Negotiations in the Third Space:
Visualization of the Complexity of an Iranian Woman's Identity

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ABSTRACT

Iranian female identity is typically represented as static and fixed, either portraying women as ‘modern’ or ‘victims’ (from the Western perspective) or ‘Westoxified’ or ‘modest’ (from the Islamic state’s perspective). Utilizing Foucault’s theorization of subjectivity and disciplinary power and Bhabha’s Third Space theory, I draw attention to the disciplinary institutions, such as family, school, urban space, government, and national and foreign media, and the ways that Iranian women resist and challenge these regimes of ‘regularization.’ I propose that through these contestations, ‘hybrid’ forms of Iranian gendered identity emerge as a result of creative borrowing and blending of Islamic, Iranian, and Western paradigms as the three dominant paradigms of modern Iran. My thesis project is a visual autobiography, titled *Bahar's Story: Negotiations in the Third Space*, which examines my experiences of being a female during my growing up in Iran, in order to visualize the complexity of Iranian women's gendered identities.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family—
my parents, my brother, and my grandparents.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my committee members, my supervisor Professor Jan Hadlaw and my advisor Professor E.A. (Zab) Hobart for lending me their knowledge and constant support. Without their help, I would have been unable to complete such a project. Attending Professor Hadlaw's two seminar courses in the Fall of 2012 was the single most compelling intellectual motivation to bring in the theoretical understanding to my design practice. I found myself quite blessed to have her constant guidance, patience, and encouragement throughout the various stages of my thesis project. As well, Professor Hobart's creative insight and knowledge, as well as her positive attitude were essential to the completion of my thesis project.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Iranian women have authored autobiographical books in which they examine their experiences of living in Iran. My thesis is inspired by two such memoirs by Iranian women, one living in Iran and the other in the U.S. The books are: *Reading Lolita in Tehran* by Azar Nafisi (published in the United States) and *Da* ["Mother" in English], by Seyyedeh Zahra Hosseini (published in Iran in Farsi). The women, from two different age-groups, tell the stories of their lives in post-revolutionary Iran. The memoirs offer contradictory portrayal of Iranian female identity, with Nafisi portraying women as 'victims' of the Islamic state and Hosseini depicting women as the embodiment of the Islamic ideals of modesty promoted by the Islamic Republic in Iran. In this way, *Da* and *Reading Lolita in Tehran* provide examples of essentialist portrayals of Iranian female identity and the dominant discourses of Westernization and Islamization that influenced each author's perception of their experiences and identities while living under the Islamic state. Yet my own experiences growing up in Iran, as well as those described by friends and family members, paint a more complicated picture of the gendered identities of Iranian women. This complexity suggests the possibility of a third space in-between mainstream, one-dimensional portrayals of Iranian women as either emulating and identifying with Western values or with those of Islam.

Thus, through this thesis project, I investigate the following questions: How can Iranian women's gendered identities be represented so as to capture their ambivalent nature and complexity in contrast to the one-dimensional, stereotypical, mainstream representations of Iranian women as either 'modern' or 'victims' (from the Western perspective) or 'Westoxified' or 'modest' (from the Islamic state's perspective)? How was my gendered identity produced as I was growing up in Iran? What forces and relations were involved in the formation of my

subjectivity during that time period? How was I taught to be an Iranian female at home, school, social events, and in public? What did I wear, listen, watch and what activities did I participate in during that time, and what do they reveal about the construction of my identity?

My thesis project is inspired by Michel Foucault's concepts of subjectivity and power relations. Foucault explains, "The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in doing so subdues or crushes individuals", and consequently he argues power relations act in a way that "certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals."[1] I use Foucault's theories to identify the forces that were involved in shaping my gendered identity during my life in Iran and examine the techniques that acted to form and transform my behaviour and conduct. I supplement the Foucauldian examination of my gendered identity with Homi K. Bhabha's notions of ambivalence and a Third Space of identity. To that end, Bhabha's Third Space theory offers a way to mediate between the binary and essentialist portrayals of Iranian women exemplified in Nafisi's and Hosseini's memoirs by acknowledging 'hybridity' in Iranian female identities and exploring the manner in which gendered identities are negotiated and translated. Consequently, my study focuses on the tensions and contradictions that challenge and disrupt the pre-given cultural contents of gender. My study is also informed by readings which identify the role of the Iranian State in the reconstruction and redefinition of women's identity and sexuality for purposes of legitimating and consolidating state power as part of the broader state-building project under international political and economic constraints.

[1] Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Culture/power/history: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks et al. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 214.

In my thesis project, I use autobiography as a means to question the essentialist portrayal of gendered identity and explore what I consider a space in-between. My graphic design project visualizes the complexity at play in the construction of Iranian women's gendered identities. In a book form, I explore my experiences, relationships, and understanding of being an Iranian girl and woman growing up in Iran. The visual language I employ in my book project (*Bahar's Story: Negotiations in the Third Space*) draws on the work of designers and artists whose work is informed by feminist and critical theories. More specifically, I have been influenced by the works of Barbara Kruger and Cindy Sherman about gender and sexuality, through which they have questioned gender stereotypes and challenged the meanings around the concepts of femininity and masculinity. For the creation of my visual language, I rely on the English graphic designer Jake Tilson's unconventional frameworks and forms by which he used to visualize narrative for his 1986-97 book project, *Breakfast Special*. My thesis project seeks to visualize the complexity, hybridity, and ambiguity I believe to be central to Iranian women's gendered identities through a multilayered visual narrative that encourages viewer/reader engagement and exploration. I use the technique of collage making to assemble self-generated and found images and drawings, deconstructive typography, hand-drawn typography, photocopy textures, lines, and forms to represent the idea of complexity in my narrative.

The significance of this project lies in the way it seeks to capture complexity and hybridity of Iranian gendered identities and move beyond the essentialist portrayal of Iranian female identities found in some of recent memoirs of women's experiences in the Middle East, such as those written by Azar Nafisi and Seyyedeh Zahra Hosseini. While these stories are depictions of personal experiences, the powers of the normative Orientalist tradition and stereotypes in the Western attitudes towards the Middle East give credibility to such stories as

representative of all Iranian women living in the daily oppression of the Islamic state. From this perspective, the practices of homogenization and simplification of Iranian women's experiences include those who comply with both these stereotypes while excluding and discounting other experiences as irrelevant. As mentioned above, Bhabha's Third Space theory provides the means to analyze the gendered identity within the complexity of its formation, as a process of signification, as opposed to the essentialist portrayal of identity as binary oppositions. I also seek to capture these concepts of complexity and hybridity in my visual narrative.

Finally, the timeline of the narrative of which forms my thesis project begins at my birth and ends at the age of eighteen, when I left Iran. As such, the experiences I describe are limited to the activities and practices that are affiliated to that age range. As a result, my study does not account for how the experiences of employment, post-secondary education, and legal and marital rights can be understood and explained in the formation of gendered identities, but these would be worthy of further investigations in articulating the complexity of women's experiences in Iran with regards to their identities.

This thesis paper is divided into three chapters. In the first, I employ Foucault's notions of subjectivity and power relations and Bhabha's Third Space theory to convey the theoretical considerations underpinning my thesis project. The second part of the paper considers postmodern strategies in graphic design, and outlines the methodology I use to create the visual representations in my thesis project. Finally, the paper concludes with a breakdown of my experiences during three periods of my life: from birth to six years of age, my years of primary schooling, and my high school years.

CHAPTER 1

Iranian scholarship on gender and sexuality has identified the State as a crucial actor in the reconstruction and redefinition of women's identity and sexuality over the past hundred years as part of broader State-building projects that encompassed attempts at both modernization and Islamization. Prior to the 1979 Iranian revolution, the Shah's vision of building a modern capitalist nation, as well as creating a modern image of his regime internationally, entailed state-led gender reforms to enable the entry of women into the labour force. With the establishment of the Islamic Republic State in 1979 with its policies of anti-Westernization and Islamization, women's roles were again redefined and reconstructed around their reproductive and domestic responsibilities, resulting in a decline in women's participation in the labour market. In subsequent years, however, women's participation in the labour force substantially increased, propelled by social transformations as a result of changing demographics, increased communication with the Western world, and economic growth. In *Theorizing Gender and Nation*, Nira Yuval-Davis examines gender relations and the ways they are produced and reproduced in national projects, and suggests: "Gender should be understood not as a 'real' social difference between men and women, but as a mode of discourse which relates to groups of subjects whose social roles are defined by their sexual/biological difference as opposed to their economic positions or their membership in ethnic and racial collectivises."[2] In theorizing gender and nation, Yuval-Davis defines nationalist projects as "multiplex", yet "one version is much more hegemonic than others at different historical moments [...] which tend to be more or less exclusionary, more or less linked to other ideologies such as socialism and/or religion."[3]

[2] Nira Yuval-Davis, "Theorizing Gender and Nation." in *Women - Nation - State*, ed. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 9.
[3] Ibid., 21.

Likewise, in *Women, Islam, and the State*, Deniz Kandiyoti argues that examining the position of women in Muslim societies such as Iran requires a close examination of current state-building projects and their historical accounts. Kandiyoti explains:

> The ways in which women are represented in political discourse, the degree of formal emancipation they are able to achieve, the modalities of their participation in economic life and the nature of the social movements through which they are able to articulate their gender interests are intimately linked to state-building processes and are responsive to their transformations.[4]

In this respect, understanding women's condition in Muslim societies such as Iran requires a close examination of social and historical transformations that occurred as part of establishing a modern nation-state.

In recent years, studies of gender relations and sexuality have made attempts to articulate gender relations and sexuality with the social formation of modern Iran. Drawing on Michele Foucault's *History of Sexuality* and Enrich Fromm's theoretical principles of human nature, Janet Afary provides an analysis of discursive production of sexuality and sexual revolution from the nineteenth century to today's modern Iran. In her analysis of the post-revolutionary Iran, Afary suggests that sexuality and gender relations have come under increasing control and regulation of the Islamic state. In the light of Foucauldian notion of governmentality, Afary refers to this state as "Islamic panopticon" in which the Islamic state has expanded its control within the realm of culture and has established its social hierarchical order—with clerics on top in control of regularization and normalization—through a wide range of control techniques, such as organized practices, disciplinary institutions, religious establishments, Islamic rituals, gender segregation, mandatory Islamic dress codes for women, and secret police force. This has led to a situation where "many ordinary citizens [have]

[4] Deniz Kandiyoti, "Introduction," in *Women, Islam, and the State*, ed. Deniz Kandyoti (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 2–3.

internalized the ethos of the new regime and eagerly imposed these rules on other, something the state [has] counted on to achieve its goals."[5]

Hamideh Sedghi's analysis of the post-revolutionary Iran demonstrates the attempts of the Islamic state in reconstructing women's sexuality and regulating gender relations to endorse its policies of anti-imperialism, anti-Westernization and Islamization alongside its economic interests in the global market. Islamization projects promote women's role in reproduction and their labour within the household. Motherhood is presented as women's sacred role, embodied in the figure of Fatimah, the daughter of Prophet Mohammad, an idealized Shi'a Islamic woman figure.[6] In this sense, motherhood becomes the symbol of "a nation's strength", and womanhood symbolic of "purity."[7] Despite these pronouncements, the Islamic state has increasingly encouraged women's participation in the labour force as a result of its shifting political and economic interests. Sedghi explains, "depending on their political and economic projects, states often promote specific ideologies regarding labor requirements."[8] Prior to the Iran-Iraq war, the regime conducted "purification policies" by which established gender regulation resulted in many women losing their occupations. During the war, with the growing economic crisis, women were discouraged from pursuing their desired education and employment. In the post-war, with the economic growth, women were encouraged to join the labour force and pursue their education. The state also used gender to project its image in its international relations. Sedghi explains, "Whereas the Pahlavis presented Westernized women as symbol of

[5] Janet Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 269.
[6] Hamideh Sedghi, *Women and Politics in Iran: Veiling, Unveiling, and Reveiling* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 228.
[7] Hammed Shahidian, *Women in Iran: Gender Politics in the Islamic Republic*. (London: Greenwood Press, 2002), 4-6.
[8] Hamideh Sedghi, *Women and Politics in Iran: Veiling, Unveiling, and Reveiling* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 232.

secularization and modernization, the IRI [Islamic Republic of Iran] portrayed Islamized women as a symbol of Shi'ism and de-Westernization."[9]

In addition, gender relations have significant roles in the formation of hierarchical social order, and gender rituals secure the power dynamics within this structure.[10] Drawing on Sylvia Welby's work on the transition from private to public patriarchy, Shahidian in his examination of gender politics in the post-revolutionary Iran argues that the Islamization project strove to create an idealistic, harmonious Shi'a Islamic society. Achieving such social relations necessitated substantial changes to existing conceptions of gender relations and sexuality. He explains, "With mothering and wifehood deemed women's central roles, women's public role becomes contingent upon their fulfillment of domestic responsibilities."[11] Afsaneh Najmabadi argues women's societal status can be found in the image that the state portrays of itself while they are also used in the state's symbols and emblems. Consequently, the image of a modern woman—which is associated with Western and imperialist values and considered un-Islamic—has been replaced with the Islamicized and veiled one in the post-revolutionary Iran.[12]

One common thread running through these analyses of gender in Iran is that gender relations have been continuously constructed and reinvented in new forms and regulated and maintained by different techniques which have ultimately secured women's subordination in the social transformation of modern Iran. Yet, these analyses risk reifying the very binaries they are analyzing by situating women's identity as determined by State policies of Islamization or modernization ideologies, potentially homogenizing and misrepresenting Iranian women's

[9] Ibid., 279.
[10] Ibid., 5.
[11] Shahidian, *Women in Iran*, 259.
[12] Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Hazards of Modernity and Morality: Women, State, and Ideology in Contemporary Iran," in *Women, Islam, and the State*, ed Deniz Kandyoti (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 64-64.

experiences. Homi Bhabha's notion of cultural signification, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, offers a way to move beyond attributing fixed characteristics to tradition or modernity. It effectively challenges the fixed and unified meanings and symbols of culture while ultimately questioning binary structure of meanings. In essence, this concept moves beyond attributing pre-given cultural contents to socially constructed categories, instead viewing them as part of "on-going negotiations."[13]

To address the complexity of Iranian women's gendered identity requires more holistic approaches. Janet Afary's Foucauldian investigation of sexual revolution in modern Iran demonstrates the significance of Foucault's theories to understanding the languages and practices that are involved in the formation of gendered identity. By utilizing these concepts, I analyze my experiences growing up in Iran. In addition, inspired by Homi Bhabha's Third Space, my research considers the contradictions and tensions of Iranian-ness played out in constructing my gendered identity.

Foucault's Subjectivity and Power Relations

Foucault's key concepts of subjectivity and power relations provide useful points of departure for conceptualizing the formation of identity and analyzing the process through which the construction of my gendered identity occurred in the post-revolutionary Iran.

The 'subject' is a central theme in Foucault's work.[14] Foucault's genealogical conception of the subject is an attempt to delve further into the understanding of the individual's relation to the self and to others. This epistemology of the relation lays out how individuals' understandings of themselves and others become pivotal points in determining who and what

[13] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 2.
[14] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8.4 (1982), 777.

they are, those forces that shape their conducts, experiences, and behaviours, as well as where they are situated in the society, how they can come to be validated within the social formation and in relation to others. Subjectivity defines this intimate relation to the self. It is how individuals are constituted as subjects. Foucault explores the question of the subject by looking into the formation of practices and discourses reinforced by power relations across history through which individuals are transformed into "subjects of desire." From this perspective, the self has been formed and understood differently in different historical periods. What this offers is an analytic understanding of our present and who we are today.

Foucault's early work, *The Order of Things*, examines the development of discursive practices in three fields—biology, linguistics, and economics—in different historical periods as a means of creating social order and making individuals into the objects of knowledge.[15] The question of the subject is important to the understanding of the operations of power. What constitutes the subject is a complex network of power and knowledge. According to Foucault, power and knowledge cannot be understood independently. This complex network of knowledge and power is what makes an individual its subject. Knowledge is made up of ideas, meanings, laws, rules, narratives, and language produced and engendered by institutions and human and social sciences, by which the individual relates to the self and others. The human being, in this sense is not a free or independent member of the society, but rather, he/she is the product of discourses and practices structured by power relations.

Further refining these conceptions in volumes two and three of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault focuses on the "technologies of the self" through which he identifies the discursive

[15] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), xv–xxiv.

practices and techniques that constitute the self into a subject of desire. For example, Foucault demonstrates how the bourgeoisie through the discourse on sex created the subject of desire, by turning men into the "desiring men" or subjects of "sexuality," to control and regulate individuals.[16] Foucault questions how individuals recognize and construct themselves as subjects of sexuality. In the introduction of *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault argues, "It seemed appropriate to look for the forms and modalities of the relation to self by which the individual constitutes and recognizes himself *qua* subject."[17] He continues, noting that "it shows a failure to recognize that the ethical concern over sexual conduct is not [...] always directly tied to the system of interdictions. It is often the case that moral solicitude is strong where there is neither obligation nor prohibition."[18] Foucault focuses on the three questions of how, why, and in what forms moral thinking permits, requires, and prohibits us from performing a conduct or behaviour. From this perspective, the subject is not only constituted by power and knowledge, but also possesses agency and is capable of moral thinking, self-reflection and resistance.

According to Foucault, power is not necessarily manifested through the implementation of a forceful state of domination or oppression by a sovereign. Power relations control, regulate, and define the conduct and behaviour of the subjects by different means. A Foucauldian conception of power replaces a traditional conceptualization of centralized power to the one that is dispersed: power comes from everywhere and nowhere. In *Society Must be Defended*, Foucault introduces the notion of biopower, a modern form of power that consists of various techniques, which aim to regulate and define the human body and its behaviour. Unlike the earlier conceptions of disciplinary power that trained, controlled, and punished an "individual

[16] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 4–6.
[17] Ibid., 6.
[18] Ibid., 10.

body", these new techniques, or "regularization" in Foucauldian terminology, are represented by human and social sciences and practiced by administrative apparatus, regularize the population rather than an "individual body." The control of individuals' subjectivities, conducts and behaviours from this perspective can be defined as "taking control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species."[19] The practical aspect of these mechanisms of regulation is achieved by institutions such as schools, hospitals, and prisons. These mechanisms serve as the means to ensure of the productivity of the population by keeping them in a healthy physical and mental state, training them into good work ethics, and controlling their moral behaviours. At the same time, these institutions shape the subjectivity of individuals: their conducts, experiences, and behaviours. Dennis Atkinson, for example argues, "These institutions [schools] promote particular forms of practice and language (discourse) in which understanding is constituted. Individuals become visible to themselves and to others through the terms of such institutional practices and discourses,"[20] and as such institutions play an important role in the disciplinary process.

Foucault's work also focuses specifically on the conception of the body in relation to disciplinary power. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault's genealogical conception of the subject studies the ways disciplinary technologies work on bodies. What his work reveals is the ways power organises itself by establishing techniques and strategies that control and regulate individuals in their daily lives. From this perspective, the body becomes a site of control and regulation. Foucault suggests that the modern disciplinary power is internalized and operates through the bodies that are self-controlled and self-regulated, as

[19] Michel Foucault, "17 March 1976," in *"Society Must be Defended": Lectures at the College De France, 1975-76*, ed. Mauro Bertani et al. (New York: Picador, 2003), 246-247.
[20] Dennis Atkinson, "A Critical Reading of the National Curriculum for Art in the Light of Contemporary Theories of Subjectivity," *The National Society for Education in Art and Design* (1999), 108.

opposed to earlier forms of disciplinary practices that exposed the body to external violence. Disciplinary power uses various mechanisms, which aim at producing docile, active bodies that can be utilized and regulated in time and space. Foucault argues, "The body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved."[21] This docility of body is achieved through institutions, such as schools, hospitals, factories, and prisons, by implementing the methods that are most often employed by the military. These institutions use a set of techniques, such as classification, ranking and frequent examination, fixed and timely oriented rules and regulations, and constant surveillance in order to distribute the bodies and control the activities.[22]

One of the ways of disciplining and regulating bodies is surveillance. Foucault adapts the model of "Panopticism", designed by Jeremy Bentham in the eighteenth century during the penal reform and prison development, to describe the expansion of disciplinary mechanisms from penitentiary institutions to the realm of modern institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and factories. The core concept behind the design was to create an environment within the space of the prison by which the occupants would be under the assumption that they were being constantly watched, and hence, to self-regulate their conduct and behaviour.[23] On the concept of the internalized discipline, Foucault presents the following passage:

> The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of the subjection much more profound than himself. A 'soul' inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body.[24]

[21] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 136.
[22] Ibid., 141-156.
[23] Ibid., 218.
[24] Ibid., 30.

As a result of the internalization of the discipline, the individuals become docile and self-governing subjects. The pivotal feature that needs to be highlighted in the concept of self-regulation is 'the gaze.' Foucault uses this concept to describe the existence of constant surveillance in modern society as a means of creating docile bodies. The gaze, from this perspective is not simply directed against individuals by others. It also becomes a way for the individual to self-monitor and self-regulate his/her own conduct and behaviour. In this sense, the individual becomes the subject of his/her own gaze. The role of the gaze plays a significant role in the constitution of both male and female subjects. Men and women shape, adjust, and monitor their body image, conduct, and behaviour based on the fixed and pre-given meanings of masculinity and femininity. Danache, Schirato, and Webb provide an example of how proper sitting in public is defined for women with their legs crossed at the ankle, as opposed to men crossing legs at the knee. This expectation of proper sitting as social norm and behaviour steers men and women to adjust their sitting which ultimately becomes an internalized mode of practice.[25]

In addition to constant surveillance, another disciplinary mechanism (initiated by the penal system) that has influenced the realm of modern society is the concept of "normalising judgement."[26] This judgement defines the norms and the degrees of normality in order to establish a hierarchy and classification by differentiating individuals from each other and situating different behaviours and attitudes within a measuring rank. "In a sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to

[25] Geoff Danaher et al., Understanding Foucault (London: SAGE Publications, 2000), 47.
[26] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 183.

another."[27] Individuals are defined by a norm, and they are judged as qualified or disqualified members of the social formation according to that norm. The process of examination, by combining the techniques of surveillance and normalizing judgement, creates opportunities for classification, categorization, and distribution of the objects of power.[28] This "individualization" in the disciplinary mechanism assures the visibility of those individuals that are subjected to the gaze of particular knowledge discourse.[29] In *Postmodernism and Education*, Usher and Edwards argue that educational practices play an important role in the disciplinary process. They explain:

> Power-knowledge formations operate both through the practices which inscribe the person as a particular subject prior to entering an educational institution and those practices they are engaged in once within it; in becoming a 'subject' we learn to be a 'subject' of a particular sort. It is our assumptions about the nature of the 'subject' which then inform our practices as teachers and lecturers, yet the effect of power which gives rise to the particular positioning of 'subjects' is effectively veiled.[30]

Disciplinary techniques operating through a myriad of regulations, controls, and assessments assure disciplined function by producing not only docile bodies but self-governing subjects who are capable of the self-control and self-regulation of their conduct and behaviour.

Foucault's theorization of institutions in the exercise of disciplinary power and the construction of subjects provides a useful means to identify and examine the institutions that were involved in the production of my gendered identity. His theories are useful in enabling the analysis of the disciplinary techniques that various institutions employed to regulate and control the gendered body, and consequently, how these techniques created docility in order for me to self-regulate and self-govern my behaviour and conduct. His theories also facilitate the

[27] Ibid., 184.
[28] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 192.
[29] Ibid., 193.
[30] Robin Usher and Richard Edwards, *Postmodernism and Education* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 96.

understanding of practices and languages that were used to normalize meanings and representations about gender.

While individuals are the product of a network of discourses, institutions, and relations, there is also a possibility of agency and self-determination within the system. Foucault introduces the concept of "modernity" that he defines as being in the present: having close relationships to the events, experiencing them, and being affected by these events.[31] Modern man, Foucault explains, "is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself. This modernity does not 'liberate man in his own being'; it compels him to face the task of producing himself."[32] This can be achieved by redefining one's relationship to truth. The formation of the self revolves around the relationship between power, truth, and subjectivity. Criticism is an essential component of individual freedom. Foucault describes criticism as "a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying."[33] With this approach to human subjectivity, Foucault introduces the notion of agency by which individuals deny the socially constructed meanings. Utilizing Foucault's conception of agency, my research also looks at my experience of instances in which gender stereotypes and pre-established meanings of gender were challenged.

Bhabha's Third Space

My project also explores the tensions, contradictions, and negotiations that are inevitably an element of any gendered identity. Homi K. Bhabha's theorization of identity as a

[31] Paul Rabinow, "Introduction: The History of Systems of Thought," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1998), xviii.
[32] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 45.
[33] Rabinow, *Ethics*, xxxv.

process of cultural signification offers a way to avoid positioning female identity in binary terms. In this section, I will outline Bhabha's discussion of the "negotiation of cultural differences" where he introduces the notions of the Third Space, hybridity, and ambivalence. Using these concepts, I proceed then to understand the forces that produced tensions, conflicts, and negations that were involved in the formation of my gendered identity. Bhabha's theory provides a useful point of departure for my analysis as its complex formulation of the process of identification challenges the concept of binary oppositions, which are generally present in the stereotypical, dominant representations that are constructed in the language of "Otherness."

Discussion of the language of 'Otherness' is at the core of postcolonial studies. Foucault's genealogical conception of the subject in different historical periods is once again useful for understanding of the formation of modern, Western subjects and the various disciplinary mechanisms of power relations for the regulation and domination of the 'Other'. His theory of power/knowledge demonstrates how power relations construct social hierarchy and organization through 'discourse'. Foucault argues, "in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a [...] number of procedures."[34] For Foucault, power is situated within discourse thus securing its state of domination. In concordance with Foucault's theory of power/knowledge, postcolonial studies demonstrate how the exercise of discursive power controls and regulates the colonial cultures. Postcolonial studies are mainly concerned with the concept of the Other and the examination of discursive production of racial and cultural differences of "otherness" to the White Western culture. Edward Said, Stuart Hall, and Homi Bhabha share the view that Western racial discourses of Otherness reside in the dominant relations of power and knowledge, which is the site of the postcolonial struggle. In

[34] Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," In *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 52.

Bhabha's view, cultural struggle engages cultural differences in "a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in the moments of historical transformation."[35]

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha's concept of the Third Space challenges the static meanings of cultural signs that reside in the language of binary oppositions. He argues that cultural identity is a process of signification and articulation of the cultural differences. The concept of culture always demands "a model, a tradition, a community, a stable system of reference" by which the culture makes sense to Self and the relations of Self to Other.[36] These symbols and icons have a "homogenizing effect" that combines differences into one entity of culture.[37] With this, Bhabha argues that the authority of culture—as a "knowledge of referential truth"—and cultural representation present cultural contents as pre-given and fixed. It tends to homogenize cultural differences into unitary totalities of cultural practice. Bhabha argues: "Culture only emerges as a problem, or a problematic, at the point at which there is a loss of meaning in the contestation and articulation of everyday life, between classes, genders, races, nations."[38] The question of the difference which resides within cultures challenges the concept of culture as a "knowledge of referential truth" and its unitary totality, and hence undermines the constructed meanings of cultural icons and symbols. From this perspective, cultural difference is the process of enunciation of culture. Cultural enunciation is "the place of utterance", and Bhabha suggests that it is "crucial to the production of meaning and ensures [...] that meaning is never simply mimetic and transparent."[39] These new meanings undermine the traditional fixity

[35] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2.
[36] Ibid., 35.
[37] Ibid., 36–37
[38] Ibid., 34
[39] Ibid., 36.

and primordial unity of cultural meanings. As a result, the enunciation of culture disrupts the hegemonic, dominant culture and the binary opposition in the language of "Otherness."

Bhabha's formulation of cultural enunciation demonstrates that it is the subject's own enunciation and understanding of cultural differences that is involved in the process of identification, rather than identifying cultures as either with their unitary totalities or with their dualistic effects in the relation of Self to Other. In that way, Bhabha's conception of cultural enunciation gives a central place to cultural agency because the subject's own understanding of culture is crucial to defining their identity. The articulation of cultural difference is significant to Bhabha's theory of the Third Space with which he defines cultures in the moment of their use when they come in contact with one another. For Bhabha, cultural difference demonstrates the fluidity and hybridity of cultures. From this perspective, cultures are not unitary totalities, but rather they are the means of understanding and articulating everyday life realities that are constantly transforming. The renewal of culture and cultural transformation are important part of cultural hybridity. In his theory of the Third Space, Bhabha argues that there is a space "in-between the designations of identity," an "interstitial passage between fixed identifications" in which "the temporal movement and passage […] prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities."[40] In this sense, identity is a process of negotiation of cultural realities within the Third Space. In this Third Space, the constant state of being in transition and transformation challenges the conception of culture as a homogenizing and unifying force in the process of identification. Through the Third Space, a moment of exchange occurs when the actual conditions of language and a specific utterance meet.[41] This moment is when the cultural icons and symbols are articulated, and consequently, the enunciation of culture continually

[40] Ibid., 4.
[41] Ibid., 36.

undermines the authority of dominant culture by disruption, translation, and reappropriation of these constructed representations of cultural identification and hence read as a new. The articulation of cultural difference creates a feeling of ambivalence "when we realize that there is no way that the content of the proposition will reveal the structure of its possibility; no way that context can be mimetically read off from the content."[42]

Bhabha's Third Space, ambivalence, and hybridity can be used to understand the complexity of the construction of gendered identity. His model offers a means to explain and articulate the presence of hybrid gendered identity within the relationship of cultural differences, as well as the concepts that constitute these differences. It also provides an opportunity to look at the ways tensions and contradictions challenge and disrupt the pre-given and fixed cultural representations of gender.

[42] Ibid., 36.

CHAPTER 2

Postmodernism in Graphic Design

Bhabha's postmodern conception of culture was influenced by poststructuralism, including the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Poststructuralism, which is an intellectual movement that focuses on knowledge and language, concerns the individual's relation to the self and others through a system of production and reproduction of meanings.[43] Postmodernism is a body of work on society, culture, and history, grew out of the poststructuralist movement and entered the discipline of philosophy in the late 20th century. Postmodernism is often associated with poststructuralism and Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction.[44] Jacques Derrida, in his discussion with Christopher Norris, explains that "deconstruction locates certain crucial oppositions or binary structures of meaning and value that constitute the discourse of 'Western metaphysics'," [45] which are central to my study of identity. For Derrida every text is *undecidable* which means it does not comply with binary opposition, ultimately allowing for the reader's reading and articulation of the text to be distinct from authorial intention. Derrida's undecidablity of texts challenges the very notion of binary structure of meaning.[46] From this perspective, any text has multiple points of access and many levels of meaning.

Postmodernism problematizes the fixity and unity of meaning that resides in the language of binary oppositions and has had a significant influence on contemporary graphic design practice. Favouring elements that are hybrid rather than pure, ambiguous and complicated

[43] Catherine Belsey, *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5.
[44] Ben Agger, "Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: Their Sociological Relevance," *Annual Reviews Sociology* 17 (1995): 111.
[45] "Jacques Derrida in Discussion With Christopher Norris," in *Deconstruction II*, ed. Peter Eisenman et al. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 7.
[46] Agger, "Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: Their Sociological Relevance," 112.

rather than straightforward and simple, and inconsistent and ambivalent rather than direct and clear, postmodern graphic design employs various eclectic approaches. These approaches include deconstruction, appropriation, authorship, and opposition, which aim to suggest many levels of meaning, ultimately, create a hybrid, double-coded visual language. The double-coded visual images strive to foster "multiple points of access", which are "as open as possible to interpretation."[47] The postmodern style in graphic design, from this perspective, captures elements and qualities that are complex, dissonant, contextual, unfixed, random, open-ended, and ambivalent to create open-ended new forms and multilayered visual communication. Jeffrey Keedy, an American graphic designer, argues "A few postmodern ideas like deconstruction, multiculturalism, complexity, pastiche, and critical theory could be useful to graphic designers if they could get beyond thinking about their work in terms of formal categories, technology, and media."[48] Postmodern tendencies in graphic design empower designers to think beyond the limitations and values of more traditional, commercially-oriented design, to explore and integrate new frameworks that encourage the viewer/reader's participation, exploration, and interpretation. My thesis project utilizes postmodern strategies of graphic design to create a complex multilayered autobiographic narrative with the goal of capturing and expressing the complex ways that my gendered identity was shaped and negotiated.

According to Chuck Byrne and Martha Witte, the use of deconstructive strategies in design results in work in which "each layer, through the use of language and image, is an intentional performer in a deliberately playful game wherein the viewer can discover and

[47] Rick Poynor, *No More Rules: Graphic Design and Postmodernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 12.
[48] Jeffery Keedy, "Graphic Design in the Postmodern Era," *Emigre Magazine*, 1998, accessed February 16, 2014, http://www.Emigre Magazine.com/Editorial.php?sect=1&id=20.

experience the hidden complexities of language.[49] Deconstruction challenges binary oppositions by breaking down an idea, a value, a meaning, and a term. The idea of deconstruction in graphic style manifests in strategies of disruption, dislocation, and deviation from an underlying structure.[50] In her deconstructive approach, Barbara Kruger, an American artist and graphic designer uses black-and-white photographs from sources such as mainstream magazines and newspapers overlaid with bold, declamatory text to question assumptions about power, sexuality, and consumerism and to challenge female stereotypes. Her visual techniques, inspired by advertising and mass communication, seek to explore the notions of gender and identity and to question the fixed and pre-given representations of gender. Commenting on Kruger's *Memory is Your Image of Perfection*, Ana Balona de Oliveira writes:

> Kruger disrupts this masculinist vision by presenting the skeleton of a woman, thus replacing the female stereotypical bodily perfection with an image of mortality and imperfection, thereby subverting the objectifying process of the male gaze and forcing the male viewer to remember his fears of incompleteness or castration.[51]

By challenging and disrupting the positions and positionings of female bodies as desirable objects of the male gaze, Kruger suggests the possibility of female subjectivity that is not constituted by the male gaze.

Graphic designers have increasingly become concerned with the question of authorship. This has come about as a consequence of the growing rejection of the universal concerns of traditional graphic design in favour of exploration and innovation in writing and visual presentation. This shift has resulted in the emergence of the "designer as author." With the rise of graphic authorship, designers such as Johanna Drucker, Warren Lehrer, and Jake Tilson, have

[49] Poynor, *No More Rules*, 49.
[50] Ibid., 48.
[51] Ana Balona de Oliveira,"Jam Life into Death: The 'Cold War' of the Stereotypes and the 'Ethics of Failure' in the Art of Barbara Kruger," *Third Text* 23, no. 6 (2009): 756–757.

created unconventional frameworks and forms to visualize narratives. The idea of authorship in design invites designers to create visual communications that are open to interpretations, by implementing "semiotic manipulation and bricolage." Rick Poynor explains: "By committing themselves to complex forms of literary and graphic invention, individual authors [...] encourage readers to explore, experience, and question the world in rich, open and ultimately empowering ways."[52] From this perspective, designers embrace the reader's participation and interpretation by creating complex visual communications that reject fixed and unitary understanding of forms and concepts.

The most influential work in shaping my thesis project is Jake Tilson's *Breakfast Special* 1986-97. In a set of five books, Tilson presents five alternative views of Mr. Emerson, a character who provides a way for the reader to explore the urban settings of Arezzo, Paris, New York, Barcelona, and London. In each volume, Mr. Emerson leaves his apartment in a different city to go to a café for breakfast. The structure of Tilson's project—in which the subject operates as the element that ties together multiple narratives—has informed the design framework of my thesis project. While Tilson focuses on the identity of the city where Mr. Emerson eats his breakfast, my narrative focuses on different stages of my life and experiences growing up a female in Iran.

Cindy Sherman, an American photographer and film director, also explores the practice of graphic authorship in her work. She applies different, unconventional approaches to her photographic self-portraits in order to "control her own representation."[53] In her work, she uses herself as her sole model, which makes her the subject of her own art. In addition, she takes on

[52] Poynor, *No More Rules*, 147.
[53] Ina Loewenberg, "Reflections on Self-Portraiture in Photography," *Feminist Studies* 25, no. 2 (2009): 400–401.

multiple roles such as director, author, make-up artist, and stylist. Women are a constant theme in her projects. Like Kruger, Sherman also explores the notion of gender identity and sexuality in her creative work. She often questions the fixed, traditional representations of femininity and gender stereotypes. Sherman's series *History Portraits* 1988–90 and *Sex Pictures* 1992 depict the horror and the sexual nature of the maternal body, creating grotesque and bizarre images using prosthetic devices and mannequins. With these series, Sherman offers a different kind of figuration of maternal bodies that embodies and explores the relationship between the culturally constructed representations of maternal bodies with fetishism of female bodies. Rosemary Betterton comments in relations to these series that "Sherman's figure discloses in the ambiguity and duplicity of its maternal and sexual identity the repressed understanding that the asexual maternal is always also the sexual feminine."[54]

Many contemporary Iranian female designers and artists, working both inside and outside of Iran, are also concerned with female identity and sexuality. These women use their own experiences and understanding of being an Iranian female to create bodies of work that investigate subjectivity, sexuality, and gender (in)equality. For example, *Women of Allah*, a series by Shirin Neshat, an internationally renowned Iranian-American visual artist, is a reflection of the artist's personal experience and visualizes and explores the notion of femininity in relation to the views associated with Islamic fundamentalism, especially those that glorify martyrdom. In *Women of Allah*, Neshat's veiled female body is represented in an aestheticized relationship to violence. In her work, Neshat questions the Islamist ideology that promotes the conception of martyrdom as a legitimization of violence for God and the *chador* as a means to prevent women from becoming sexual objects. Neshat explains the problematic nature of this

[54] Rosemary Betterton, "Promising Monsters: Pregnant Bodies, Artistic Subjectivity, and Maternal Imagination," Hypatia 21, no. 1 (2006): 93.

conceptualization of Iranian female identity, in which "The *chador* becomes a political statement that expresses the women's solidarity with men in rejection of [W]estern cultural imperialism. There is a great deal of self-contradiction in strong and proud women, participating in the revolutionary process, willing to go to war [...], yet still endure the laws of the harem."[55]

Shadi Ghadirian is another contemporary visual artist working in Iran, whose work addresses the conditions of Iranian women. Ghadirian's *Like Everyday* series explores and questions the traditional expectations of married women in performing domestic roles, such as cleaning, cooking, and ironing. It portrays veiled females whose faces are replaced by a household item, such as a broom, an iron, a meat cutting knife, a pan, and a tea pot. Commenting on *Like Everyday*, which draws on the artist's personal experience, Ghadirian explains: "I myself was faced with the stark reality of these expectations and routine chores when I got married to my husband. It was a reality I was not accustomed to before!"[56] Women wearing the *chador*—or headscarves— also act as protagonists in the works of many other designers and artists who investigate the conditions of women living in Iran, such as Shirin Aliabadi, Parastou Forouhar, Afshan Ketabchi, and Babak Kazemi. While their work raises awareness and creates opportunities for discussion, I suggest that the representation of Iranian women's issues can benefit from the use of postmodern strategies that perhaps better capture the qualities of complexity, ambiguity, and hybridity that mark Iranian women's identities. My graphic design thesis project undertakes this exploration. The project uses autobiography as a means to question static conceptions of gendered identity and to show the complexity of Iranian women's gendered identities. Employing collage as my primary technique, I assemble self-generated and found

[55] Shadi Sheybani, "Women of Allah: A Conversation With Shirin Neshat," *Michigan Quarterly Review*, Spring 1999, accessed February 16, 2014, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?cc=mqr;c=mqr;c=mqrarchive;idno=act2080.0038.207;rgn=main;view=text;xc=1;g=mqrg.
[56] Hossein Amirsadeghi, "Artists, Curators and Collectors," in *Different Sames: New Perspectives in Contemporary Iranian Art*," ed. Hossein Amirsadeghi (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 148.

images and drawings, deconstructive typography, hand-drawn typography, lines, and forms as a means of constructing a complex and polysemous visual narrative.

Methodology

While autobiographical research methods are sometimes seen as lacking validity and objectivity by critics, the autobiographical approach is useful for capturing subjective experience and especially for giving voice to the marginalized individuals whose experiences are often overlooked. In other words, the autobiographical approach as utilized in various academic disciplines such as literature, cultural studies, sociology, psychology, and history provides a window into subjects that are ignored by hegemonic discourses within the academy. Thus, this method has been central to feminist projects as a means of including the absent voices of those who have been marginalized and excluded from the text and history.

The marginalization and social exclusion of women must be understood in social and historical context. In *Rethinking the Public Sphere*, Nancy Fraser shares what she refers to as "revisionist historiographies" that challenge and problematize Jürgen Habermas' description of the historical development and transformation of the public sphere. Habermas defines public sphere as a social arena, accessible to all citizens, where private individuals come together to debate their concerns and discover common opinion.[57] Drawing on the work of scholars, such as Joan Landes, Mary Ryan, and Geoff Eley, Fraser argues that the bourgeois conception of the public sphere operated as "the power base of a stratum of bourgeois men, who were coming to see themselves as a 'universal class' and preparing to assert their fitness to govern," and was

[57] Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)," *New German Critique*, no. 3 (1974): 49–51.

highly stratified by gender, class, and race.[58] The Bourgeois public sphere was constituted in opposition to the private sphere, or the domestic sphere, which was the female domain.

For Fraser, recognizing the existence of subaltern counterpublics as multiple public spheres in which those excluded from the bourgeois public sphere could articulate their own concerns, goals, and identities. As a result, subaltern counterpublics, while functioning as "spaces of withdrawal and regroupment", provide "bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider public."[59] From this perspective, the concept of subaltern counterpublics offers a way for those excluded and marginalized voices to gain recognition and affect change. The idea of subaltern counterpublics offers a space for women's concerns and issues to emerge from the private sphere into public discourse. The concept of autobiography from this perspective can be understood as a strategy for bringing private experiences into public awareness. In *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, Smith and Watson explain:

> Autobiography has been employed by many women writers to write themselves into history. Not only feminism but also literary and cultural theory have felt the impact of women's autobiography as previously unacknowledged mode of making visible formerly invisible subject.[60]

Women's autobiography has provided an invaluable means for women to share the experiences of their private lives, which have been excluded from the public sphere. Thus, women become the speaking subjects within their own stories. As a result, the concept of agency is central to the women's autobiographic impulse.

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[58] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 26, no. 25 (1990): 60.
[59] Ibid., 68.
[60] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "Introduction: Situating Subjectivity in Women's Autobiographical Practices," in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sidonie Smith et al. (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 5.

Autobiographic methods in academic contexts place the researcher at the centre of the investigation. In autobiographical approach to graphic design, heuristics is considered a useful method of inquiry. Welby Ings, professor of graphic design at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand, describes heuristics as "a form of inquiry [which] utilises sophisticated levels of informed subjectivity and tacit knowledge to solve complex creative problems."[61] It is a non-formulaic method, which is non-linear and flexible, that enables questioning, experimentation, and exploration to discover knowledge, rather than applying a pre-established formula. It can be understood as an informal method of problem solving which allows for trial and error. Heuristics embraces self-exploration and self-discovery as modes of inquiries. In an autobiographic design project, the researcher is central to the inquiry, Ings explains, and "heuristics can be used to reach rich but often vulnerable parts of both the researcher and the researched."[62] Here, the graphic designer takes on the role of a researcher and autobiographer in the investigation, and the researcher's own experiences are at the core of the investigation.[63] The visual explorations that make up my thesis project utilize heuristics as an autobiographical system of inquiry. The final product is a book (*Bahar's Story: Negotiations in the Third Space*) in which I visualize my experiences, relationships, and understanding of growing up female in Iran.

The notion of complexity is central to the visual exploration in my thesis project, and my concern is to communicate and capture complexity and ambiguity in my narrative. This requires a design process that facilitates openness and a non-linear approach to inquiry. The process also needs to provide an opportunity for trial and error and non-formulaic

[61] Welby Ings, "Managing Heuristics as a Method of Inquiry in Autobiographical Graphic Design Theses," *International Journal of Art & Design Education* 30, no. 2 (2011): 228.
[62] Ibid., 232.
[63] Ibid., 227.

experimentation with forms. To capture the elements of complexity in my visual language, I utilize the technique of collage making, through both analogue and digital process, to assemble self-generated and found images and drawings, typography, photocopy textures, lines, and forms to visualize my narrative. By committing to complex forms of literary and visual invention, my thesis project seeks to provide an opportunity for readers to explore, experience, and question my narrative. The problem that I have initially faced with is how to address complexity in my visual language without being too literal or too opaque for the readers. Collage offers a challenging but rewarding complex system to bring together unrelated images and fit them into one piece. In *Collage: Diversions, Contradictions and Anomalies*, Sally O'Reilly explains:

> With the malleability of objects in illusionary space creating a veritable fantasia of scale, proximity or causality, it must be difficult for an artist to resist authoring barmy simultaneities, eerie multiple universes or jaw-dropping coincidences. Collage empowers the production of meaning server-side, so to speak.[64]

Thus, collage offers a unique way of bringing together multiplicity of different images to covey meanings that would otherwise not be possible. Using the collage technique enables me to combine different materials together in order to create new meanings. As a result, I am able to create visual communication that is open to interpretation. At the same time, I also face restrictions inherent to working with found imagery. Yet, these restrictions encourage me to explore creative strategies to make effective use of found imagery. This experience extends my creative process beyond the digital photomontage to appreciate the use of craft in my work. Through the integration of both analogue and digital processes, I am able to be more engaged with the materials I am using. In addition, different visual techniques, such as juxtaposition are applied as part of this project to place various concepts side by side, such as old and new, past

[64] Sally O'Reilly, "Collage: Diversions, Contradictions and Anomalies," in *Collage: Assembling Contemporary Art*, ed. Blanche Craig (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008), 19.

and present, familiar and unfamiliar, and reality and imagination. The body is also a central theme of my visual narrative, in which it acts as the canvas on which my identity is formed and transformed. Through dismantling, dislocating, manipulating, and modifying images of the human body, I represent the experiences of transformation, translation, influence, reflection, and adjustment involved in the construction of my gendered identity. This echoes the centrality of the body in Foucault's examination of disciplinary institutions and discourses, where the human body enters the social machinery that transforms and regulates it.

The data for my autobiographical thesis project is drawn from family photos, letters, postcards, books, newspapers, magazines, music, television shows and films, school textbooks, childhood drawings and writings, and diaries, as well as in-depth interviews with family members. The narrative is organized temporally and is informed by my own recollections of growing up in Iran, as well as the recollections of those individuals whom I have interviewed and who have been influential during my growing up. Zoe Strickler defines the in-depth interview as a technique which is "primarily concerned with identification of personality factors and effective states that cause specific behavior in one person."[65] The collected data from these interviews are utilized in my thesis project and inform the organization of its themes and narratives. Foucault's theories of subjectivity and power relations and Bhabha's project of the Third Space inform my visual narrative of how my gendered identity was formed, naturalized, and transformed during my childhood and teenage years in Iran. The diagram that follows illustrates the approach I use for my study.

[65] Zoe Strickler, "Elicitation Methods in Experimental Design Research," *Design Issues* 15 (1999): 35.

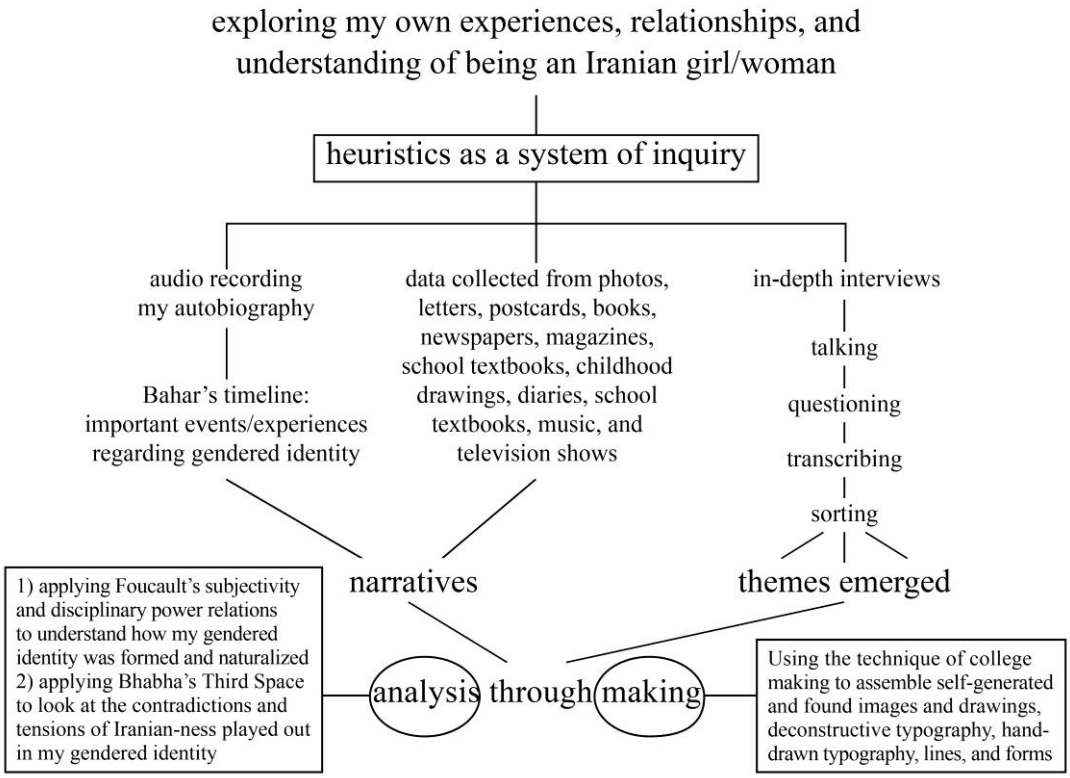

Figure 1: Demonstration of the approach utilized in my autobiographical thesis project

My thesis project employs visual narrative to explore the formation of my gendered identity in the light of Foucault's theories of subjectivity and power relations and Bhabha's Third Space of cultural identity. In light of Foucauldian conception of power as residing in discursive production, my work explores the languages and practices that have reified the positions and positionings of women and femininity as the other of men and masculinity, and to establish heterosexuality as normative. In my visual narrative, I identify those disciplinary institutions, such as family, school, urban space, government, national and foreign media, that have—directly or indirectly—participated in the formation of my gendered identity through the use of various techniques, such as classification, ranking and frequent examination, strict rules and regulations, and constant surveillance to shape and monitor my conduct and behaviour. Most importantly, my

narrative also demonstrates women's agency in challenging and resisting socially constructed meanings of femininity and gender stereotypes.

Through this project, I discover the complexities of female-ness and male-ness, as well as heterosexuality, as performed in day-to-day contexts, as opposed to the 'official' gender identities that are propagated by various disciplinary institutions. For example, the idealized representation of woman as wife and mother promoted by governmental institutions, such as the Iranian media and schools, at home, I was exposed to different conceptions of gender ideals in which men and women worked outside the home as well as participated in domestic roles. My project also attempts to capture how discourses of female identity and sexuality have been transformed during the period under study as a result of external forces such as the increasing use of communication technology, demographics change, and economic growth and how these changes also propelled increasing demands for greater social freedoms.

Bhabha's conceptualization of identity as a process of signification in a hybrid space where cultural differences come to contact with each other provides a useful means for my project as it enables understanding the complexity of the conditions involved in the construction of my gendered identity. By utilizing Bhabha's model, the examination of my experiences and the interviews I have conducted with my family members, I identify three factors that have been involved in the construction of my gendered identity, namely Iranian paradigms, Islamic paradigms, and the Western paradigms, and the space that formed within—and sometimes between—these paradigms. In other words, my gendered identity has emerged from the tensions, contradictions, and negotiations between these paradigms. My examination shows that when these paradigms come into contact with one another, new meanings have been produced that disrupted the gender stereotypes. The question of my gendered identity, which is understood at

the moment of contact and interaction of Iranian, Islamic and Western paradigms can be visualized in the following diagram:

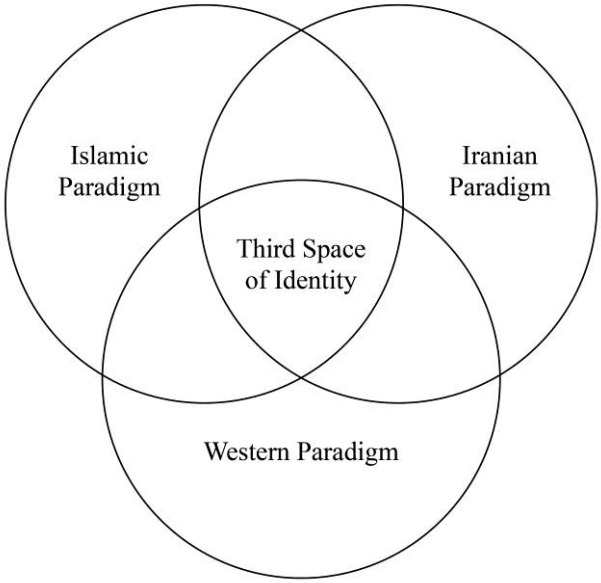

Figure 2: Visual demonstration of the Third Space of my hybrid gendered identity.

CHAPTER 3

My book project is organized as an autobiographical narrative in which I examine the experiences, relationships, and activities that informed my understanding of what it means to be an Iranian female. This narrative is organized in a chronological fashion and draws on my memories of growing up in Iran as well as the recollections of my family members I collected through one-on-one interviews. It is also informed by the data I gathered from different sources, such as family photos, childhood drawings, diaries, school textbooks, music, and television shows.

Examples of the visual narratives that make up my book project can be found in Appendix B. Each spread has been assigned a number and included in the examination of my narrative.

From Birth to the Age of Six

My story begins three years after the 1979 Iranian revolution, which led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic government. Prior to the revolution, Iran was ruled by the Pahlavi monarchy. A Westernization plan that promoted emulation of and identification with Western values was central to the Pahlavi's state-building projects, and were intended to create a strong, autonomous State with a modern economy, and to encourage industrial development. The introduction of modern practices and values, the diffusion of communication technologies, and the expansion of modern leisure spaces, such as cinemas and coffee shops, exposed Iranians to modern Western concepts and products.[66] A new image of the ideal woman was also introduced, one that emulated Western values. While the Pahlavi monarchy supported Westernization, the Iranian public perceived the project as an example of interference by the West (more specifically

[66] Janet Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 198.

the United States) in Iran's political and economic policies and its cultural realm. The Westernization project ultimately provoked public antagonism and resistance. The 1979 Revolution was, from a post-colonial perspective, the manifestation of a cultural struggle against the Western values. The events of the Revolution inspired my young parents, who were pursuing their studies in France at the time. Despite never having belonged to any political party, they decided to return to Iran in order to take part in the revolution (Appendix B, Figure 3). One year after the establishment of the Islamic Republic government, in the September of 1980, the country faced more turmoil and upheaval, but this time as a result of a foreign invasion by the neighboring country, Iraq. A year into the war, I was born in the city of Shiraz (Appendix B, Figure 4).

The first six years of my life, I was left mostly in the care of my maternal grandparents while my mother completed medical school and my father worked. I could describe my grandparents as modern but at the same time they held strong religious and nationalist convictions. During this period, they had a great influence on my development and behaviour. They maintained traditional expectations of appropriate gender roles for girls and boys, and as a consequence, I was dressed in feminine clothing, taught to sit 'like a lady,' to not laugh or speak loudly in public, to smile without showing my teeth, and to play with dolls and those toys seen as appropriate for girls. At this time, there was a strong return by the new Islamic regime to Islamic and Iranian values as the means for creating positive societal change. The West's support of Saddam's war against Iran increased nationalist fervor among Iranians. As Bhabha's model suggests, this return to traditional Islamic and Iranian values on one side and Western values on the other gave rise to public resistance against and antagonism towards Western modernity. As a result, both the public and the State were negatively predisposed to activities and behaviours that

could be seen as reflecting Western values, including social interaction between males and females, and any representation of females that did not conform to traditional Iranian norms.

Although my grandparents were not affiliated with any institutionalized religious group, religious values and practices played a significant role in the upbringing of their children and their grandchildren. From a very young age, I was taught the religious responsibilities that were expected of an Iranian female, and I was called to perform religious rituals, such as *vozoo* (cleaning the body in the preparation for five times daily prayer), *Namaz* (Islamic prayer), and *ghosl* (full body ritual washing) to the satisfaction of my grandparents. I also observed other family members practicing the religious duties on a fixed schedule and strict manner. During the family gatherings, when performing prayer together, women had to stand behind men during the religious practice. As a young girl, I never questioned or challenged these rituals, and simply did as my family's expected. These religious rituals were normative and unquestioned (Appendix B, Figure 5).

In addition, the normative discursive practices of heterosexuality that shape conceptions of femininity and masculinity also influenced my everyday experiences. During the first six years of my childhood, the distinction between girls' and boys' behaviour, wardrobe, interests, activities, roles, and aspirations was based on gender stereotypes. Under the guidance and supervision of my grandparents, my behaviour and actions were scrutinized and repeatedly corrected in order to conform to traditional models of femininity (Appendix B, Figure 6). These routines and reminders were disciplinary practices that encouraged self-regulation and self-awareness of my conduct. But while some of my family's beliefs captured the ideas promoted by gender stereotypes, there were equally strong views on gender equality that emphasized equal opportunities in education, sharing domestic chores, aspiring to professional employment, and

the expectation that family members are active in society. Failing to meet these normative expectations resulted in one being classified, ranked, and compared to the others.

The behaviour of young girls was also influenced by children's books, music, and TV shows—from both pre- and post-revolution Iran—which also projected normative heterosexual gendered identities. For example, *Khaleh Sooske*, a famous children song written before the revolution and still popular after the revolution, describes a female character who decides to travel to find a spouse because she feels lonely and incomplete without a male partner (Appendix B, Figure 7). The female character's role is sung in a sweet and seductive tone, while to the male part is sung in a deep and powerful voice. Yet at the same time, the song also questions and challenges gender stereotypes, such as female submissiveness, acceptance of men's authority and control over women's bodies, and domestic abuse against women. While the narrative promotes hetronormative ideals of marriage and reproduction, it is the female character herself decides who, where, when to marry. Using the model of the Third Space, the negotiation between the tradition and modernity involves both acceptance and rejection, which ultimately creates new meanings that challenge established gender representations.

The national media, which was under the control of the government, also played an important role in shaping my identity. The revolts of 1979, which led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic government, were the result of the Iranian public's disapproval of the old regime and, more specifically, its Westernization project and resulted in a wholesale rejection of the West and the concepts associated with it. As a result, the government and the media authority engaged in constant monitoring of TV programs for inappropriate Western language and imagery, implementing censorship as a mechanism of regulation and control in order to minimize the exposure of the Iranians to Western values and concepts. Overtly sexual portrayals

of women in the popular Western programs were especially seen to be against Islamic values and a threat to Islamic cultural identity. Western TV programs with images of women, and sometimes men, that were deemed inappropriate were cancelled or edited. These techniques were also applied to the children's TV programs. As a result, a female character wearing what was considered inappropriate clothing would be heard but not seen, her body and sometimes even her head blacked out on screen. (Appendix B, Figure 8).

Media discourses associated with the war also amplified gender stereotypes. Men were encouraged to defend their country by joining the military while women were advised to support the troops by preparing food, washing and sewing military uniforms, and providing care for the children in the absence of men (Appendix B, Figure 9). These stereotypical representations of gender roles effectively situated women and men, respectively, in private and public spheres.

Yet, while the media valourized distinctly different roles for men and women during war time, my memories and my family's recollections show that women's participation in the war effort routinely extended beyond the domestic realm. Women who were doctors, like my mother, were called on to provide medical care to casualties of war. My grandmother, formerly a school councillor, counselled families of war victims.

The Years of the Primary Schooling

At the age of seven, I entered school, where I was exposed to new expectations and regulations for my behaviour and conduct. The school had different rules of behaviour and conduct for boys and girls as well as specific disciplinary techniques to monitor and regulate each gender. The K12 education in Iran is based on a single-gender system; therefore, throughout my primary and secondary education in Iran, the physical spaces, curricula, and

textbooks of the schools I attended were designed specifically for female students by the Ministry of Education. In addition, in the Iranian education system, girls—and boys in primary school—were required to wear school uniforms (Appendix B, Figure 10). However, my experiences demonstrate rules and regulations varied from school to school in Iran, and were less homogeneous than might be expected.

Ten years into the instalment of the Islamic Republic government, almost eight years after the invasion of Iraq, the war finally came to an end. After the war, Iran entered a new era with a free market economy and warmer ties with the West (but not the United States) in terms of its foreign policy. With a booming economy, consumerism entered the lives of many Iranians and with it came the possibility of more social and cultural freedom. Growing affluence and the rise of consumer culture substantially transformed Iran's urban spaces and the lifestyles of Iranians. During this time, my parents decided to move to the capital, Tehran, in pursuit of better opportunities for their careers and their children. Leaving Shiraz lessened the influence and supervision of my activities by my grandparents. My parents, especially my mother, was ambivalent about moving to a bigger city. She was aware that the cultural and economic transformations in Iran would be felt most acutely in Tehran, and she was aware of the contradiction between these new freedoms and the Iranian and Islamic traditions she valued. As a result of my mother's ambivalence, my parents decided to send their children to schools in which children were closely supervised. My elementary school in Tehran was founded by the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs—a semi-governmental body—and had more restrictive rules and deeper religious values than the school I attended in Shiraz. The school authorities controlled and corrected the students' behaviour and conduct through various disciplinary methods in accordance to what they deemed to be Islamic values. These disciplinary

practices included daily inspections of school uniforms for cleanliness and school bags for prohibited materials, including jewellery which was forbidden. Students were assigned a grade for conduct and discipline, which was included in each student' grade point average. Through these daily routines and assessments, students internalized expectations and regulations so as to develop the ability to self-monitor and correct their own conduct and behaviour (Appendix B, Figure 11).

My ninth birthday has immense significance for gendering of my identity. This was when my body was subjected to new mechanisms of regulation. Based on the Iranian version of the Shi'a Islam, girls reach the age of *jashn-e taklif* [coming-of-age] at the age of nine when puberty begins and they are consider physically and intellectually mature. In comparison, boys are considered to have reached maturity at the age of fifteen. Religious duties for girls commence at this age. All elementary schools for girls hold a ceremony for third graders. For my *jashn-e taklif*, my classmates and I wore white dresses under white prayer *chadors*[67]. We sang songs and answered questions about our religious duties and the principles of Shi'a Islam in front of our mothers and school authorities (Appendix B, Figure 12). After taking part in this ceremony, girls were expected to participate in the daily noon-time prayer and to practice all their religious duties. From grade three to the end of my primary education in grade eight, girls take religious studies classes to learn Shi'a Islamic values and rituals. *Jashn-e taklif* has great significance for girls in the education system and is covered by the national media. This ritual does not have the same significance for boys. A woman's body and sexuality, from this perspective, acquire a greater attention for regulation and control, which in turn results in more self-governance and self-monitoring of behaviour and conduct. In this way, the State creates and

[67] The *chador* is an outer garment, open in the front, which covers the whole body except for the face.

maintains social order by means of religious morals and rituals and the scientific languages of intellectual and sexual maturity. Despite the significance of the *jashn-e taklif* in the institutions under the control of the government, the ceremony did not have such relevance to my family. However, from the age of nine, my family, especially my mother and grandmother, expected me to cover my hair in front of men who were not *mahram* [family relations] and to practice my daily prayers (Appendix B, Figure 13). However, my mother was ambivalent about enforcing some religious duties, such as fasting, especially for a young girl. Her ambivalence was a result of trying to reconcile her medical knowledge and her religious beliefs.

Once I reached the age of puberty, my parents, especially my mother, made a conscious decision to send me to a religious middle school (from grade six to grade eight), which was also a school with a high academic standing. In contrast to schools with more liberal views, the new school had more rules and restrictions based on the conservative version of Islamic values. The school authorities were very selective in terms of the students they accepted. In order to get admission, students had to pass academic and behavioural entry assessments. Parents, both mothers and fathers, were also evaluated in terms of their religious, social, and cultural views. In addition to the school uniform, wearing a black *chador* was also mandated for all the students (Appendix B, Figure 14). During school hours, men were forbidden from entering the school property since the students took off their hijab when they were within the walls of the school. From this perspective, the physical space of the school functioned as a private sphere and the normative practice of hijab were followed in this space.

The school also advocated practices aimed at training and preparing students for motherhood. We were encouraged to pursue higher education, so that we could become educated mothers in the future. My interviews and my school textbooks show that the Islamic Republic

government presents motherhood as a sacred role of women. The ideal of woman as caregiver and nurturer embodied in the figure of Fatimah, the daughter of Prophet Mohammad. The production of the ideal Iranian womanhood originated in academia before the revolution, especially in the work of Ali Shariati, an Iranian revolutionary and sociologist (Appendix B, Figure 15), in reaction against the Pahlavi's Westernization project's adoption of Western values and ideals. The establishment of Western feminine ideals as a model for Iranian women resulted in antagonism and resistance against the West, which was seen as a colonizer. In a sense, it was considered as an invasion against Iranian cultural values. Using Bhabha's model, these ambivalent feelings against the West initiated the attempts to create a new idealized model of Iranian womanhood. The use of Fatimah as a model of motherhood and femininity illustrates woman as nurturing, caregiving, modest, non-materialistic, and strong. Her importance derives from her position as the wife who stood beside her husband, Imam Ali (Prophet Mohammad's cousin), and the mother of Imam Hassan and Imam Hussein (successors to Imam Ali). Imam Ali is an important figure in Shi'a Islam and is considered to be the rightful successor to Prophet Mohammad. This belief also separated the Shi'a from Sunni branches of Islam. Fatimah's role of giving birth to Hassan and Hussein is considered significant to the survival of the legacy of Shi'aism. As a result, her roles as a wife and mother are considered sacred and crucial to the continuation of Shi'a Islam.

Fatima as a symbolic ideal of the Iranian woman as nurturer and caregiver was explained in school textbooks, in contrast to representations of males as leaders and protectors who provided guidance (Appendix B, Figure 16). During my school years, several textbooks for girls were different from the ones for boys. For example, *Herfeh va fan* [home economics] was a compulsory course in the three years of middle school. For girls, the course focused on domestic

activities, such as sewing, washing, cleaning, cooking, family planning, child related cares, and some electrical skills. In contrast, the boys' course taught carpentry skills, defense, electrical work, and mechanics. In this sense, traditional gender roles were reified within the classroom, and students were constantly reminded of differences between the genders. These practices aimed to facilitate the creation of docile bodies, and students were the subjects of normative discourse of heterosexuality.

After the revolution, Fatimah's birthday was officially considered the Iranian Mother's Day. Throughout my primary schooling (from grade one to grade eight), school authorities organized an annual ceremony on Mother's Day. The significance of these annual events was as a public showcase in which students were classified and ranked. Students named after Fatimah, or by her nickname Zahra, or her mother's name Khadijah (Prophet Mohammad's wife), or her daughter Zeinab were rewarded in front of other students. By virtue of its repetition, this yearly ritual reinforced Fatimah as the ideal woman, and valorized the role of wife and mother. It was indeed a process of establishing normative gender identification to situate women's predominant responsibilities in reproductive and domestic duties. The public display brought particular student bodies to visibility. Through the practice of ranking, the students who shared names associated with Fatimah were acknowledged and rewarded for complying with the ideal form of womanhood.

The techniques of examination and ranking were also applied to test students' knowledge of religious rituals women were expected to perform. The school created a point system for assessing how well students performed their religious duties. On a monthly basis, students who collected the highest point got rewarded for their achievement.

Despite the restrictions and disciplinary mechanisms implemented by the school authorities, the role of agency in the students must be also identified. During that time, there were ongoing debates on whether women should be allowed to play soccer and whether it was appropriate for women to attend men's soccer matches.[68] The debates could be understood from the fusion and contradiction between the question of soccer, which was considered a modern leisure activity, and the pre-established, traditional women's roles in their domestic responsibilities, which created ambivalent feelings towards the idea of women's soccer. In spite of these debates that raged in government and the national media, the girls in my school actively played soccer within the confines of the school. We organized teams and school competitions, designed uniforms, and asked our physical education teacher to be our referee. While school imposed rules and restrictions on students, it also provided a space within which female students could freely engage in those activities that were forbidden for women in the public sphere (Appendix B, Figure 17).

The Years of the Secondary Schooling

The contrast between my life in school and my life at home was so extreme that I often felt I was living a dual life. Despite my mother's religious beliefs, both my parents had very liberal cultural and social views on gender equality in domestic duties, occupation, capability, education, and legal and social status (Appendix B, Figure 18). They created a safe space at home where I could freely express myself and practice different activities. They also encouraged me to question gender stereotypes, to create my own understanding of the world, and to learn about other views through texts and films, such as *The Little Prince*, *The Gadfly*, and *Great*

[68] The Iranian Football (soccer) Federation organized a women's national soccer team in 2005. Today, Iranian women play soccer internationally despite the limitation of wearing a hijab. However, women are still forbidden from attending soccer stadiums.

Expectations. In addition, my choice of hijab outside of school was a loose headscarf, which was also endorsed by my parents. In contrast, I was faced with a different reality in school. Wearing the black *chador* was mandated and part of my school uniform. The rules and regulations imposed by school contradicted what I experienced at home and my parents' beliefs. Yet, during that time, the school played a more dominant role in shaping my gendered identity (Appendix B, Figure 19). This created concern for my parents, especially my father who had very liberal views. As a result, when choosing my high school, my parents decided on a very liberal school (Appendix B, Figure 20).

Moving to my new school coincided with popular discussions about women's rights in the social and political realms. Unlike my primary school, my high school had fewer restrictions and rules about religious values—in many cases they were non-existent or unenforced, Students still had to wear a school uniform; however, the *chador* was not mandated and the school did not even have a designated area for the practice of daily prayer. Students also differed from those in my primary schools. While the majority of students held strong religious convictions in my previous schools, those in the new school had feelings of antagonism and resistance towards those convictions, as well as the restrictions and regulations that were imposed by the society as a result of Islamic rules. The students did not share the religious beliefs upheld by the Islamic Republic regime. Travelling abroad and watching foreign media had exposed them to representations of women and conceptions of social and cultural freedoms that were different than those idealized in Iran at this time. The style of wearing the hijab became a site of resistance. For example, the students modified their *maghnaeh* in a way that would allow their

hair to be visible in the front and back.[69] However, in my experience, the school authorities never confronted or punished any of these behaviours (Appendix B, Figure 21). Other forms of resistance included bringing foreign music, films, and posters of singers and actors, which were forbidden in school, as well as talking about intimate relationships with the opposite sex. It was during this time that I was introduced to the concepts of sex and "boyfriend."

My interviews indicate that the transformation of women's representations and discourse around sexuality in Iran occurred as a result of the introduction of satellite TV and later the internet, which exposed many Iranians to foreign ideas and images. As a result, this brought forth many changes. During my high school years, the majority of my classmates and I had access to the internet as well as satellite dishes at home. This was indeed a new revelation in our lifestyles. With the new technology came a new culture, which consumed the majority of our discussions in school, and we all wanted to be part of it. For example: "Did you listen to Michael Jackson's new song?"; "What did you watch last night?"; "Leonardo Dicaprio is so hot!" The exposure of many Iranians to new practices and concepts, and new representations of women and sexuality, that emulated the Western values, contradicted, challenged, and disrupted the pre-established cultural icons and symbols introduced by the government. The authorities identified these exposures as a threat to cultural and social values which created ambivalent feelings about the new communication technologies, and resulted in the rejection of these innovations. The government increased surveillance and implemented regulations that included the banning of satellite dishes, assigning penalties for distributing foreign media without authorization, and using filtering systems to block unwanted Internet sites. Yet, many of these measures proved to

[69] The *maghnaeh* is an Iranian hijab worn by schoolgirls and female government workers. It fully covers a woman's head and shoulders leaving only her face exposed.

be unsuccessful as users bought satellite dishes on the black market and undermined the regime's internet filtering technology by using anonymous browsing techniques.

The ambivalent feelings about these new images of women and sexuality also entered our family, and were most strongly felt by my mother. My parents introduced their children to these technologies like many other families, and both my parents admired these modern tools for information and exposure to other cultural values. Yet, my mother was uncomfortable with the portrayal of women and the representations of sexuality in foreign media, which were against her beliefs and values. As a result, these contradictory concepts created tensions and constant negotiations that involved rejection and acceptance of the new contents brought forth by the technological tools. These ambivalent feelings endorsed new disciplinary techniques, such as internet safety strategies, hiding away the TV remote in my parents' absence to prevent me from watching TV, suspending inappropriate channels and TV programs, and censorship. For example, my experience of watching the movie *Titanic* (1997) with my parents illustrates the effect of these ambivalent feelings. The scene when the character Rose posed in the nude for Jack and the scene in which they had sex in a red Rolls-Royce caused my mother to cover the TV screen with a newspaper so that my father and I could not see what was happening.

The diffusion of information and communication technologies gave the Iranian public easy access to representations of sex and sexuality and encouraged sexual curiosity and openness. This transformation opens up the discussion of gendered identity in relation to the male gaze. The exposure to sex and sexuality created an openness of discussion about sex among youth. This also created curiosity about sex and sexual attractions. Despite social mechanisms to restrict and control interactions between boys and girls, Iranian youth devised creative strategies in order to engage with each other. Since women's faces are the only part of the female body

visible in the public, some of my friends underwent plastic surgery to make themselves more attractive and desirable to men (Appendix B, Figure 22). At the same time, unwanted male attentions in public areas were a problem. Male drivers honked to get the attention of female pedestrians walking alone or stopped to offer women a ride. Men whistled or threw rocks at women, or rubbed against women on the narrow or crowded sidewalks of Tehran (Appendix B, Figure 23). My parents were alarmed by such sexual harassment and yet reluctant to stop my participation in extracurricular activities. These competing concerns led them to implement various strategies which included providing constant supervision, secure transportation, self-defense training, and a mobile phone. To reduce any possible attention from men in the public, my grandmother also introduced me to new sets of techniques for the presentation of my body in public so as to be less desirable to males. These techniques included controlling facial expression (frowning rather than smiling), avoiding eye-contact with unrelated members of opposite sex, and maintaining an awareness of my posture. In this way, men's desire made my female body both the subject and object of the male gaze.

After I finished high school, my mother received a two-year research opportunity from a Canadian hospital. However, Iranian law does not allow women to be away from their families for more than one year, which is part of the broader discourses and practices of the ideal form of a womanhood dedicated to reproduction and motherhood. As a result of this law, my family relocated to Canada along with my mother, and I have been here since then (Appendix B, Figure 24).

CONCLUSION

My thesis project takes as its starting point that the Iranian women's gendered identity cannot be simply explained by reverting to binary oppositions or fixed presuppositions. I use an autobiographical approach by employing heuristics as a system of inquiry to investigate the complex relations that were involved in the formation of my gendered identity. My narrative, which is based on my memories of growing up in Iran and the recollections of my family members, allows me to look at the forces involved in the production and transformation of my gendered identity through the lens of Foucauldian conceptions of subjectivity and power relations and Bhabha's concept of a Third Space. I examine my own experiences, relationship, and understanding of being an Iranian girl and woman growing up in Iran to interrogate how my gendered identity was formed and transformed and how the tensions and contradictions between cultural values, as identified in my study as Iranian, Islamic, and Western paradigms, played out in the production of my gendered identity.

Foucauldian conceptions of subjectivity and power relations facilitate the process of identifying the disciplinary mechanisms and institutions that acted to shape behaviour and constructed gender roles described in my narrative. Yet, these Foucauldian conceptions leave insufficient room for agency[70] and largely overlook the resistance and contestation that are inherent in attempts to discipline a populace. Bhabha's Third Space, a theory of identity primarily concerned with the postcolonial condition, complements Foucauldian conceptions of subjectivity and power relations by focusing on agency. This conception is useful in so far as it

[70] The extent to which agency plays a role in Foucault's theories is subject to debate within the poststructuralist literature. See Margaret A. McLaren, *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity* (New York: SUNY Press, 2002); Mark Bevir, "Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency Against Autonomy," *Political Theory* 27, no. 1 (1999): 65-84; Amy Allen, "The Anti-Subjective Hypothesis: Michel Foucault and the Death of the Subject," *The Philosophical Forum* 31, no. 2 (2000): 113-130; and Amy Allen, "Power, Subjectivity and Agency: Between Arendt and Foucault," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 10, no. 2 (2002): 131-149.

facilitates the process of identification of how people who are subject to disciplinary regimes react to these disciplinary efforts. These reactions often take the form of ongoing negotiations with dominant ideologies, whether in form of resistance or adoption of a hybrid form of the dominant ideologies. These ongoing negotiations in turn lead to the transformation of the dominant paradigms as well as creative adaptation of the dominant paradigms to suit one's own specific circumstances. In other words, dominant paradigms are enforced by disciplinary institutions, and the reactions they evoke may lead to the production of new hybrid meanings.

The narrative I develop in my thesis project identifies the social institutions, such as family, school, government, urban space, and national and foreign media through which various disciplinary techniques, such as fixed routines, examinations, rankings, classifications, and surveillances, have acted to control and correct my conduct and behaviour. My narrative demonstrates how the use of the iconic figure of Fatima and the language of motherhood in State and school events acted to idealize women's roles as mother and wife. The language of motherhood and the representations of manhood and womanhood in school textbooks and the curriculum, as well as official ceremonies and religious rituals acted to normalize distinct gender roles and identities. These distinct gender roles and identities were also further reinforced as a result of the male gaze, which brought forth various disciplinary techniques such as restricting the interactions between the opposite-genders. All these disciplinary mechanisms acted in concert to influence my gendered identity.

As my narrative demonstrates, however, women were not simply silent victims of these societal disciplinary techniques. In many cases, women challenged, resisted, and contested restrictions and regulations imposed upon them by the Islamic Republic regime in Iran. These contestations led to the transformation of conceptions of womanhood in Iran, in ways that were

not intended by the disciplinary mechanisms of the Islamic Republic government. Indeed, while gender segregation was meant to enforce strict gender roles on women in Iran, it instead created a space within which women were free of many of the patriarchal constraints and engaged in 'masculine' activities—such as playing soccer—that facilitated experimentations with gender roles and expectations that were outside of the bounds of the dominant paradigms espoused by the Islamist ideology.

My thesis paper identifies Iranian womanhood as the result of creative adaptation and borrowing from a multiplicity of various dominant paradigms including the Islamic, Iranian, and Western paradigms. When Islamic paradigm was dominant under the Islamic Republic regime, women engaged in a creative borrowing from the other paradigms that led to the transformation of gendered identity. This transformation creates what Bhabha refers to as hybrid identity. Indeed, as I show in my narrative, there is a continuous interplay between the Islamic, Iranian, and Western paradigms within Iranian society that also played out within my family. The practice of mandatory hijab for women, enforced by the Islamic regime, was resisted by girls and women, and resulted in the new hybrid practice of wearing the hijab in such a way that showed hair, dyed in noticeable bright colours, in the front and back. Within my family, this hybrid practice of hijab manifested in a form of wearing the headscarf in a loose manner. Lastly, this is not to overstate women's freedoms in Iran, but to portray the fluidity and complexity that is central to gendered identities in Iran.

My autobiographical thesis project, the book titled *Bahar's Story: Negotiations in the Third Space*, aims to produce a multilayered visual narrative that captures the qualities of complexity, ambiguity, and hybridity that marked my experience of growing up female in Iran in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of Iranian women's gendered identities.

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

I conducted in-depth interviews with my family members as part of my study on gendered identity. The questions that follow are what each family member was asked during the interview.

Q1: When you first married, how did you imagine your future family would be like, how many children, what gender, and how you would raise them?

Q2: When you decided to marry, you both worked outside of the home. How did you think of sharing household responsibilities? How did you think about raising children?

Q3: How were household tasks and responsibilities appropriated in your family of origin? How were they appropriated once you married? How were they appropriated once you had children?

Q4: How would you describe society expectations for boys and girls in the period during which you were starting your family?

Q5: How do you describe life during the Iran-Iraq War period? How did it affect your family life? How did it affect your expectations of your children?

Q6: 'Coming of age' is an important annual celebration held in schools and promoted in the media. It marks from childhood to adulthood. 'Coming of age' occurs at different ages for girls and boys—girls 'coming out of age' is at the age of nine and boys at fifteen. Why do you think 'coming out of age' occurs at different ages for boys and girls? Do you think the ceremony and experience are the same for boys and girls in their families?

Q7: You taught me how to pray and read Qur'an to me as early as the age of five. Why did you decide to teach me religious practices at the very young age? Did it have the same meaning to you as the 'coming of age'?

Q8: How do you describe the time period after the war ended, roughly from 1988 to 1997? Was your life and your family life affected? How? Did it affect your expectations of your daughters? Sons? How did it impact on your life and on your family life? Did it have any impact on your expectations of your daughters and sons?

Q9: Thinking back, how do you describe raising your children based on their gender? What were your expectations, concerns, and worries for your daughters? For your sons?

Q10: How did you prepare your daughters and sons for their future? What qualities did you emphasize while raising your children? Were they different for your daughters and sons?

Q11: In 1997, Mohammad Khatami was elected president on a platform promising reforms for greater gender equality and women's participation in economy and politics. Could you describe women's lives and roles before and after his election?

Q12: What were the main sources for news and entertainment for Iranian people during Iran-Iraq War and the period after war till 1997? What are they today?

Q13: Do you think the attitudes toward the gender roles and qualities of women's lives have changed in today's Iran comparing to the time period of 1979 revolutionary Iran? Describe gender relations and women's social and political activities in 1979 revolutionary period; the period of Iran-Iraq War; Post-war till 1997; and today.

APPENDIX B: FIGURES

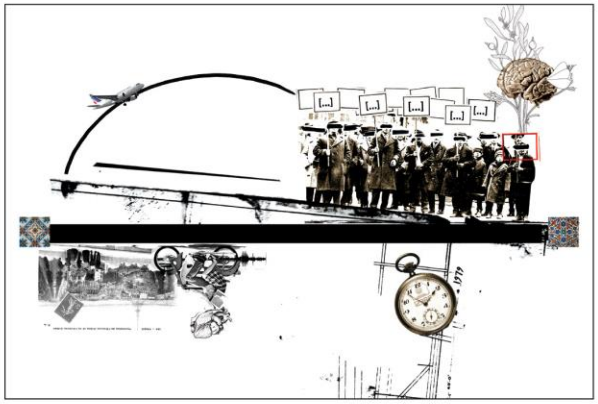

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

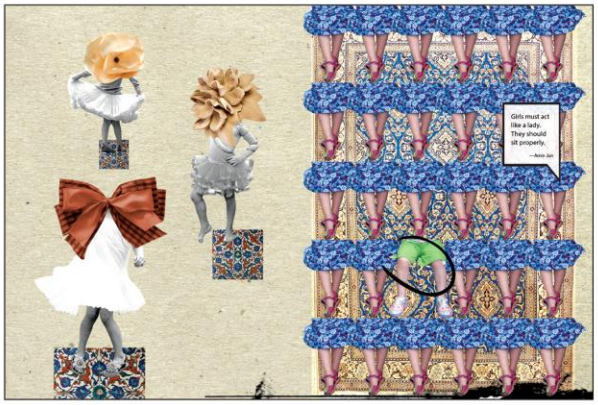

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Figure 7

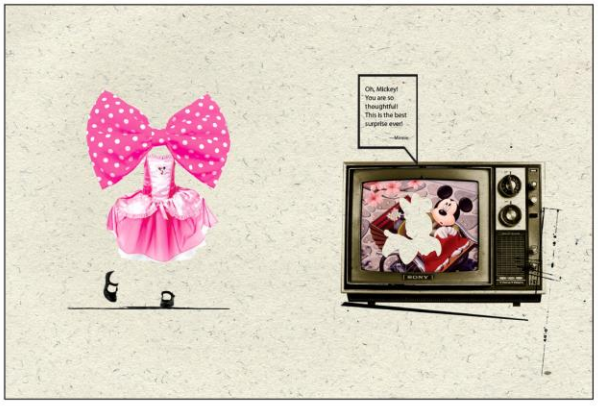

Figure 8

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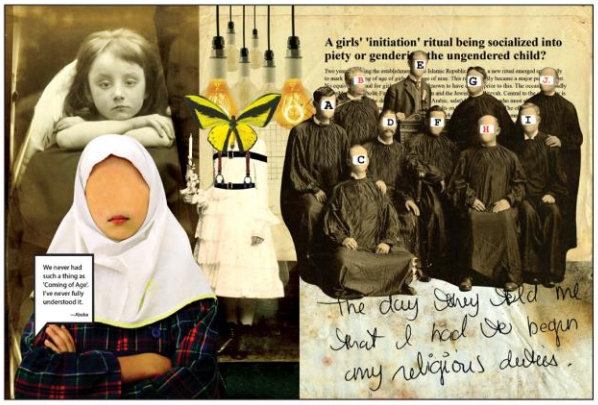
Figure 10

Figure 11



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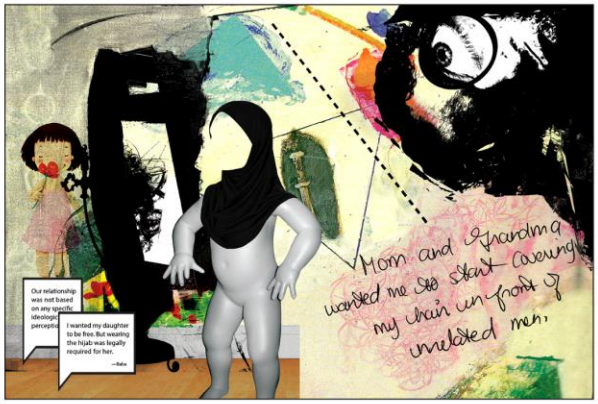

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Figure 16

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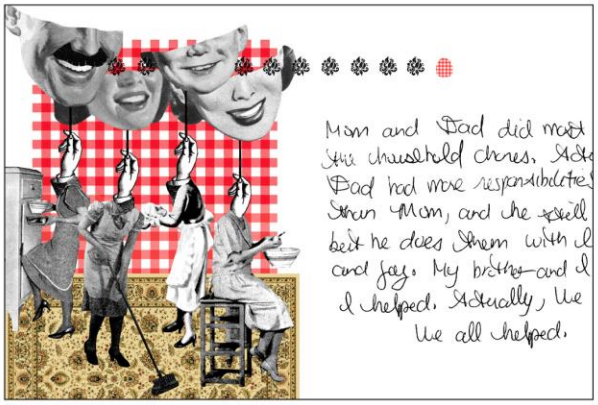

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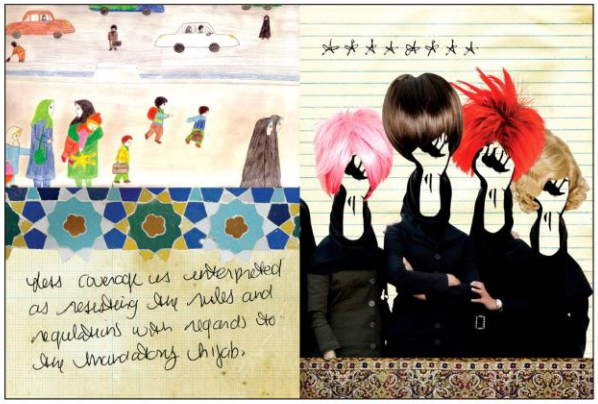
Figure 19

Figure 20



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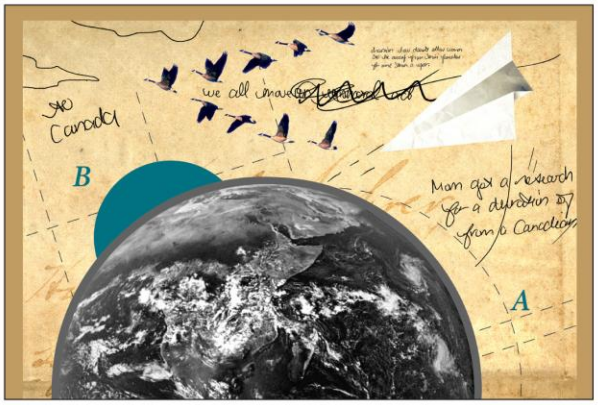

Figure 24

APPENDIX C: IMAGE CREDITS

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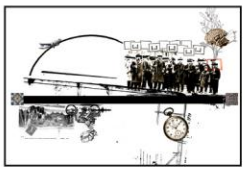

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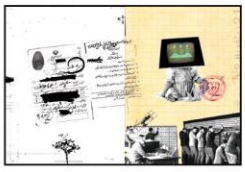

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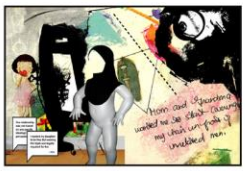

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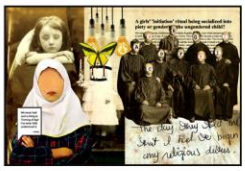

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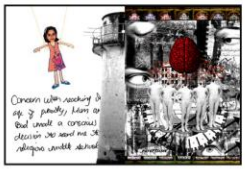

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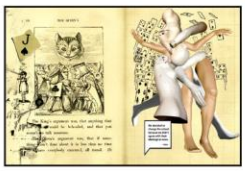

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