposition between resistance and power (Highmore, 2002, p. 30). Resistance in this sense does not emerge from a position outside of the domain of the power, but functions within the premises of the dominant discourse (Foucault, 1978). It also entails believing that systems of domination are not always total in their domination, and therefore there remain cracks, knots, and blind spots from which resistance is possible. Seen this way, resistance in everyday life is not about forcefully rejecting the systems of domination, blocking their reach, and destroying their elements. Paradoxically, it entails taking part in those systems in order to "hinder" and "dissipate" the "energy flow of domination" (Highmore, 2002, pp. 151-2). Resistance to subjugation, in this sense, is fundamentally about creative forms of resilience, it entails a coupling of "inertia" and "inventive forms of appropriation" (Highmore, 2002, pp. 151-2).

In a similar fashion, the everyday holds an invitation to rethink the dualism of the visible and the invisible; to envisage a vast array of unseen moments and practices that function within the realm of the seen. I advocate non-visibility as a feature that does not stand in complete opposition to the order of the visible, but partakes in its construction in ways that hinders and dissipates its hegemonic grasp. Non-visibility is about utilizing a multitude of forms of inertia and appropriation so as to resist the discursive construct of visibility and deflect its undesirable effects. Following this line of thinking, I have disregarded those hidden and invisible domains which are strictly defined in opposition to, and secure from, the realm of visibility – such as the private sphere and the underground spaces of subculture. Rather, I have focused on the uneasy and sometimes transient conditions in which the visible and the invisible in the everyday converge and come into conflict. Moments of critique and subversion arise particularly from such liminal spaces.

By rejecting the stark opposition between the hidden and the visible domains, I have also refused to embrace the underlying assumptions of freedom and authenticity that the realm of invisibility enjoys. The compartmentalisation of everyday life into distinct units of behaviour and conduct is a common trope in social and cultural theory. To understand how people behave in public and in front of the judging eyes of others, Erving Goffman (1959) talks about the vast impression management that is required for the presentation of selves. His theory of performativity therefore posits the public stage in direct opposition to "back regions", where true emotions and impressions that are otherwise managed and concealed can burst out freely and forcefully in seclusion. James C. Scott (1990) likewise sees everyday forms of gestural, performative, and verbal enunciation as discursively (but also spatially) divided into two separate systems of articulation, where everyday forms of dissent amongst subordinate groups are strategically confined to off-stages. He therefore theorizes the "hidden transcript" as those forms of expression that cannot be publicly avowed and are expressed "behind the back of the dominant", and the "public transcript", the strictly managed and theatrical interactions that take place within the domain of the power (Scott, 1990).

In this dissertation, by contrast, I have studied the liminal conditions in which the stage and backstage, and the public and hidden transcript, meet and create new constellations. This way, I explain not only the way people learn to act and perform in public, but also the ways in which myriad new identities, sentiments, and social relations come into existence in everyday life that defy any one or other pre-defined positionality. In the liminal spatio-temporalities of cars, rooftops, shopping centres, and sports, it is precisely this potential for the creation and actualization of a multiplicity of embodied ways of being and cultural practice for which I have argued.

In looking for the politics of active and non-conformist presence in everyday life, I have deliberately avoided 'heterotopias' where 'other' forms of social relations – counter-publics – and different modes of cultural practice – sub-cultures – could be said to be lived and actualized. The concept of heterotopia, as theorized by Michel Foucault (2008), entails a notion of an absolute break from the traditional time and conventional spaces of the everyday. It describes those places that are positioned outside of regular spaces of everyday life, that "are absolutely other than all the emplacements that they reflect, and of which they speak" (Foucault, 2008, p. 17).

They point to "various institutions and places that interrupt the apparent continuity and normality of ordinary everyday space", and therefore "inject alterity into the sameness, the commonplace, the topicality of everyday society" (Dehaene & de Cauter, 2008, pp. 3-4). Even though, at first sight, all of the four spatio-temporalities that I have analysed might stand out as 'other' spaces and times – indeed, it is common in critical studies to consider the shopping mall as a heterotopia – the consideration of the way these spatio-temporalities constitute common conditions for engaging with the everyday, rather than escaping from it, is fundamental to my approach. They contribute to the established patterns of publicness rather than breaking away from them; they join the flow of everyday life rather than interrupting it.

My claim is that possibilities for sustained social and political critique lie in moments when articulations of alterity meet the normative and conventional, developing in conjunction with each other rather than in seclusion. It is in the liminal conditions of co-presence that the orders of the visible and invisible enter a process of conflictual negotiation. The liminal conditions of non-visibility that I have sketched out in this thesis resist being conditioned as invisible and subjugated to the hegemonic discourse, which exercises its power by "activating selective in/visibilities" (Brighenti, 2007, p. 339). Rather than accepting the dominant power's renditions of visibility – based on which the non-conformities would be defined and stigmatized as 'other', and therefore assigned to invisibility – the modes of presence that I have been arguing for strive to deactivate, redefine, and reframe the hegemonic imposition of visibility. In asserting non-conformist ways of presence, they do not intend to unveil and reveal "real interests" or a "true reality" in opposition to the one articulated by the power, but rather they aspire "to re-articulate a given situation in a new configuration" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 79).

Such liminal conditions of non-visibility offer radical political critique, since, rather than being "merely oppositional or conceived as desertion", they engage with a certain aspect of the existing hegemony in order to "disarticulate/re-articulate its constitutive elements" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 79). Rather than accepting being assigned to certain times and spaces and modes of visibility, the cultural practices that I have sketched strive to "re-frame" the given orders of the visible, intervene in the constitution of the orders of the sensible, and therefore "re-configure the fabric of

162

sensory experience" (Rancière, 2010, pp. 139-140). They connect to politics, and carry the force of social and political change, particularly for the sustained way in which they invent "new configurations between the visible and the invisible" and give voice to new sensibilities and "bodily capacities" (Rancière, 2010, p. 139). It is through such furtive and liminal conditions for artful ways of presence in the space between visibility and non-visibility, and absence and presence, that I see moments of critique being enacted in Iranian everyday lives.

Although my focus in this project has been on Iran, the notion of non-visibility is helpful, and in ways necessary, for understanding everyday lived experience globally. The concept is useful for critically examining the creative ways in which people around the world strive to resist and hold back the dominating forces of market capitalism and neoliberal urbanism that regulate their everyday living conditions. An appreciation and critical analysis of everyday modes of resistance around the world is particularly necessary today, because, on the one hand, everyday life around the world seems to be inescapably governed by particular global structures and economies that orient collective sentiments and regulate ways of practice – such as the Internet and creative industries – while, on the other hand, these same structures open up myriad possibilities for creative modes of cultural practice and engagement in public.

In addition, non-visibility is a relevant concept for addressing such potentialities for resistance and creativity, because globalization fosters conflicting concerns over visibility. On the one hand, in the networked society and under the precarious job opportunities under neoliberal employment schemes, visibility and self-presentation are deemed essential for gaining "a kind of presence or recognition in the public space, which can help to call attention to one's situation or to advance one's cause" (Thompson, 2005, p. 49). However, as everyday life in the twenty-first century has becomes increasingly susceptible to various forms of surveillance in the real and virtual public domains – in urban centres and on the Internet – people around the world have developed significant concerns over visibility and exposure. More specifically, aspirations for non-visible and undisclosed modes of presence develop in reaction to the dangers of being stigmatized in societies in which fear of certain bodies and appearances – such as the migrant, asylum seeker or terrorist – are increasingly being created and spread based on visible markers and appearances. Under the dominance of such affective economies of globalization, "to pass through a

space" writes Sara Ahmed, "requires passing as a particular kind of subject, one whose difference is unmarked and unremarkable" (2004, p. 122). This is why my analysis of the politics of public presence in Iran contributes to understanding tactics of non-visibility within the broader field of cultural and visual studies.

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172

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NON-VISIBILITY AND THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY PRESENCE:
A SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN IRAN

SUMMARY

This dissertation is concerned with space as it is lived, experienced, mediated, and produced in everyday life. It is also about non-conformist ways of being present in the tightly ordered regime of publicness in Iran. Its primary aim is to critically analyse the realm of the public in Iran by establishing connections between specific spaces, times, performativities, and aesthetics. To this end, this project focuses on four spatio-temporalities: the space inside moving cars, urban rooftops, shopping centres, and the realm of sports. Analysed in separate chapters, these spatio-temporalities are conceptualized as forms of everyday engagement that not only commonly constitute everyday lived experience in Iranian cities, but are also instrumental to the construction of visual, narrative, and communicative modes of engagement with the city and its citizens at large. They are also conceptualized as social and cultural formations that form non-visible yet embodied modes of public presence in Iran.

As a way of introduction, chapter 1 provides a short analysis of street photographs of Tehran, through which the correlation between non-visibility and presence, absence and visibility, is teased out. Chapter 2 focuses on car scenes in Iranian cinema, particularly in films of Abbas Kiarostami. It argues for an embodied notion of the car that joins the multiple rhythms of the street, while disrupting the conventional regimes of the look in cinema. Chapter 3 builds upon the concept of rooftops as urban leftover spaces, and argues that the practices of Iranian rooftops – such as the practices of shouting from the rooftops at nights as a form of protest – provide conditions for engaging with the everyday rather than constituting moments of escape from it. Chapter 4 engages with the ambiguities of the shopping experience as a form of urban flânerie. It argues that the experience of shopping centres, especially as carried out in fiction, films, and paintings, provides conditions for the suspension of normative regimes of visuality. Chapter 5 engages with media sport and argues for the potentialities contained in its regime of visuality for the disclosure of wayward bodies, and the subversion of the public orders of visibility that it is supposed to uphold.

By analysing these conceptual formations, as addressed within cultural and social spheres, this dissertation explores the ways in which people strive to make themselves 'seen, heard, and felt' in ways that do not necessarily comply with the dominant orders of the visible. The central argument is that modes of everyday presence in urban Iran are best conceptualized as the politics of non-visibility: intricate ways of less-visible, yet sensible and affective, engagement with the everyday that are feasible and effective so long as they sustain certain levels of familiarity, anonymity, inconspicuousness, and ordinariness. This politics therefore engages with the interrelation between notions of visibility and non-visibility, publicness and privacy, presence and absence, transparency and ambiguity, specificity and anonymity, exceptionality and ordinariness, and exposure and security. It follows that everyday moments of critique (in the form of resistance to the conformist ways of being public) are enacted in furtive and liminal conditions, in the space between visibility and non-visibility.

180

ONZICHTBAARHEID EN DE POLITIEK VAN ALLEDAAGSE AANWEZIGHEID:
EEN RUIMTELIJKE ANALYSE VAN HEDENDAAGS STEDELIJK IRAN

SAMENVATTING

Deze dissertatie bestudeert hoe ruimte in het dagelijks leven wordt geleefd, beleefd, in beeld wordt gebracht en geproduceerd. Ook onderzoekt de dissertatie non-conformistische manieren om aanwezig te zijn in het strikt gereguleerde openbare leven van Iran. Het hoofddoel is om het openbare leven in Iran kritisch te analyseren, door verbinden te trekken tussen ruimte, tijd, performativiteit en esthetiek. Hiervoor richt het project zich op vier 'spatio-temporalities', momenten in tijd en ruimte: de ruimte binnenin een rijdende auto, stedelijke daken en dakterrassen, winkelcentra en de sportwereld. Deze 'spatio-temporalities' worden geconceptualiseerd als verschillende manieren om om te gaan met de ervaring van het dagelijks leven in een Iraanse stad, maar die tegelijkertijd ook essentieel zijn voor het vormen van visuele, narratieve en communicatieve manieren om om te gaan met de stad en haar burgers in het algemeen. Verder worden ze bestudeerd als sociale en culturele producten, die te maken hebben met onzichtbare maar belichaamde vormen van openbare aanwezigheid in Iran.

Ter introductie biedt hoofdstuk 1 een korte analyse van straatfotografie in Teheran, waarmee de correlatie wordt blootgelegd tussen onzichtbaarheid en aanwezigheid, afwezigheid en zichtbaarheid. Hoofdstuk 2 is gericht op auto-scenes in Iraanse cinema, met name in de films van Abbas Kiarostami. Hier wordt een belichaamd idee van de auto ontwikkeld, dat de meervoudige ritmes van de straat samenbrengt, terwijl het tegelijkertijd de conventies van de blik in cinema verstoort. Hoofdstuk 3 ontwikkelt het idee dat daken overgebleven stedelijke ruimte vormen, en beargumenteert dat de manieren waarop daken in Iran gebruikt worden, zoals bij het nachtelijke schreeuwen van daken als protestvorm, mogelijkheden bieden om om te gaan met de werkelijkheid van alledag, in plaats van hier een ontsnapping van te bieden. Hoofdstuk 4 gaat in op de ambiguïteiten van de winkelervaring als vorm van stedelijke flânerie. Dit hoofdstuk claimt dat de ervaring van winkelcentra, vooral zoals deze in literatuur, film en schilderkunst wordt behandeld, mogelijkheden biedt om de normen voor openbare zichtbaarheid op te schorten. Hoofdstuk 5 analyseert

media-sporten, en betoogt dat de sportwereld inherent mogelijkheden biedt om afwijkende lichamen zichtbaar te maken, en zo ingaat tegen de normen voor openbare zichtbaarheid die de sportwereld in theorie zou moeten handhaven.

Door deze conceptuele samenstellingen in het culturele en sociale leven te analyseren, verkent deze dissertatie manieren waarop mensen hun aanwezigheid willen laten 'horen, zien en voelen' die niet altijd overeenkomen met de gevestigde normen voor zichtbaarheid. Het hoofdargument is dat de manieren om aanwezig te zijn in het dagelijks leven in Iran het beste beschouwd kunnen worden als een politiek van onzichtbaarheid: ingewikkelde manieren om minder zichtbaar, maar toch merkbaar en aanwezig, om te gaan met de alledaagse werkelijkheid, die realistisch en effectief zijn, zolang ze een bepaalde mate van gewenning, anonimiteit, onopvallendheid en gewoonheid mogelijk maken. Deze praktijk hangt dan ook samen met het samenspel tussen ideeën over zichtbaarheid en onzichtbaarheid, openbaarheid en privacy, aanwezigheid en afwezigheid, transparantie en ambiguïteit, persoonlijkheid en anonimiteit, uniekheid en onopvallendheid en blootstelling en veiligheid. Dit wil zeggen dat alledaagse vormen van kritiek (in de zin van weerstand tegen conformistische manieren van deelname aan het openbare leven) plaatsvinden in stiekeme en marginale situaties, in het raakvlak tussen zichtbaarheid en onzichtbaarheid.