



Hurtful Augenblick

Affect's Doing in a Series of Instagram Stories of Resistance

A Master's Thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts (120 credits) in Visual Culture

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Abstract

Hurtful Augenblick:

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Samaneh Mohseni Hosseinabadi

This thesis explores the affective qualities in a set of Instagram stories juxtaposing photos of the pre- and after 1979 Iranian revolution protests. It poses the central question: 'How can the power of photographic images in an era of social media be elucidated based on theories of affect?' By asking this, another subsequent question arises: 'How is an affective reading of a type of material of mixed and complex nature formulated?' These two questions shape the structure of this thesis.

To answer the subsequent question, the first chapter of the thesis looks at the complexities of affect theories in different humanities disciplines while taking the empirical material as the constant point of departure in formulating an analysis structure and a theoretical framework. The theoretical framework aids in both formulating the analysis structure, and the detailed discussions needed to answer the main research question. The thesis brings in various vectors of theory but mainly dwells on performativity, phenomenology and semiotics the way it is employed by Roland Barthes and Margaret Olin's reading of Barthes. Vittorio Gallese's Embodied Simulation theory is also of importance in the discussions throughout the thesis.

In chapter two, this thesis employs the outlined analysis structure to summon different theoretical discussions to investigate the affective qualities of the empirical material. Through this investigation, the thesis elaborates on the power of the photographic image to provoke affect in the beholder and its potential when represented through newer forms of media representations to answer the central research question. Furthermore, it proposes reconsiderations of the usual manner of theorizing the visual material more generally.

Keywords: affect theories, photographic image, embodied simulation, Iran, social media

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Introduction

One morning in November 2019, I woke up to a beautiful snowfall to go to the University to teach in a seminar, where we had planned to work on a collection of critical essays by master's students of architectural history about a question that the president had asked a few months prior, 'Where is the Islamic Republic's City?'¹

The University is located in northern Tehran, where snowfalls are heavier, and the residents belong to upper economic classes. By the time I arrived, all the highways in the city were jammed, and the national radio in the cab was broadcasting the morning news. It stated the gasoline prices tripled overnight without any prior announcements from the government, and while it was a shock to the citizens, people were going to work and school as usual in this beautiful snowy day. On my phone, on Twitter and Instagram, I lived in a parallel universe where people stopped their cars on all highways and streets all over the country in peaceful protest.

As I walked the remaining one Kilometer up to the University through the jammed highway, I continued checking my social media for the news. Texting back and forth with family and friends in my hometown, I witnessed the protests spreading fast and the police getting violent. The connection to the international web was cut by early afternoon as I walked back south, through the jammed highways covered in more snow, receiving calls from my family worried about my safety and desperate without an internet connection to the world to get the news of the events.

The following week passed without connection to the international web until the protests were finished due to immense violent police oppression. The connection to the world came back gradually, and the photos of oppression started circulating on social media. Wounded bodies, dead bodies, blood and fire, and desperation spread through the snow.

Next January, my morning started with the news of a plane crash; the Ukrainian Airlines Flight 752 crashed near Tehran minutes after takeoff from Imam Khomeini International Airport.

¹ I should mention that the official name of the country is 'Islamic Republic of Iran.' But there is an inherent divide in the name and usually the citizens call the country Iran and the government authorities call it Islamic Republic, the latter has gained an alienating connotation among the citizens, when they say Islamic Republic, they are referring to the government and not the country. The president's question was part of a speech he gave, where he stated we knew what Iranian cities looked like in different periods of history, but we did not know what the Islamic Republic's city looked like. He asked the question in criticizing the lack of studies on the after 1979 revolution architecture and city and the lack of architecturally significant monuments and urban developments. I received many comments from the students, following the events in November 2019, stating that Islamic Republic's city is where the citizens are being killed on its streets.

Everyone died, and a video circulated through social media showing that the plane was shot. That single video and the pressure from the public forced the military, after three days of denial, to admit that Iran's air defense system had hit the plane. Unlike the official news on national television, social media was flooded with photos, screengrabs of the video, photos of the victims, and the crash site.

I cannot recall how many of the same mornings I have had in my life, reaching out for my phone to check for news on social media, reports from citizen journalists, and uncensored information. One thing is common in all these mornings; there are always photographs that serve as evidence of an event or as tokens of remembrance or fronts for raising awareness. The heavy censorship of national news through the years after the 1979 revolution has resulted in a tendency toward acquiring news through different mediums. Before the social media era, the main source was the news agencies outside Iran, such as BBC Persian, and now it is supplemented with social media and reports from anonymous citizens.

There is an unspoken collective agreement among citizens² to shoot events and pass them through as soon as something happens. Anonymous users and groups spread the photos and turn them into artworks, and in the process, some photos stand out. In the affective abundance of photos of violence and resistance, there are iconic photos that *stick*. In her essay 'Happy Objects,' Sara Ahmed gives affect a 'sticky-ness' property as something that keeps 'the connection between ideas, values, and objects.'³ The sticky photos are sometimes juxtaposed with photos from before —the before refers to different points in Iranian history and sometimes even the world if there is a resemblance.

I had seen these scattered juxtapositions made by different people on social media. A specific set, however, stuck with me more than the others: a series of Instagram stories that told an anecdote of resistance, violence, and hopelessness by juxtaposing different photos of different protests, putting the photos of protests after the 1979 revolution next to the ones from protests

² This is something based on my lived experience in Iran and witnessing different protests unravelling. It specifically became evident when during November 2019, when the connection to the international web was cut by the government, the news agencies outside Iran did not have any reliable information or visual material and reports from the citizens on the events happening in Iran.

³ S. Ahmed, 'Happy Objects', in M. Gregg and G. Seigworth (ed.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010, p. 29.

leading to the 1979 revolution. I could not get the anecdote out of my head; my initial question was: Why do these photos affect me as much as they do?

Aim and Research Questions

The previous anecdote represents my lifelong experience of being affected by photos and the social and political context surrounding them. It also shows the affective force that was the trigger for researching this topic. In this thesis, theorizations of affect and the photographic image (namely semiotics, performativity and embodied simulation) will form the theoretical spine of the analysis structure. These theorizations connect all different layers of analysis while their inter- and cross-disciplinary nature is considered throughout the discussion.

This thesis is arranged in two parts to answer the overall research question: How can the power of photographic images in an era of social media be elucidated based on theories of affect?

By asking this overall question, an inevitable subsequent question arises: How is an affective reading of a type of material of varied and complex nature formulated? To answer this question, I will first highlight the theoretical debates around affect, the photographic image, and affect in the photographic image.

I hypothesize that in this formulation, the body plays an important role; the individual body and the collective body. As Sara Ahmed discusses, we come to have a sense of our skin as a bodily surface. Although it keeps us apart from others, it also *mediates* the relationship between bodies, internal and external.⁴

I will then apply this theoretical investigation, and methodological formulation to the Instagram stories set I have chosen as my empirical material. By doing so, I aim to access the affective qualities of the material based on the material's nature and choose them as the starting point of inquiry and not just as an object that the theories are applied to. This aims to answer the overall research question.

In a broader sense, then this thesis aims to achieve two goals: first, to open up for further questions and reflections on studying affective qualities in photographic material represented in

⁴ S. Ahmed, 'Collective Feelings or the Impression Left by Others', *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2002, p. 28.

newer media formats, and second, to propose reconsiderations of the usual manner of theorizing the visual material more generally.

Background and Relevance

The 1979 revolution in Iran, also known as the Islamic Revolution, is considered by some the most drastic change in Iran's history. As debatable as this claim is, no doubt the 1979 revolution was a drastic change of government when for the first time in history, the Monarchy was replaced by an Islamic Republic, which is based on the rule of Islamic Jurists and one member of the clergy as the supreme leader. The government is based on the rule of Islamic law and two main pillars, compulsory *hijab* for women and opposition to the US and Israel. The revolution was led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who later was assigned as the country's first supreme leader;⁵ after his death in 1989, Ali Khamenei was appointed as the supreme leader, and he remains in the position to this day.

The seeds for the 1979 Iranian revolution were planted in 1941 when Reza Shah, the last king of Iran's father, was sent to exile to South Africa by the Allies because of his tendencies toward the Axis powers, only to have his son on the throne. In 1953, the Shah (Mohammad Reza Pahlavi), manipulated and forced by the British and American intelligence services, dismissed the popular nationalist prime minister, Mohammad Mossadeq, who refused and sent the Shah into a panic flee from Iran to Italy. Eventually, the CIA and MI6 organized a coup and overthrew Mossadeq and Shah returned.

During all these years, intellectuals and the members of the clergy who were opposed to the way the country was run, one driven by nationalist tendencies and the other by religious ones

⁵ It is worth mentioning that the supreme leader in the Islamic Republic is not just a political role, it is based on the development of a Shiite concept called *velāyat-e motlaq-e-ye faqīh*, that translates to 'the Absolute Guardianship of the Jurist.' In this concept a member of the clergy is appointed as *vali* (the guardian) and is considered to be continuing the line of Islamic government since the Prophet Muhammad's time and his predecessors who are twelve Imam's, last of them is in hiding and will come back to lead the Muslim nation. *Vali*, then is in charge until the last Imam reappears, and in this role he has the absolute power over the Muslim nation under his rule and can decide the fate of the nation as a whole and its individual members. In this concept his power is invested in him through the chain from Muhammad's time, by God and so it is an absolute power. Although based on the Islamic Republic of Iran's constitution and the government structure, the supreme leader does not have an executive power in the country's affairs, this Absolute power opens the door for any interference if he himself deems necessary.

against the government's not so Islamic façade, were outspoken about their opposition to the Monarchy.

Consequently, people were also following their lead in opposing the Shah, despite some tension between the two poles of the opposition. These oppositions continued, and gradually Khomeini became a prominent face of the opposition based on his power to lead the masses. The intellectuals and the clergy were aligned and gained more power from 1962 onwards. While Khomeini kept developing his ideas for an Islamic Government that the ordinary working-class Iranians celebrated due to their Islamic roots and his simplicity in formulating his ideas opposed to those of the intellectuals.

With Khomeini becoming more popular among the people, he became the leader of recurring protests against Shah's regime that eventually led to the 1979 revolution to overthrow Shah. The closer the protests got to 1979, the more violent they became; many people were killed on the streets and many in Shah's prisons. The revolution was considered a victory for most Iranians regardless of their religious beliefs since the Monarchy, despite their patriotic tendencies, was considered a corrupt, oppressive one.⁶

Despite this victory, soon after the revolution, the scene changed with Khomeini's verbal order for compulsory *hijab* and the rapid divide of power that left almost all the other not very religious groups involved in the victory out of the leading circles of power.⁷ The first series of protests after the 1979 revolution were against the compulsory *hijab* ruling, which was treated violently, although not to the same degree as the violence of the pre-1979 protests, and a compromise on the protesting women's side was made for the sake of the revolution. The revolution led the political situation to take a rapid turn toward the worse based on the Islamic laws, limiting many citizens' civil rights, especially women. Iran-Iraq war hit the country for eight years, and any hope for reform gradually was shadowed by the war and the new government's attempt to establish itself as the Islamic government. From that very first series of protests against compulsory *hijab* ruling, there were protests against various issues in Iran, and all of them were oppressed with different degrees of violence.

⁶ This very concise historical account of the events leading to the Iranian revolution in 1979 is based on this book: Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two revolutions*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1982. It should be noted that there are many nuances to this revolution and this account is only presented to give an overview of the event for the reader and I do not claim to have gone deep into the historical nuances since it is out of the scope of this thesis.

⁷ For detailed account of these protests refer to: M., Matin and N., Mohajer, *Khizesh-e Zanan-e Iran* Vol. 1 [Iranian Women's Movement], Cologne, Noghteh Publication, 2013.

It is to be noted that generally, in Iran's current political atmosphere, any protest is considered an act of treason and a threat to the rule of Islamic law, which in practice means it will be oppressed by any means necessary and usually is followed by extensive arrests of citizens, activists, journalists and politicians involved.⁸ It is important because any reference to protest means a reference to potential violence in this context, and it is not perceived as it is in more democratic countries.

Oppression of journalists and photographers⁹ and the rise of digital photography and its accessibility to the broader public caused a shift in how the protests were documented. While the pre-1979 photos were mainly taken by professional photographers and journalists and had specific aesthetical characteristics, many of the newer photos were taken by ordinary citizens, shared digitally on social media, or passed among individuals. The primary purpose was to get the news of the events out due to the lack of independent newspapers and extreme censorship on the national news mediums.

Around the same time, people familiar with photography, historians, and sociologists gradually started juxtaposing images of the 1979 revolution next to the images of the recent years' protests, pointing out similarities between the protests leading to the 1979 revolution and the ones after the revolution.¹⁰

The new attention towards the older analog photos of the 1979 revolution is partly magnified by the world increasingly mediated by virtuality. The photos are circulated digitally in the conversation with the post-1979 photos since the virtual realm is significantly used in Iranian society. It is a shared space that is hard to control and, therefore, a common ground for Iranians living in Iran and the Iranian diaspora.

⁸ Discussing the degree of human rights violations in Iran was out of the scope of this thesis. It is a controversial issue between the governmental officials and the international governmental organizations. For an overview of the human rights situation in Iran please refer to Amnesty International website. On the website, there are also detailed pages about specific cases of human rights violations: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/iran/report-iran/> (Accessed 21 May 2022)

⁹ Based on Reporters without Borders report, Iran is one of the world's ten worst countries for press freedom, in 2022, it has the 178th place out of 180 countries: <https://rsf.org/en/country/iran> (Accessed 21 May 2022)

¹⁰ An interesting example of this is David Burnett's, who has photographed the Iranian revolution in 1979, opinion piece in New York Times. D. Burnett, 'Once Upon a Revolution in Iran', New York Times, New York, Dec. 2019. <http://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/24/opinion/iran-revolution.html> accessed 29 December 2021.

Since the rapid rise of media platforms and the growth of the digital world, as early as the 1980s, new means of telecommunication have become a point of heated debate. As it is for some, a death of real encounters, for many, it has been liberating. The digital realm's enormity and uncontrollability have made it a perfect space for oppressed individuals and groups. Despite all the early theoretical debates and the new turns toward limiting the daily use of digital media and, precisely, social media in many contexts, it has been more beneficial than destructive.

The photographic image has been one of the most important mediums of the modern world, which has changed modern society into one with a tendency toward the visual. News photos are usually one of the first things we open our eyes to every morning and close them to every night. News articles are supplemented with photos, and we expect to see photos of any event on the news. Photos and videos are usually our main sources of information about world affairs. We expose ourselves to photos, and we let photos affect us. They as well have not failed us, their affective power is evident, and everyone has at least one touching photo in mind that has stuck with them for a long time.

Despite our awareness of the power of the photographic image, our fascination with photographic images seems to be endless. We still keep taking photos and circulating them; the abundance of the photographic image surrounding us does not stop our abilities of being affected by them, and the social media we so despise is still where we resort to when we want to spread a sense of affection through the photographic image.

In this thesis, I will dwell on this fascination with the photographic image and its mysterious power in provoking emotions. By establishing different background aspects, I drew the contextual outline for my empirical material as things related to a community of people, a collection belonging to a powerful visual medium and represented through a rapidly growing and changing media environment.

Empirical Material

This thesis will examine a series of ten Instagram stories that I first saw on November 28th, 2021. They were later saved under the stories' highlight function of Instagram titled 'The Repetition Cycle.' The series combines texts and photographs; some of the photographs are screengrabs of videos shot by citizens. In November 2021, the farmers in my hometown Isfahan, a central city in

Iran famous for its river, started a series of strikes on the dry riverbed of Zayandeh Roud, calling on local and national authorities to open the dam and bring back the water to the river which they rely on for their livelihood. The river has gone dry because of climate change and water mismanagement for over twenty years.

The strike lasted for about two weeks, and on November 19th other citizens joined the farmers in protest.¹¹ The police and unofficial militia groups supported by the government gradually started treating the protesters violently, and the photos of these violent treatments circulated on Social Media when it peaked on November 28th.

The first two frames show photos of the mentioned protests and then are followed by six frames representing a juxtaposition of protest photos from before and after the 1979 revolution. It ends with two frames that serve as a conclusion to the visual testimonies presented earlier in the set. While the Instagram series I have chosen as my empirical material are published on a public account on Instagram, their main audience is the Iranian society and Persian speakers since the texts on the frames are only in Persian with references to Persian poetry and contemporary history. It is therefore important to have this point in mind when discussing the empirical material and consider that even though there is a target audience, the nature of material which is heavily visual, does not dismiss the affective qualities they might have when perceived by beholders other than the target audience. This in fact opens up for discussions of the layered affective qualities in the photographic image that is not solely dependent on language and extensive contextual knowledge. Another important point about the audience is that they have a variety of political views, some are less inclined towards calling the acts of police violence as oppressive and some are not, yet the fact that there is a juxtaposition of pre- and after 1979 photos, means that the affective qualities work on a variety of Iranian audience regardless of their political views, even though they might not be completely in line with the series' position.

In discussing empirical material, I refer to the series as a whole, and when necessary, I discuss individual photographs in the series. Because the series was created by an individual, who is not an artist or journalist, nor possesses any other relevant title, and to honor her request for anonymity, I refer to her as M throughout the thesis. As for the background information about the photos related to the protests, I rely on the official news providers who has verified the

¹¹ S. Mohseni Hosseinabadi, 'Iran's Environmental Protests: How Water Mismanagement is Becoming a National Conflict', *The Perspective*, December 2021, <https://www.theperspective.se/2021/12/21/article/irans-environmental-protests-how-water-mismanagement-is-becoming-a-national-conflict/> (Accessed: 2022-04-20).

authenticity of the citizen reports of the incidents. These are mainly BBC Persian, VOA Persian and Radio Farda.

My initial choice of material was a wider variety of photographic juxtapositions made by different people over the years that I had encountered before this research. To delimit the number of materials and the time required to find and access those materials, I decided to focus on this specific set which contained enough empirical material for my theoretical discussions and had a unique potential for the discussions of affect as well as being the most recent set of such juxtapositions as far as I researched.

Method and Theory

In this thesis, the methodological approach derives from discussing theories around affective encounters and the photographic image. I will take my empirical material and its inherent mixed nature as the point of departure for developing a methodological approach and an analysis structure specific to the material. In doing so, I will discuss the many aspects of affect as scholars in different disciplines have theorized them. Through the formulation of an analysis structure, my methodological approach comes to the surface.

I follow in the footsteps of Jill Bennett's *Empathic Vision*, who has argued that a reconsideration in discussing art is much needed where art is not only an object of theoretical readings but also a source to provoke thought and theorization. She has claimed that her approach does not aim to dismiss the use of theory for reading the works of art but to expand the methodological borders.¹² Referring to her approach, I do not claim to propose a new methodology since it is much bigger than the scope of this thesis, but I aim to dip a toe in the same waters.

My approach depends on an awareness of the complexity of studying affect. I rely on Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth's *Affect Theory Reader* as the primary source for outlining the different theoretical approaches toward affect theorization. It is the first step in outlining my theoretical framework. Early in the discussion, I will include theories of affective encounters in the photographic image, showing how it has been approached from different and sometimes

¹² J. Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Artefact, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 152.

contrasting angles. I aim to demonstrate the tension between these approaches and benefit from this tension to formulate my analysis structure as a dynamic one.

I will use discussions on the body's role as the basis of many philosophical theories. In formulating the analysis structure, I will benefit from Gilles Deleuze's Spinozan approach to the body and phenomenological discussions of the body. This discussion of the body as a tool to formulate the analysis structure will then be the playground for the theoretical tensions I will present.

I will touch upon Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* and the influence of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics on his developing of notions of *punctum* and *studium*. Barthes defines *studium* as the symbolic layer of meaning in the photographic image that affects the beholder but does not go further to a personal level, while *punctum* is a detail in a photograph that 'punctures' the *studium* level and makes a connection with the beholder on a personal level. I bring in heated debates on the shortcomings of semiotics and the supposed inherent photographic indexicality from Tom Gunning and Margaret Olin while discussing Barthes. I will discuss different theories of performativity to the extent it benefits my analysis of the empirical material on some levels.

Vittorio Gallese's *Embodied Simulation* theory plays a significant role in anchoring the mentioned theories to that of the body, giving the body a metaphorical role in the discussion and a central role in the discussion of affective encounters in the photographic image. Sara Ahmed's works also resonate with that of Gallese in centralizing the body in the discussion. Ahmed, drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who relates perception precisely to the intercorporeality of being with others, discusses the relationship between movement and attachment; she claims that what moves us, and makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place; this attachment is linked to proximity, to getting close enough to touch another and being moved by another.

Previous Research

Babak Ebrahimian uses an exhibition consisting of different artistic works from the pre- and post-1979 revolution: *Between Word and Image: Modern Iranian Visual Culture*¹³, as a case study to discuss pictures of a revolution. Part of the exhibition focuses on Abbas Attar's photos of the

¹³ *Between Word and Image: Modern Iranian Visual Culture*, Grey Art Gallery, New York, September 18-December 7, 2002; Abbas, *Iran Diary 1971-2002*, Autrement Press, 2002.

uprisings leading to the 1979 revolution. Ebrahimian uses Barthes' (1981) ideas on *studium* and *punctum* in *camera lucida* as his basis of argument. I also argue that these two elements are necessary to understand how the empirical material is perceived. At the same time, his argument stays on this level, but I will go further to take the aspects of *punctum* as supplementary for provoking empathy while also showing that Barthes' work does not suffice the discussion of affective qualities in the photographic image. Ebrahimian claims that revolution is not a sharp point in history but rather a process; he goes on to the third part of the exhibition dealing with the posters of post-revolutionary Iran to build on his claim.

In a previous paper¹⁴, I worked on the emotions presented in a photo collection by Hengameh Golestan and used the emotions as a basis of argument on the representation of violence; I will build on some of the arguments I presented in the said paper by exploring them further.

Sara Ahmed argues that we can look into the psychic, social, individual, and collective relationship by considering how emotions work. She focuses on how feelings make 'the collective' appear as if it were a body in the first place.¹⁵ I argue that this definition of a body is also manifested in the very flesh of the bodies that we see in the empirical material of this research. Many have previously discussed how emotions are vital in establishing the social bond in psychoanalysis (Blackman and Walkerdine, 2002; Freud, 1922), the sociology of emotions (Bendelow and Williams, 1998; Kemper, 1990; Williams, 2001), or in theories of the nation and diaspora as imagined communities (Anderson, 1991; Moorti, 2003). In studying my empirical material, I will build on these debates, although not directly, by discussing the visual embodiment of emotions by bodily others.

Scholars of photography have also studied the affect of the photographic image. I will rely heavily on Margaret Olin's *Touching Photographs*¹⁶, where she discusses affect and its relation to indexicality and presents an interesting take on Barthes notions of *punctum* and *studium*. In her book *Photographic Engagements*¹⁷, Erika Larsson looks at affect in photography

¹⁴ 'Always Guilty, Mostly Angry', presented in Landskrona Foto symposium on September 2021, the paper was first written for the course KOVN11.

¹⁵ S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004.

¹⁶ M. Olin, *Touching Photographs*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2012.

¹⁷ E., Larsson, *Photographic Engagements: Belonging and Affective Encounters in Contemporary Photography*, Gothenburg and Stockholm, Makadam, 2018, p. 134.

from different angles; specifically, her work on photography and participation is instrumental in my discussion of the empirical material as a whole in the social and political context.

Disposition of the Thesis

In chapter one, research on affect and how it has been theorized with different approaches and within different disciplines will be discussed. This is to situate the present thesis in the context of affect theory and studies and to problematize the complexities involved in studying affect and affective qualities. Therefore I start with questioning what affect is and touch upon terms associated with affect studies, such as emotions, empathy, and trauma. By putting different discussions on and about affect into conversation with one another, I will show affect's dynamic nature and how this dynamism calls for a dynamic approach toward studying it in the empirical material.

In doing so, I refer to the relation of affect and the body. I bring in a variety of scholarly discussions on the embodied characteristics of affect, which later, I will show, plays a significant role in structuring a theoretical and methodological framework in this thesis. This discussion of the body's role slips into the theoretical discussions of the photographic image, as I will show in chapter one. The body then will be a common ground for all the discussions in the thesis, both on a metaphorical level and an actual level. I lay out the structure for analyzing the empirical material based on the metaphoric take on the body that is the starting point, and it then moves forward to be integrated into the actual discussion of the material.

Chapter one ends with elaborating on tensions between different theoretical approaches that I anchor to the body serving as the red thread in chapter two. I will delimit the extent to which Barthes' *punctum* notion and the inherent indexicality he assumes for the photographic image and its semiotic roots are instrumental in analyzing empirical material. Performativity and phenomenology will be delimited in the same manner, and the theoretical framework will be anchored utilizing Vittorio Gallese's embodied simulation theory to the body's discussion.

The theoretical framework and analysis structure outlined in chapter one will then be employed in chapter two. There, I situate the body of empirical material in the previously mentioned theoretical force field. Using the metaphorical dissection, I discuss the affective

qualities of my material on different levels corresponding to a categorization inspired by human anatomy.

Using the theories mentioned above, I focus on each level of the analysis to trace the forces of affect. I circle back to the body of material as a whole once again, and now that the internal forces are discussed, and the use of the theoretical framework maps out the affective potentials, I put the body back together to discuss it in the broader context and related to the world as a source of affective force. By doing so, I aim to present a new understanding of the material and its affective potential to answer the overall research question: How can the power of photographic images in an era of social media be elucidated based on theories of affect? By answering the research question and this analysis, I aim to present further questions in studying affect in the photographic image and the possible methodological and theoretical approaches that can be beneficial in accessing affect in the material of the similar nature.

Ethical Considerations

The most critical ethical aspect I needed to consider was keeping the anonymity of the individuals involved. The person who created the Instagram stories was in the circle of people I followed on Instagram, but I did not have a close and personal relationship with her. I interviewed her quite late in the research process since I reached her through mutual friends and it took me a while to make her feel safe about her anonymity; therefore, I included the interview as an appendix,¹⁸ and I could not integrate it into the text. In the interview, she asked to remain completely anonymous so I would call her M in the text, and I refrained from adding any information that could be traced back to her. This means that I had to omit some identifying elements from the screenshots and some contextual information about her. These precautions did not have any crucial impact on the analysis but to keep M's anonymity, I could not give a link to her Instagram account as the source of the images, so it has only affected the list of references.

Anonymity is critical while studying images of protests in Iran for both photographers and the subjects too. To make sure everyone was safe, I traced the individual photographs on each frame and made sure all of them had been published publicly before, and the people in each

¹⁸ It is to note that the interview is not part of the research method in this research and it has not affected the research process or the outcome of the research.

photo were not in any danger of being exposed against their will. The photographers were either anonymous or had willingly published the photos and did not have a problem being exposed, but I refrained from mentioning their names to avoid any unwanted added implications to their previously published photos. This as well did not affect the analysis.

Chapter 1: A Shock to Thought, Theories and Formulating the Analysis Structure

*'A body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies; it is this capacity for affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality.'*¹⁹

Gilles Deleuze, 'Ethology: Spinoza and Us', 1992.

What is affect? Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth start the introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader* with the same question. They explain affect as a collection of intensities and resonances that passes between bodies and a collection of all the passages between these intensities and resonance.²⁰ They continue to identify these elements as forces other than conscious knowing, beyond emotions, that drive us toward movement, thought, and extension, a combination of force and relations.²¹ They explain that affect comes to existence amid *in-between-ness*, 'affect is in many ways synonymous with *force* or *forces of encounters*. [Original emphasis]'²²

I want to stay with the term force here. When one starts reading about affect and without even delving deep into the different scholarly works, some other terms arise too, such as *emotion*, *empathy*, and *trauma*. These three terms each refer to a different function derived from affect, and to all of them, affect is the initiating *force*. For instance, Jill Bennett in *Empathic Vision* heavily focuses on trauma and, consequently, empathy, and she discusses the role of affect regarding those notions in producing trauma art.²³ In *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Sara Ahmed claims that she would ask what emotions do instead of asking what emotions are, and she tracks the paths 'emotions circulate between bodies, examining how they "stick" as well as move. [Original Emphasis]'²⁴ In her essay 'Happy Objects,' Ahmed gives *affect* the same *sticky-ness* as something that keeps 'the connection between ideas, values, and objects.'²⁵

¹⁹ G., Deleuze, 'Ethology: Spinoza and Us', S. Lotringer (ed.), *Incorporations*, New York, Zone, 1992, p. 625.

²⁰ M., Gregg and G. J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010, p. 1.

²¹ M., Gregg and G., Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, p. 1.

²² Gregg and Seigworth, p. 1.

²³ J. Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Artefact, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2005.

²⁴ S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004., p. 4.

²⁵ S. Ahmed, 'Happy Objects', in M. Gregg and G. Seigworth (ed.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010, p. 29.

Comparing the two works by Sara Ahmed, at first, it seems that she does not differentiate fundamentally between affect and emotions, as is the case with many works dealing with the same notion, which do not delve deeply into the theoretical discussions of affect and emotion. But when looking closer, it is evident that she associates affect with the *impression*, in connection with the term *sticky-ness*. When bringing impression into the discussion, she argues that '[i]t allows us to associate the experience of having an emotion with the very *affect* of one surface upon another, an *affect* that leaves its mark or trace. [Emphasis added]'²⁶ It is an interesting route for thinking about affect when one brings the impression into the equation, which also resonates with Gregg and Seigworth's mention of *force*. The impression is also a notion that comes to the surface when discussing photography and its supposedly inherent indexicality, which I will get to later in this chapter. Gregg and Seigworth carry on with the notions of force(s) and explain that it passes between *bodies*, emphasizing that the bodies do not necessarily refer to skin-enveloped bodies but to a potential to reciprocate in the passages of affect.²⁷

When it comes to affect, a discussion of the body is inevitable. The quote from Gilles Deleuze that I started this chapter with is mentioned in almost any work on affect. When I first encountered this quote, was after reading Vittorio Gallese's work,²⁸ where he argues that many of the human actions *light up* the parts in the human brain that belong to the motor function, the parts that many consider primitive in contrast to the more advanced cognitive parts of the human brain. This echoes with what Deleuze has written, from a very different disciplinary angle, where he does not make a distinction between the traditional mind-body dichotomy. Not conforming to this dichotomy, I will argue, brings to mind the intertwined nature of the body as a complex system which in the context of this thesis resonates with the similar nature of affect and the empirical material—a combination of analog photographs, digital photographs, video screen grabs, and texts, posted on social media. Thus the notion of intertwined entities plays a significant role in this research.

This chapter will search for a way of accessing the material's affective qualities by looking at theories as tools. I will challenge the more common use of theories in which one theory is the

²⁶ S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004, p. 6.

²⁷ M., Gregg and G. J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010, p. 2.

²⁸ Vittorio, Gallese, 'Embodied Simulation: From Neurons to Phenomenal Experience', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, Springer, No. 4, 2005, pp. 23-48.

focal point arguing that affect's complex nature needs a more nuanced theoretical framework. In doing so, I will first give a brief account of the works on affect and how their core vectors can get into conversation with each other. I will discuss the importance of focusing on the material as the point of departure in formulating the analysis structure and how this formulation points toward various theories to make itself understood to the probing eye.

On the actual and metaphorical level, a discussion of the body will assist in formulating said structure. The spiral movement between the empirical material and the theoretical toolbox and their blurred borders will open discussions of ongoing debates on photographic indexicality as a *widely believed but not necessarily accurate fact* and its relevance to analyzing the material on some levels. The discussion of the complexity of affect and the approaches to it will serve as the theoretical framework for discussing the intertwined nature of theory and method in this thesis and later on for accessing affective qualities in the empirical material.

1.1. The Many Faces of Affect

So far, I have touched upon how the word affect itself is the subject of various discussions and how slight differences in defining it might lead to different approaches to empirical material. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Sara Ahmed gives an account of debates around emotions, giving a loose categorization of the subject. She explains that she has become overwhelmed by seeing how emotions had been a "sticking point" for philosophers, cultural theorists, psychologists, sociologists, and scholars from a range of other disciplines.²⁹ She elaborates, referring to Deconstruction, that the thing thought to be belonging to the margins is, in fact, the center of thought itself.³⁰

Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth also discuss the variety of works done on affect.³¹ They start with stating that two essays on affect in 1995 shaped the resurgence of interest and intrigue regarding affect: Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank's 'Shame in the Cybernetic Fold' and Brian Massumi's 'The Autonomy of Affect.'³² They argue that these two papers and

²⁹ S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004, p. 4.

³⁰ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, p. 4.

³¹ They emphasize that these categories are by no means a comprehensive overview of the previous works on affect.

³² M., Gregg and G. J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010, p. 5.

the subsequent works have substantially shaped the two dominant vectors of studying affect in humanities: Silvan Tomkins's psychobiology of differential affects (1962) (Sedgwick and Frank) and Gilles Deleuze's Spinozist ethology of bodily capacities (1988) (Massumi).³³ The fundamental difference between Deleuze's and Tomkin's approach to affect, according to Gregg and Seigworth, is that Tomkin's approach follows a Darwinian tendency toward dominance of evolutionary hardwiring while also considering the social relation that these hardwirings only function in their context. They elaborate that Deleuze's work has Spinozan roots, which puts affect on the field of things and relations clashing into the complex composition of bodies and the world.³⁴ According to Gregg and Seigworth, the motivator of studying affect has a sense of reverse flow (inside-out/outside-in) in these two vectors.³⁵ In this sense, my approach to affect is closer to Deleuze's framing of affect since the relations are the focal point. I have echoed this vector in structuring the analysis and the general way of looking at affect as an intertwined complex system. At the same time, the body of theories on the relation of affect and the body is central to this structure, both on a metaphorical level and as part of my theoretical framework.

Vittorio Gallese's embodied simulation theory, mainly, for instance, is of high relevance to my analysis that is more in line with Tomkin's evolutionary approach while it has more nuances on the social aspects and more empirical neuroscientific data to support it. These two vectors, when seen in the bigger context of affect studies, are complementary to each other because, as it has been widely discussed by theorists and scholars dealing with affect theory, affect *is* complicated; it has a nature that does not come easily to the grasp of formulations and framings. Thus it is not reasonably possible or even generally logical to ignore one strain of affect theory in favor of the other(s).

Although Gregg and Seigworth write that these works are the dominant vectors of affect studies, there are more than just these two central angles to affect theorization,³⁶ a statement reflected in their eight-point loose categorization of affect studies. These multi-layered approaches to affect that address some aspects of it and move its theorization further, show that studying affect is more than anything *dynamic*. This dynamism calls for moving between theories and layers, for zooming in and out. One can, and most definitely with good reasons, focus on

³³ M., Gregg and G. J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010, p. 5.

³⁴ Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, pp. 5-6.

³⁵ Gregg and Seigworth, pp. 5-6.

³⁶ Gregg and Seigworth, p. 6.

only one of these approaches, and they can deliver a rich study of affect in a given material, but what I am interested in while doing this research is to dwell on the notion of dynamism of affect. Affect in nature is dynamic, as I showed earlier, and with dynamism comes relational capacities; in this thesis, by laying out a dynamic structure for analysis, I seek to sketch a framework to address these relational capacities, specifically in studying empirical material of the similar dynamic nature.

Gregg and Seigworth's categorization of affect studies sketches the different methodological and theoretical approaches toward the subject of affect.³⁷ The approaches they mention include firstly, phenomenologies and post-phenomenologies of embodiment (Vivian Sobchack, Don Ihde, Michel Henry, Laura Marks, Mark Hansen, and others) and secondly, some more recent works that have a more blurry affectional line between the living and non-living. Third, works in connection with Spinozan philosophy in different disciplines such as feminist work (Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz, Genevieve Lloyd, and Moira Gatens), cultural studies (Meaghan Morris, Brian Massumi), and political philosophy (Giorgio Agamben and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri). The fourth is in line with psychological and psychoanalytic inquiry, which they mention are diverse but usually give some sort of categorizations of naming affects and are pretty human-centered (early Sigmund Freud, Silvan Tomkins, Daniel Stern, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, and so forth). As they put it, the fifth is in politically engaged works, often done by feminists, queer theorists, disability activists, etc.

The sixth category is related to the linguistic turn in the twentieth century in many different disciplines; they bring in as examples works of Raymond Williams, Frantz Fanon, Walter Benjamin, Susanne Langer, and John Dewey. As Gregg and Sweigworth point out, these works are concerned about various subjects concerning the linguistic turn. The seventh is seen in critical discourses of emotions and histories of emotions, concerned with many different topics from subjectivity to regimes of expressivity and matters of belonging with a range of postcolonial, hybridized, and migrant voices. The eighth approach is within the sciences in which, as Gregg and Sweigworth put it, 'affect is the hinge where mutable matter and wonder [...] perpetually tumble into each other.'³⁸

³⁷ I should mention that I here only bring these categories very briefly to draw a picture of diverse approaches to affect and I do not intend to elaborate on these categories in a deep analytic manner.

³⁸ M., Gregg and G. J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 6-8.

These many different categories of studying affect show the variety of disciplines working on the subject and are the indicators of how studies of affect cross the disciplinary borders by connecting different theorizations. As Gregg and Seigworth put it, '[p]erhaps one of the surest things that can be said of both affect and its theorization is that they will exceed, always exceed the context of their emergence, as the excess of an ongoing process.'³⁹ It applies when looking at the existing landscape of the researching affect and testifies that studying affect needs the theoretical and methodological border crossings, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth, after their account of the diversity of works on affect, touch upon the discussions about affect's *promise*, which, according to them, is nonexistent. They, based on many works done on affect, refer to the fact that affect cannot be considered positive or negative, instead *neutral*, echoing with Roland Barthes wording as he calls for 'a hyperconsciousness of the affective minimum, of the microscopic fragment of emotion [---] which implies extreme changeability of affective moment, a rapid modification, into shimmers.'⁴⁰ These shimmers that Barthes mentions, I believe, capture the true essence of affect and its hard-to-grasp nature; he argues that from the neutrality then, we should come to an 'inventory of shimmers' which then are gathered into 'affectivity' and then result in action and 'passion for change.'⁴¹ Composing these shimmers and their force field then, I argue, is part of studying affect and furthering methodological approaches.

Henri Lefebvre's 'theory of moments' also resonates with these things that Barthes calls shimmers; to him, moments are when things have the potential to change, even radically; he emphasizes the importance of instances.⁴² Affect also, if we agree with Barthes' shimmers' notion, arises in moments; we are affected in a moment, or we affect others in a moment; all that comes before and after is a composition of these moments in time with different paces. Lefebvre's theory of moments echoes the works of, for instance, Friedrich Nietzsche and Søren Kierkegaard.

³⁹ Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, p. 5.

⁴⁰ Gregg and Seigworth, p. 11, referring to Roland, Barthes, *The Neutral*, trans. Rosiland E. Krauss and Denis Hollier, New York, Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 101.

⁴¹ Gregg and Seigworth, p. 11, referring to Roland, Barthes, *The Neutral*, trans. Rosiland E. Krauss and Denis Hollier, New York, Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 101.

⁴² H. Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, London and New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2017, p. x.

Interestingly, Nietzsche's *Augenblick*, the blink of an eye,⁴³ the collision moment of past and future, connotes the moment that a camera's shutter clicks and captures a moment.

Elsbeth Probyn, reflecting on Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank's work on Silvan Tomkin, emphasizes that affect works on different nuanced levels.⁴⁴ To elaborate on this point in the context of this thesis is to understand that there are different affects *visible* or, somewhat, *traceable* in the empirical material that work on the beholders differently and on different levels. To further this point to the theoretical framework is to accept and nourish different directions one has to take to approach affect, not necessarily to have a complete picture but to establish affect's nuanced nature in the first place.

Acknowledging this multifaceted nature and basing the discussion of the empirical material on it leads to proposing a way of addressing affect in the visual material we are exposed to daily, just a touch away, literally and figuratively speaking. This acknowledgment and the consequent approach open up possibilities for discussions about what photographs are capable of doing.

1.2. Dissecting the Metaphoric Body in Favor of the Affected Body

Being affected has a connotation of being vulnerable, '[b]odies take the shape of the very contact they have with objects and others,'⁴⁵ as Sara Ahmed continues to discuss it in the introduction of *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*. Being vulnerable is the inherent characteristics of the body. The body as a metaphor hence works on more than one level throughout this thesis. Seeing the empirical material as a body opens up discussions of agency and taking action. The body in this text serves as the analysis structure and a tool to understand the material in the social context.

On the other hand, the first visible front of the material are *people*, or better-put *bodies*, individuals and groups, injured and emotional, violent and aggressive, and body is where the emotions are felt and are acted upon and are also where emotions come from, very much physically as Vittorio Gallese discusses.⁴⁶ The familiar dichotomy of emotion and logic—or

⁴³ Which is also the inspiration for title of this thesis.

⁴⁴ E., Probyn, 'Teaching Bodies: Affects in the Classroom', *Body and Society*, Nottingham, Sage, Vol. 10, No. 4, 2004, pp. 22-43.

⁴⁵ S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004, p. 1.

⁴⁶ V., Gallese, 'Embodied Simulation: From Neurons to Phenomenal Experience', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, Springer, No. 4, 2005, pp. 23-48.

rather the hierarchy between them, as Sara Ahmed explains, putting emotions in a lower place—might make this metaphor used for analysis, quite literally, invalid.⁴⁷ It invalidates the humans’ agency through their body, ‘[n]o one ever says, here am I, and I have brought my body with me,’⁴⁸ as Alfred Whitehead puts it in a rather humorous way.

I draw upon the concept of a material body that is understood as an entity of deeply interwoven force fields as the core drive for the structure of the analysis. With this approach, I want to build on the understanding of the deep entanglement of cultural elements experienced through and with the body. The central concept of this approach is that, based on the previous discussions, grasping affect’s complex nature means that it does not require complete untangling but rather a delicate approach to preserve the natural texture of the tissues while discussing them critically.

To serve this purpose, I have opted to use the body and theoretical discussions as tools to structure the analysis. In doing so, I implemented Kenneth Saladin’s five categories of human anatomy for my analysis levels. According to him, these five levels are *systems*, *organs*, *tissue*, *cells*, and *chemicals*.⁴⁹ I used this categorization as a conceptual framework to formulate my analysis structure into three main layers corresponding to: 1. Cells, tissues, and organs; 2. Systems; and 3. Body. The body in the structure is the force fields pulling the parts back together.

Based on this structure, in the empirical material, the “individual photos” and the “individual texts” serve as the *cells*; the “relation of individual texts with visuals in each frame” and the “internal visual relations” are seen as the *tissues*; the “textual narrative line” and the “visual narrative line” serve as the two main *organs* of the structure’s body. I discuss cells, tissues, and organs together to prevent over-untangling of their texture that defies the initial purpose of analysis. The three more significant layers of relations are seen as the *systems*, “relation between the visual whole and the narrative whole”, “relation of the visual whole with the context”, and “relation of the textual whole with the context”.

The whole series is the metaphoric *body* and the third layer of analysis, that occupies a space in the world and interacts with it, affects, and is affected. I present an introduction to the material and mention all the frames in the series in the following section, together with the translation of the Persian texts in each frame. When discussing other related theories in this

⁴⁷ S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004, p. 3.

⁴⁸ A. N., Whitehead, *Modes of thought*, New York, Free Press, 1968, p. 156.

⁴⁹ K. S., Saladin and C. A. Gan, *Human Anatomy (Sixth Edition)*, New York, McGraw-Hill Education, 2020.

chapter, I will briefly refer to the material when necessary since it is the anchoring body for the theories. In doing so, I aim to elaborate on how the theories are related to different levels of the material and how they are united and collected in one vessel which is the empirical material. However, I will not go into a deeper analysis of the material in this chapter. Instead, I will perform the metaphorical dissection in chapter two, where I go through the mentioned layers, and I will put the body back together as a whole in the end with a more extensive discussion of its relation to the context, which we will have a richer understanding of it after the analysis.

1.2.1. The Material's Body

The empirical material is a series of ten Instagram stories that I first saw on November 28th, 2021, posted the same day. They are now saved under the stories' highlight function of Instagram titled 'The Repetition Cycle.' In November 2021, the farmers in my hometown Isfahan, a central city in Iran famous for its river, started a series of strikes on the dry riverbed of Zayandeh Roud (The fertile river), calling on local and national authorities to open the dam and bring back the water to the river which they rely on for their livelihood. The strike lasted for about two weeks, and on November 19th, other citizens joined the farmers in protest.⁵⁰ The police and unofficial militia groups supported by the government gradually started treating the protesters violently, and the photos of these violent treatments circulated on Social Media when it peaked on November 28th. The series combines texts and photographs; the first two frames exhibit photos of the mentioned protests and then are followed by six frames representing a juxtaposition of protest photos from before and after the 1979 revolution. It ends with two frames that serve as a conclusion to the visual testimonies presented earlier in the set.

⁵⁰ S. Mohseni Hosseinabadi, 'Iran's Environmental Protests: How Water Mismanagement is Becoming a National Conflict', *The Perspective*, December 2021, <https://www.theperspective.se/2021/12/21/article/irans-environmental-protests-how-water-mismanagement-is-becoming-a-national-conflict/> (Accessed 20 April 2022).

Frame 1

The photo on top shows a young man in a leather jacket and patterned pants (the usual clothes that militia forces wear in Iran) holding a shotgun. The photo is a screengrab of a video showing that man shooting at protesters' upper bodies. The video was spread on social media as evidence of gun violence against unarmed protesters. (Fig. 1)

The bottom photo shows two other young men wearing identical civilian clothes. This photo is also a screengrab of a video shot by citizens as evidence of violence and organized suppression of the protests. M uses these two photos to supplement a poem verse from Saeb Tabrizi: 'The betrayal's dagger broke into my eye.'⁵¹

These two photos do not have what is considered to be aesthetic values, they are not visually pleasing or have any compositional standards. They are low quality screengrabs of videos taken in stealth and in a hurry. The original video sources were published to get the news out, and these screengrabs were initially meant for citizens to identify persons in the photos for future reference and possible encounters in the city. The man in the top photo was later identified, and there were a variety of suggestions by anonymous Twitter and Instagram users on how to deal with him, which led to many debates on the notion of violence and resistance.⁵²



Figure 1. Frame 1 of the stories

⁵¹ *neshtar az nāmardom-ī dar parde-ye cheshmam shekast.* نشر از نامردمی در پرده چشم شکست.

⁵² For background information on the photos please refer to: <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/iran-isfahan-water-protest-farmers-zayandehrood/31580051.html> (Accessed 15 February 2022)

Based on the categorization discussed earlier, each of the photos and the text serve as the cells, the relation between the two photos and the one between the text and the photos serve as the tissues. On another level, the text and the two photos are parts of the main organs which are discussed concerning the other elements on other frames. The same logic is followed in the subsequent nine frames so I will not repeat this to prevent redundancy. Each photo and the text convey different meanings, and their relations do the same, and through this, they affect the beholder. Being affected starts in this frame and continues throughout the series.

Frame 2

This frame shows a man holding a sign, looking straight at the camera, wearing a mask, and it is difficult to read his facial expressions. The sign reads: ‘Basiji!’⁵³ Do not shoot at my head; it bothers my mother; shoot at the center of my chest.’ He is standing on the dry riverbed, one of the iconic bridges over the river is visible in the background, and a crowd is behind him.⁵⁴ (Fig. 2)

The text in the photo refers to previous protests after 1979, where there were many accounts of mothers of the deceased young citizens who were even more shattered by seeing their children’s dead bodies shot in the head.

It has the connotation that the militia forces shoot people with real guns, aiming at the upper body, which means they shoot to kill or seriously injure. The text in this frame is a verse from Hafiz’s



Figure 2. Frame 2 of the stories

⁵³ The Persian name commonly used to refer to members of militia forces in Iran.

⁵⁴ For protests in November 2021: <https://ir.voanews.com/a/iran-isfahan-protests-security-forces/6328870.html> (Accessed 12 February 2022)

Divan, which translates⁵⁵ to this: ‘My chest is brimful of pain; alas, a remedy!⁵⁶ My heart is dying of loneliness; for God’s sake, (send) a companion!⁵⁷’

Frame 3

From this frame, the double juxtapositions start. There are two photos in this frame, both of hands covered in blood, a typical photo of protests worldwide. The one on the top belongs to the 2009 protests after the presidential elections, which has been referred to as the green movement. A spectator familiar with Iran’s modern history can recognize the photo both based on the visible green elements worn by the crowd in the back and the familiarity of the photo since it was spread over social media at the time. (Fig. 3)

The black and white photo at the bottom connotes that it was taken before the revolution; the clothes and the man’s face also indicate the photo’s approximate time. The text reads, ‘What is happening in the past, has happened in the future.’



Figure 3. Frame 3 of the stories

⁵⁵ H., Clarke, *The Divan-i-hafiz*, Vol.ii, 1891. Digital source: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.62301/page/n115/mode/2up> (Accessed 1 May 2022).

⁵⁶ *sīne mālamāl-e dard ast; ey deriqā, marham-ī.* سینه مالامال درد است ای دریغا مرهمی.

⁵⁷ *del ze tanhā'ī be jān āmad, Xodā-rā, hamdam-ī.* دل ز تنهایی به جان آمد خدا را همدمی.

Frame 4

This frame shows another set of common photo types of protests worldwide; people carry a wounded body, a distressed crowd indicating their vulnerability to the violence, their sense of unity and support, and the effort to save a fellow citizen's life. (Fig. 4)

Again, the contrast of colored and black and white photos calls on the spectator's lexicon of a timeline of previous photos they have seen, where the majority of pre-1979 photos are in black and white, plus the clothes people are wearing in these photos gives a sense of when the photo has been taken. The colored photo is of the student protests in the 1990s.

Photos of crowds carrying a wounded body are particularly popular in these discussions. It is as if they are the cornerstone of resistance and provoking empathy—a furious, afraid, and frustrated crowd carrying a defenseless wounded body. People are trying to save a person and to show the world, the individual police officers and military soldiers, what they are doing to people. The text reads, 'What is happening in the future, has happened in the past.'



Figure 4. Frame 4 of the stories

Frame 5

Another familiar gesture in the protests' photographs is where people are holding up a fist. The photo on top is from pre-1979, a typical photo in the Islamic Republic's propaganda, to showcase that all the members of the society participated in the revolution, *even women/mothers*. The bottom photo is a screen grab of a video spread on social media in November 2021, as evidence of militia forces driving on their motor bikes on the dry riverbed towards the crowds of protesters to scare and scatter them. The woman facing them with a fist up and dressed in a manner that is, in fact, acceptable and promoted by the government has a connotation that the symbolic *woman/mother* figure, wearing *hijab*, who was once *with* the Islamic Republic, is now on the opposite side *against* the Islamic Republic's oppressive forces. (Fig. 5)

This particular frame's importance is indicated by its text; it relies on the text. The rotation with a twist is the key. The text reads, 'My child! Repetition is the main rule of the world.' (Literal translation: Repetition is the foundation of the world's turning. It is essential to account for the literal meaning because the world's turning is a common notion in Persian literature, and countless references and metaphors are playing with the turning and repetition.)



Figure 5. Frame 5 of the stories

Frame 6

This frame again has the colored/ black and white contrast, showing the crowds of government forces facing citizens; the photo on top shows the militia forces dressed in the same clothes that the two militia men were wearing in the first frame, a uniform that indicates to which group they belong yet similar to the ordinary citizen clothes. (Fig. 6)

Some have pointed out that the militia forces choose civilian clothes to look less threatening than the classic patterned clothes they were associated with before. The Islamic Republic's propaganda also uses this in their news coverage, referring to the protesters as hooligans and the oppressive forces as concerned citizens, turning the whole scene into a confrontation between the citizens and removing themselves from the equation.

An interesting point in this series is the photographer's position. In the photos from after the 1979 protests, the photographer is on the crowd's side, clearly part of the protesters, in a rush, running for their life, but that is not always the case with the pre-1979 photos. A knowledgeable spectator has the contextual information that photojournalists took those photos. The majority of them were not pro-Shah but also were not necessarily actively participating in the protests against Shah; they tried to maintain the face of a reporter, someone who is watching and documenting, a third party capturing the best frame; this is evident in the aesthetic values of the pre-1979 photos as well as the position of the photographer.

In the bottom photo, the photographer is shooting from behind the guards' line, shooting the crowd but not aligned with the actual guns, instead tilted to the side, shooting both sides, from



Figure 6. Frame 6 of the stories

a margin. The text reads, ‘It [life] is not as diverse that you would have fun. Do not wait; everything looks the same.’

Frame 7

Both photos show the common crowd control water cannons used in urban protests around the world, the colored photo on the right is from the protests in November 2021. (Fig. 7)

It is apparent from the text and hashtag on the colored photo that it is also one of the citizen photos posted on social media as the evidence of violence with an ironic linguistic reference to the protests being about water shortage ‘Weren’t you asking for water? Here is water! #Isfahan.’

The text on the frame reads, ‘You will probably live between two, three or four rounds of repetition and then leave. Read the history.’



Figure 7. Frame 7 of the stories

Frame 8

The same colored/ black and white contrast continues in this last dual juxtaposition frame; both photos in this frame show an individual in distress shot in a moment of maximum frustration and sadness. The text reads, ‘I just hope you are lucky enough to be born where its repetitions are not so intertwined with sadness, blood, and sorrow.’ (Fig. 8)

The photos in this frame show individuals with emotional expressions on their faces, which is interesting on the level of systems in my analysis, and I will discuss it more in chapter two.



Figure 8. Frame 8 of the stories

Frame 9

This frame shows a collage of photos from the pre- and after 1979 protests. The photos are put together with no particular order or relation, four are from pre-1979, and four are from after; they more or less show the same themes the previous frames had; crowds of protesters, individuals showing emotions, and police forces committing acts of violence. This collage shows an abundance of these incidents that lead to M's conclusion of the series and the statement she makes using the text. (Fig. 9) The text reads:

My child! If you got lost somewhere, do not worry. Do not try to remember if it is 57⁵⁸ [1979] or 67 [1988] or 78 [1999] or 79 [2000] or 88 [2009] or 96 [2017] or 98 [2019] or 98 [2019] or 98 [2019] or 1400 [2021]! Because everything is similar, over and over, and you are right not to know when it is. Just try to stay alive because your 'life' is the most valuable of all. My child! Try not to become one of the dead because I love you, and I know you being alive is more precious than you being dead.



Figure 9. Frame 9 of the stories

⁵⁸ These dates refer to the Persian calendar.

Frame 10

This last frame is the concluding text to the set, which reads

My child! Do not involve yourself in the loops. Go somewhere far where you are as tall as the others. In the world of politics, you are like Flirtacia next to Gulliver; he can shoot you with a finger. Throw away ‘the hopes and dreams,’ and ‘your home country’ and all the stuff. (Reference to a poem: Go where people look and hear you, go where there is someone waiting for you!) My dear. Get as far away as you can from the scent of blood on the streets. These are robots, armed robots, thinking they are playing a computer game, and if they shoot you between the eyes, they would get the highest score and go on to the next level. These are unscrupulous. You will die, and your name will be lost in history. At best, the same loop you are in will remember you, which I prefer them not to! Stay alive! As shitty as it might be, life is still a chance; use it.

This frame is the peak in the series textual narrative and M’s conclusion of the series composition. (Fig. 10)



Figure 10. Frame 10 of the stories

1.3. Body: A Vehicle for Thought and Action⁵⁹

The body, no doubt, has been the subject of many debates, and nonetheless, it has gained a more central role in humanities after the 19th century as a sociological concern. Bryan Turner argues that it is due to the emergence of a ‘somatic society’ that relies on expressing its political and ethical problems through the human body.⁶⁰ Anthony Giddens also mentions a notion that refers to the body as the bearer of emotional forces in relation to others.⁶¹

Feminist movements and the liberation movements of the 20th century also, without a doubt, have played a crucial role in bringing the body to the center, owing their theorization vastly to postcolonial and postmodern theories.⁶² The body is a diverse entity, a collection of bodies with their force field, relations, and interactions in these contexts. Tomas Osborne writes, quite bluntly, that *the body* does not exist; there are only *the bodies*;⁶³ he elaborates that in addressing the question of body/ bodies, it is more helpful to think of the body not as something to be theorized but as ‘a vehicle for thought and action.’⁶⁴ This approach to thinking about body/ bodies also is crucial in addressing affect. As Sara Ahmed writes ‘we need to consider how emotions operate to ‘make’ and ‘shape’ bodies as forms of action, which also involve orientations towards others, [original emphasis]’⁶⁵ these notions of making and shaping and orienting, echo with the synonymy of affect with force and forces of encounters discussed earlier in this chapter.

Mariam Fraser and Monica Greco argue that we must broaden the way we think of the body as ‘something we have, as something we are, and as something we become.’⁶⁶ This broadening of the apparatus puts the body, simultaneously, under different categories of object, subject and process, and performativity, and consequently, brings a variety of theoretical approaches to the discussion. Having them simultaneously in mind helps us understand the

⁵⁹ T. Osborne, ‘Body amnesia: comments on corporeality’, D. Owen (ed.), *Sociology After Postmodernism*, London, Sage, 1996, p. 192

⁶⁰ B. Turner, *The Body and Society*, Second edition, London, Sage, 1996, p. 6.

⁶¹ A. Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1991.

⁶² M. Fraser and M. Greco (eds.), *The Body, A Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, 2005, p. 2.

⁶³ T. Osborne, ‘Body amnesia: comments on corporeality’, D. Owen (ed.), *Sociology After Postmodernism*, London, Sage, 1996, p. 189.

⁶⁴ Osborne, ‘Body amnesia: comments on corporeality’, p. 192.

⁶⁵ S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004, p. 4.

⁶⁶ M. Fraser and M. Greco (eds.), *The Body, A Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, 2005, p. 4.

complexity of analyzing the material from different perspectives. Although it might seem distracting, our ability to understand the body concerning all these philosophical nuances, in the end, is more clarifying than confusing as it points out something that we all, as embodied creatures, understand.

Steven Shapin, referred to by Fraser and Greco, words his objection to disembodied knowledge as ‘to tell the truth, I have never seen a “disembodied idea,” nor, I suspect, have those who say they study such things. What they and I have seen is embodied people portraying their disembodiment and that of the knowledge they produce.’[Original emphasis]⁶⁷ One might ask, then why not use this embodiment to the fullest it can offer?

As Fraser and Greco address in *The Body, A Reader*’s introduction, the body as a metaphor has long been used in humanities to benefit different (and sometimes even contradictory) arguments, and it has served the purpose very well. I want to stress that the body is not just used as a metaphor in this thesis. It is indeed a metaphor on one level, but it is also at the core of the empirical material, at the heart of the theories, and at the center of the attempt to understand and formulate the affective potentials of photography; therefore, I have tried to use the body extremely cautiously so I will keep the nuances of the discussion. This metaphor is not in the fashion it was used in the 19th century as an organic analogy or a blueprint for society.⁶⁸

A Spinozan view of the body, how Gilles Deleuze has elaborated on it, is instrumental in my analysis. First, the body’s individuality (as a collection of endless interacting particles within the one body), in this thesis, the empirical material and the bodies represented through it; and second, the body in the context, in relation to other entities, dynamics of a body.⁶⁹ For Spinoza, ‘bodies and minds are not substances or subjects, but modes.’⁷⁰ And as Deleuze elaborates more on this, ‘a mode is a complex relation of speed and slowness, in both the body and the thought’⁷¹ thus seeing ‘bodies as capacities to affect and being affected many things change.’⁷²

The affected bodies do not stop at the point of affecting or being affected; as much as the affect is dynamic, it is also continuous. We continue those relations and circles of affect, shaping

⁶⁷ Fraser and Greco, *The Body, A Reader*, p. 6; referring to Steven Shapin, 1998, p. 23.

⁶⁸ Fraser and Greco, p. 11.

⁶⁹ G., Deleuze, ‘Ethology: Spinoza and Us’, M. Fraser and M. Greco (eds.), *The Body, A Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, 2005, p. 58.

⁷⁰ G., Deleuze, ‘Ethology: Spinoza and Us’, M. Fraser and M. Greco (eds.), *The Body, A Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, 2005, p. 59.

⁷¹ Deleuze, ‘Ethology: Spinoza and Us’, p. 59.

⁷² Deleuze, p. 59.

and reshaping. The dynamic itself is not static; it can be static in some cases, but it grows more intensive in its *force*; Deleuze asks if the relations can form new ‘extensive’ relations, which would lead to a more ‘intensive’ force.⁷³ The more extensive force, to some extent, is the equivalent of a collective body, a *bodies*, and a ‘symphony of nature’⁷⁴ as Deleuze puts it, that is alive and changes and is indeed *intense*.

The reference to a symphony echoes with Spinoza’s thought on the body as a collection of speed and slowness; I add, this is as well governed by notions outside this body, the vast social, political, and ethical structures forcing themselves to the surface of said body, while also the body has the power to shape them back. This dynamic is what I aim to achieve with my layered, or rather dissected, analysis. ‘A body can be anything,’ Deleuze writes in defining the body, ‘[it can be] a body of sounds, a mind or an idea, [...] a social body, a collectivity.’⁷⁵ As Deleuze continues in his discussion of Spinoza, the critical point in defining the body is the set of relations, the longitude and latitude, the former being the dynamic of all body elements and the latter being the set of affects and the ‘force for existing’⁷⁶.

1.3.1. *Photographic Relations*

Photographs are fascinating, and the fascination started with the first photograph taken; since then, they have been everywhere, and anywhere they are, there are relations as well. We take photographs, pass them between ourselves, choose them, collect them, and are affected by them, see them, and touch them. We even poke and probe them, we get close and look at every detail, or we take a distance to look at the whole, whatever the whole might be, and we might go closer again. In the book *Touching Photographs*, Margaret Olin writes that the word photograph itself, which means ‘light-writing,’ engages more than just the vision, it also evokes touch, and this tactility makes it a ‘relational art.’⁷⁷ Olin reflects on the relationship between touching and seeing, and she engages in a lively discussion of touching in its actual meaning and sense and as a metaphor, we use to describe photographs. With the same logic, the relationships regarding the

⁷³ Deleuze, p. 60.

⁷⁴ Deleuze, p. 60.

⁷⁵ Deleuze, p. 61.

⁷⁶ Deleuze, p. 61.

⁷⁷ M. Olin, *Touching Photographs*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2012, p. 3.

photographic image are everywhere, between *us* as beholders and the photographs and between the photographs and the world.

‘The presence of photographs can be so powerful that we cannot see them by looking closely,’⁷⁸ when we get emotional, the same thing happens, our vision/ mind’s vision gets cloudy, and the emotions overwhelm us. This is also one of the ways affect works with us. At some level, it is what happens with a selection of photographs. We see them as an entity that touches us and not necessarily in their full detail at the first one or two glances.

The dissection analysis tries to work with this quality of photographs. When the photos in the series are seen separately, each has its touching power that affects the beholder, a single photo of violence or one that represents emotions on another body indeed touches the beholder. Still, when this is put next to another touching photo their relation adds up to their power, another layer of *touching* emerges. As such, there can be endless layers, and so the touching force gets more substantial. One can discuss these layers individually or simultaneously—relations of the relations as one layer over another. This is the nature of this thesis’ empirical material, and I will show in the next chapter how the touching quality of the photographs works on different levels using the body metaphor structure.

Taking the tactility of photographs into consideration when we look at photographs, acknowledging their force, changes the way we engage with them; as Margaret Olin argues, it becomes more action than just reading; hence ‘it produces more than it understands.’⁷⁹ This is where the photographs’ relation to the context lies. The photos become intertextual; we identify with things and people outside the photographs. A three-way connection, the resemblance between the object in the photo and an object outside the photo, then between the beholder and the object outside, and lastly between the beholder and the object in the photograph; making these connections is the act that derives from understanding tactility of photographs.

⁷⁸ Olin, *Touching Photographs*, p. 3.

⁷⁹ Olin, p. 3.

In frame 8, for instance (fig. 11), the colored photo shows a middle-aged man who seems to have been beaten on the head and is covered in his blood. At first glance, it is only one cell in the body of the material, and of course, it can also be discussed on its own. However, this particular photo that belongs to the environmental protests in November 2021 went viral on Social Media; its power lies in the man's appearance. For my generation, he had an uncanny resemblance to our fathers, a working man providing for his family with no supposed hidden political intentions to make a significant change in the government. It usually is one of the main accusations younger people face in Iran when participating in protests; they are not protesting for their rights; they are, supposed by the Islamic Republic, planning to overthrow the government. Hence they deserve to be treated violently. This contextual knowledge based on the lived experience of past events made the photo significantly affective. It connects to a vast net of causal chains and personal memories that make the event even more unfair to the individual in the photo.



Figure 11. Photo from frame 8, the middle-aged beaten up man, belonging to November 2021 environmental protests

Olin gives an interesting account of the dichotomy of touch and vision in philosophy and arts; as she puts it, '[a] rich and intriguing jumble of meanings, evidence, and experience clung to the interplay between the terms *touch* and *vision*. [original emphasis].'⁸⁰ Through this account then, she continues, referring to a 19th-century theory on the moon illusion⁸¹ that some 'hard-to-decipher signs' can become signs of more familiar objects we have previously experienced through our tactile senses, correspondingly through our vision, we can grasp a touching feeling of

⁸⁰ Olin, p. 8.

⁸¹ The optical illusion that causes the moon to appear larger when it is closer to the horizon, Olin writes that this illusion consequently gives the beholder the illusion that they can *touch* the moon.

objects we can never touch.⁸² Olin calls this quality of the photographs a ‘performative index,’ which means it does not only rely on the resemblance but relational performative power.⁸³

Maurice Merleau-Ponty formulates the concept as showing an embodied relation to the world outside one’s body, to absorb what one sees, not only as an image but as knowledge of it with one’s tactile senses, one relies on the internal vision of oneself; therefore the relation is at the core.⁸⁴ He elaborates that the distinction between the senses is also a result of the science, a reading formulated from outside;⁸⁵ on the contrary, the living being itself does not *feel* through the lens of sciences, instead *is* the core of emotions, the core for questions. The ultimate question of: why do I feel the way I feel?

1.4. Lost and Found in Theory

Before starting the more profound discussion of theories, I want to once more emphasize on affect’s dynamic and relational nature, as Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth put it, echoing the words of Brian Massumi:

[A]ffect emerges out of muddy, unmediated relatedness and not in some dialectical reconciliation of cleanly oppositional elements or primary units, it makes easy compartmentalisms give way to thresholds and tensions, blends and blurs. As Brian Massumi (2002) has emphasized, approaches to affect would feel a great deal less like a free fall if our most familiar modes of inquiry had begun with movement rather than stasis, with process always underway rather than position taken.⁸⁶

The movement Massumi writes about applies to both studying affect and the photographic image. A dynamic theoretical approach to both affect and photography thus, I argue, is the key to studying affective qualities in this thesis’ empirical material and in the photographic image as a broader subject too. As Margaret Olin elaborates on in the introduction of *Touching*

⁸² M. Olin, *Touching Photographs*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2012, pp. 8-9.

⁸³ Olin, *Touching Photographs*, p. 6.

⁸⁴ M. Merleau-Ponty, ‘Cézanne’s Doubt’, *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. H. L. Dreyfus and P. A. Dreyfus, Evanston, IL, Northwestern University Press, 1964.

⁸⁵ Merleau-ponty in the previous and other writings.

⁸⁶ M., Gregg and G. J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010, p. 4.

Photographs, one very important and often neglected aspect of photography lies in *relations*,⁸⁷ photographs are not independent entities that one can poke and probe to a great extent, but at the same time, they are. That is what makes all the debates heated in photographic theory and visual culture.

In this thesis, based on both natures of affect and photography, I propose an alternative, echoing the works of photography theory and affect theory scholars, and I implement it in discussing my empirical material. It is first to be aware of the materials' dynamism and relationality and then proceed to the process of probing. By understanding and establishing the complex nature of a set of material and taking into account all the actors, it becomes possible to study the material holistically, hence understanding them holistically considering as many complexities as possible. It is, in this thesis, of utmost importance also because, as I have discussed, the affect and working with affect theory also inherently brings in a considerable amount of complexities already to the table, which only adds to the complex nature of the photographic image.

I insist on considering photography as complex and not only the debatable indexical representation of reality. With even a glance at photography and its many outcomes, whether it being a passport photo, a family photo, a news photo, or abstract works of art using photography as their medium; it is evident that the photographic image serves more than an index and has many different relations to the reality.⁸⁸

The zooming in and out I mentioned earlier refers to the structuring of the analysis and entails the same approach to the use of theory. It is a circle of going back and forth between theories in understanding the material on different levels and consequently referring to theory in the same manner. In this manner, this forceful dynamic of theory and the empirical material opens up more doors for thinking.

As Jill Bennett writes in *Empathic Vision*, art history has taken theoretical models from outside the art world (from philosophy and other non-artistic disciplines). They have sure been and still are instrumental in '*readings of ...*' that see art as the object of theoretical study, but rarely, she continues, we have thought of deriving theory '*from the visual.*' [Original emphasis on quoted

⁸⁷ M. Olin, *Touching Photographs*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2012.

⁸⁸ T. Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index? Or, Faking Photographs', *Plenary Session II: Digital Aesthetics*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017, p. 44.

phrases]⁸⁹ Bennett has tried to work ‘from the artwork toward a concept of empathic vision’⁹⁰ in an endeavor to further methodological borders. I do not claim that I will do this, but I have followed in the footsteps of theorists such as Jill Bennett to give the material a more central role in using theories.

The photographic image has been and still is discussed as something that solely has the imprint of the context, something that just receives from the outside world, and the use of theory is thus oriented toward this thought. Resonating with Bennetts’s work,⁹¹ I ask how the photographic image itself has an imprint on the world and how it contributes to understanding. Bennett calls this ‘a kind of critical awareness’ that is ‘engendered through the visual.’⁹² Bennett, resonating with Ernst van Alphen, refers to his theory of ‘thinking visually’ that states art itself constitutes ideas and therefore proposes more philosophical questions; she argues this also echoes Gilles Deleuze’s conception that thought *comes after*.⁹³

In a way, this also brings in a question for further investigation when, in a set of empirical material such as this thesis’, where the *maker* is not an artist but has used works of art as her material, how would this way of thinking proceed. Is it possible to assume that those photographs that have been identified and collected have had, in fact, this potential of *thought-making*, which has been contagious to a work that is not art per se? To some extent, I would answer that this research is not merely a study of a distinct group of works of art, but it is to study a dynamic process, an investigation partly concerned with method.

1.4.1. Barthes, Semiotics and the Index’s Controversy

Many works on the photographic image, whether or not they address affect, refer to Roland Barthes’ *Camera Lucida* and his notions of *punctum* and *studium*, and consequently, their discussion turns toward the debate on index and photography’s truthfulness. It relies heavily on the assumption of an indexical nature of the analog photograph, and with the digital medium’s coming into existence, its indexicality went into question. Barthes’ discussion of the index in

⁸⁹ J. Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Artefact, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 150.

⁹⁰ Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, p. 151.

⁹¹ Bennett, p. 152.

⁹² Bennett, p. 152.

⁹³ Bennet, p. 152.

Camera Lucida is based on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiology. Peirce classified signs into three categories: Icons, Indices, and Symbols. In this classification, indexical signs have a causal relation to the object they represent, and in explaining indexes, he notes that 'anything which focuses the attention is an index.'⁹⁴ Barthes' use of index relies on a causal physical relation in which he considers the photograph as an immediate impression of the object on the film. While there are researches done drawing upon this strand of theory as their main theoretical focus, and there will be more of such in the future, and while many of these researches address the affective qualities of the photographic image, this theoretical strand is also quite controversial.

In his essay 'What's the Point of an Index?' Tom Gunning questions this *given* characteristics of the analog photograph. He argues that when these theories consider the analog photograph as a direct imprint of reality, they eliminate the whole process between the time the light enters the camera and when the printed photo is ready and visible.⁹⁵ He sees the issue quite simply that both the digital and analog photographs are equally indexical based on their relation to the object regardless of how one achieves to have a photo of an object.

The problem with the digital photo, according to Gunning, is that the digital puts photography's 'truth claim' under the question, based on the assumption that it is easily manipulated. He uses the phrase 'truth claim' to indicate that it is not a fact but a claim that photography is truthful.⁹⁶ He identifies two general positions around this 'truth claim,' one that is paranoid and sees digital photographs as manipulated evidence of non-existent entities and the other that he calls 'schizophrenic' which does not care about the truth claim at all.⁹⁷

Gunning argues that a photograph simply relies on people to say things for it and in itself is not capable of neither telling a lie nor the truth.⁹⁸ In the case of my empirical material, this is an evident fact; the material is a collection of photographs that someone has collected as evidence of certain events and has said things for them using both the process of choosing and juxtaposing photos and the language itself. Although, I argue that it is not the case if these are actual evidence or manipulated ones because they are not just evidence of *the* reality, but of *a* reality, a reality of an affected individual and are testifying to that. They show repetition, violence, blood, hope, and

⁹⁴ C. Peirce, 'What Is a Sign?', *The essential Peirce: selected philosophical writings*, ed. Peirce Edition Project, Indiana University Press, 1998, p. 5.

⁹⁵ T. Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index? Or, Faking Photographs', *Plenary Session II: Digital Aesthetics*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017, p. 40.

⁹⁶ Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index?', p. 42.

⁹⁷ Gunning, pp. 41-42.

⁹⁸ Gunning, p. 42.

hopelessness, which is the extent of the truth they need to deliver. As Gunning stresses, many perceptual agencies intervene, and the truth claim cannot be reduced to just the indexical process.⁹⁹

In this thesis, the question of manipulation is undoubtedly a valid one since the material was posted on social media, and there are numerous studies on the truth aspect of photos on social media. It is also not limited to manipulating the photos themselves, but the way information is presented, and the narratives that glue the visuals together can be subjects of manipulation, hence subjects of not being truthful. My argument, though, is that any of these debates do not necessarily and inherently undermine the affective potential of photography in these mediums, nor should they be disregarded altogether. This stresses the nuances of discussing affect when one deals with such material.

But, if we discard the indexicality or the truth claim, can we still work with Barthes' *punctum*? Olin looks at the matter from another angle in her article 'Barthes' mistaken identification.' She questions the process in which he elaborates on the notion of *punctum* based on a photo of his mother, known as The Winter Garden photo, and shows how that photo might not even exist and yet the *punctum*, without any indexical reference, works on Barthes.¹⁰⁰ As such, even though there is the possibility of no indexicality and a questionable trustworthiness, affect in the case of my empirical material works with different references for the beholder, which I claim has their own sets of internal anchors for the truth and for letting the photo affect them. There is more to *punctum* in the material than its indexical qualities. If we keep the *punctum* in the equation but disregard Barthes' argument that *punctum*'s power lies in the indexicality, then it can be a sufficient tool to study affective qualities of the photographic image.

However, the former discussion does not deny Gunning's strain of argument. Gunning believes we have a 'basic *aporia*' in understanding photography; he then puts phenomenology in contrast to semiotics as a more suitable approach to understanding photography.¹⁰¹ He elaborates that there is a continuous relationship between photographs and reality through phenomenology.¹⁰² He continues to explain that the indexical explanation is not enough to

⁹⁹ Gunning, p. 41.

¹⁰⁰ M. Olin, *Touching Photographs*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2012, p. 104.

¹⁰¹ T. Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index? Or, Faking Photographs', *Plenary Session II: Digital Aesthetics*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017, p. 44.

¹⁰² Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index?', p. 45.

explain the fascination with photography;¹⁰³ while his argument is on one level in line with mine, I argue that the problem here is not, or rather should not be, choosing one approach over another or trying to look for one that captures the photographic image's essence fully. Instead, I think we should consider the dynamic nature of how we encounter it theoretically, be agile in opting for theories, and not be invested in one or the other.

Gunning writes that '[p]ictures are more than signs, and frequently we would be hard-pressed to claim they referred to anything other than themselves.'¹⁰⁴ But the point missing here is that pictures are signs *too*. The photograph has a signifying relation to the world; it has more than that too. To accept photography's complexity as something more than a system of signs is not to discard its semiotic qualities. If we choose to start the theorization from the photographic image itself, and I argue we must do so, then we will not end up with one or two theories that come short in understanding it fully. The approach I propose seems more crucial in the case of this thesis, as affect itself also works on many different levels and in a complex system.

Gunning's argument revolves around the fact that when we opt for a semiotic approach toward photography, it fails to grasp its relational qualities. As he explains Barthes' work, he elaborates that Barthes puts the most emphasis on the photograph as being 'an emanation of a past reality,' according to him, this means that only an index has this quality within a semiotic discourse.¹⁰⁵ But also, at the same time, this relation of photography to the real world, photography being a substitute (to translate seeing it as something belonging to the 'realm of signs'), is, in fact, contradictory with what Barthes believes the photograph is; that is a contributor to the creation and not a substitute.¹⁰⁶

Gunning proposes an interesting discussion here, proving how nuanced our understanding of photography should be. Parts of my argument resonate with Gunning's, but as stated earlier and lightly addressed by Gunning as well, it is possible to engage in a discussion of the photographic image without being bound to choose one theory over another or to use Gunning's wording, 'to avoid the sacred cows associated with each side.'¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Gunning, p. 45.

¹⁰⁴ Gunning, p. 46.

¹⁰⁵ Gunning, pp. 46-47.

¹⁰⁶ Gunning, p. 47.

¹⁰⁷ Gunning, p. 48.

1.4.2. Performative Force of the Photographic Image

Another critical component in the theoretical body of this thesis is performativity; many have discussed the performative qualities of photography despite it being visually immobile. As Roland Barthes has noted, ‘what founds the nature of photography is pose.’¹⁰⁸ It points mainly to what is *in* the photograph, but what I want to focus more on is the performative qualities evident in the relation between the photograph and the beholder, which has also become a concern of scholarly works related to the ‘affective turn’ in humanities and social sciences.

Laura Levin gives a brief overview of the works with this approach in her review essay ‘The Performative Force of Photography,’¹⁰⁹ where she mentions the works of Kathleen Woodward (1996), Lauren Berlant (2004), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003), and Patricia Ticineto Clough (2007), dealing with affective spectatorship concerning photos of violence, trauma, and loss. She refers to the J. L. Austin’s works and specifically his lecture ‘How to do things with words’ (first delivered in 1955), as the beginning of a strain of performance studies, where he establishes that some words have a ‘performative’ force.¹¹⁰ While it has influenced performativity studies of photography, in this thesis, it has a good weight for the analysis of the empirical material since the series contains a considerable amount of language as well, which is, in fact, the narrative spine of the series too.

Although, based on these works, performativity can be used to analyze all the layers I have proposed for this thesis, it is most evident in the more considerable levels concerning the whole series. Correspondingly, I argue that more minor performative qualities seen in each frame and each photo and each sentence, resonate with each other to give an overall performative power to the whole series through juxtaposing photos and words; consequently, I focus on performativity in more detail when discussing the series as a whole in chapter two.

¹⁰⁸ R., Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. R. Howard, New York, Hill and Wang, 1981, p. 78.

¹⁰⁹ L., Levin, ‘The Performative Force of Photography,’ in *Photography and Culture*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2009, pp. 327-336.

¹¹⁰ Levin, ‘The Performative Force of Photography,’ p. 328.

1.4.3. Embodied Simulation Theory

I have discussed a diversity of accounts on the relation between body and affect, and the photographic image within the realm of humanities. But, one fascinating theory on the subject that links the discussed notions to hard sciences is Vittorio Gallese's Embodied Simulation theory. He is one of the neuroscientists who discovered the mirror neurons in the human brain led to his theory of Embodied Simulation. In Gallese's words:

About ten years ago a new class of premotor neurons discharging not only when the monkey executes goal-related hand actions like grasping objects, but also when observing other individuals (monkeys or humans) executing similar actions was discovered in the macaque monkey brain. These neurons were called "mirror neurons" (Gallese et al. 1996; Rizzolatti et al. 1996a; see also Gallese 2000, 2001, 2003a,b, 2005). Neurons with similar properties were later discovered in a sector of the posterior parietal cortex reciprocally connected with area F5 (PF mirror neurons, see Gallese et al. 2002a). The observation of an object-related action leads to the activation of the same neural network active during its actual execution. Action observation causes in the observer the automatic simulated re-enactment of the same action. We proposed that this mechanism could be at the basis of an implicit form of action understanding (Gallese et al. 1996; Rizzolatti et al. 1996a; see also Gallese 2000, 2003b; Gallese et al. 2002a,b).¹¹¹

His theory helps explain how the neurons that govern our actions are also the very bodily particles we use to understand the meaning of actions we perceive and the emotions they trigger in us.¹¹² Gallese's theory questions the two contrasting distinctions introduced by Head and Holmes (1911-1912): 'the body-schema' and the 'body image.'¹¹³ The former is a body's unconscious map controlling our actions and orientation in the space, and the latter, in sharp contrast to the body-schema, is a conscious image of our bodies. Gallese argues that this dichotomy echoes with that of the conscious and unconscious and the consequent superiority given to the brain over the body, and he claims that 'this distinction is very simplistic.'¹¹⁴

He backs up his claim with recent neurological data, that show the change in our understanding of sensory-motor integration in our brains—or if we translate it into the phrases we

¹¹¹ V., Gallese, 'Embodied Simulation: From Neurons to Phenomenal Experience', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, Springer, 2005, p. 32.

¹¹² Gallese, 'Embodied Simulation: From Neurons to Phenomenal Experience', p. 23.

¹¹³ Gallese, p. 24.

¹¹⁴ Gallese, p. 24.

are more familiar with, integration of emotion-action. As such, our perception of visual and tactile stimuli is linked to various parts of the brain and not only the parts considered to be related to cognition.¹¹⁵ The mentioned data shows that these premotor areas serve the three functions of representation of '(a) actions together with (b) objects acted on and (c) locations toward which actions are directed.'¹¹⁶

As Gallese shows in his paper, we have both 'purely visual neurons and visual and tactile neurons'¹¹⁷ in our brains called 'Bimodal VIP'¹¹⁸ neurons. I want to emphasize that according to Gallese, these bimodal neurons respond 'independently' to both visual and tactile stimuli, meaning that their bimodality can be considered an inherent characteristic of them, hence it is plausible to consider photography and our consequent relation to it a tactile one or at the least a simultaneously visual and tactile one. It echoes Olin's discussion on the relation between touch and vision in photography. Visual stimuli do certain things, but acting on the same thing physically changes how we cognitively understand. The signs, I argue, can also make an individual remember a bodily sensation and certain emotions associated with it. Emotions are connected to actions and performativity.

Such neurological studies have shown that there is a coordination, a map, that exists corresponding to the certain body part that is shown in the visual stimuli; as Gallese writes, the visual stimuli 'do not signal positions on the retina, but positions in space relative to the observer.'¹¹⁹ It is safe to say that the performative force one feels is deeply ingrained in the brain. Gallese writes that based on empirical neurological data, there is a possibility that '[w]hen a visual stimulus is presented, it evokes directly the simulation of the congruent motor schema which, regardless of whether the action is executed or not, maps the stimulus position in motor terms.'¹²⁰

The word simulation here, I think, is very interesting; based on Gallese, when a person visually perceives an action, whether or not they do it themselves, the simulation in the brain responds as if they have done it, and consequent to this is that the brain also simulates what it feels to do the same action. Gallese connects the body awareness backed up by

¹¹⁵ Gallese, p. 24.

¹¹⁶ Gallese, p. 24.

¹¹⁷ Gallese, p. 25.

¹¹⁸ Gallese, p. 25.

¹¹⁹ Gallese, p. 25.

¹²⁰ Gallese p. 26.

neurophysiological research to definitions of this awareness made by phenomenologists Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Edmund Husserl; his neurophysiological explanation of the body awareness is that the sensory-motor system in the brain is responsible for Husserl's phenomenal awareness of the body in the space as both 'a spatial externality and an internal subjectivity.'¹²¹

Gallese puts the body's neurological characteristics at the center of the individual's world as a frame of reference to understand the individual's relation to the world. Assuming that there is a hard-wired similarity between alive beings, it is plausible to say that witnessing others being affected also affects us, as we know, based on the neuron discharges in our brains, how we feel when the same thing happens to us. He argues that we can also externalize these feelings cognitively to understand them and categorize them and manage our relations with the world.¹²² Having both these functions in our bodies is then a tool to be affected and to affect and to plan and initiate actions based on them, represent affected bodies, discuss affected bodies, and show and see and tell.

To put it simply, embodied simulation is our ability to internally simulate an observed action, an unconscious process that also requires using our other resources of life experience that eventually affects us. This simplification resonates with what Margaret Olin discusses about Barthes and how he connects details from one photo to another and from one photo to something outside a possibly non-existing photo. When we see something, and at the moment we pay attention to something, our body responds and is affected, even if we do not cognitively realize it or even we cannot cognitively trace the source of that affect process.

When and if this process becomes conscious to some extent, I argue, we also would start making connections between visuals, we can trace the chain of reactions to visuals, and we can choose and collect and relate images to each other to make the affective force stronger. Gallese elaborates that we have both necessary functions in our brains, the conscious and unconscious ones, which are either embodied simulation or mental imagery.¹²³ He claims that these functions also provide us with a basic understanding, probably something that I think resonates with theories on art as something that provokes thought. Correspondingly, if, as I have suggested in this chapter, we refer to the photographic images outside our corporeality as sources of affect and thought, we can derive theoretical and methodological tools from them.

¹²¹ Gallese, p. 27.

¹²² Gallese, p. 31.

¹²³ Gallese, p. 36.

Gallese writes that evidently, embodied simulation is not the sole brain function for understanding emotions in others, and our cognitive abilities are also very much capable of doing so. Still, he argues that embodied simulation is the most ancient from an evolutionary point of view, and is based on experience.¹²⁴ As I see it, both these functions resonate with different strings of theory for studying affective qualities in the photographic image, the cognitive functions are more inclined toward semiotics and interpretation of a system of signs, and the embodied simulation leans toward phenomenology and performativity. While also the last two, of course, benefit from cognitive functions and all the discussions we can have, rely on our cognitive abilities. What I see as the red thread of all these seemingly contrasting theoretical approaches is the body; as I have shown, having the body as the common grounds enables us to put these theories in a thought-provoking conversation without ending up with a jumble of theoretical utterances.

1.5. Chapter Conclusion

In the present chapter, I attempted to elaborate on two blueprints that are my guide in addressing this thesis' subject. One was of the affect's complex nature and the complex theoretical approaches to it, and the other was the complexity of theoretical approaches to the photographic image combined with the varied nature of the empirical material. As Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth put it, the muddy grounds that affect theory comes from¹²⁵ make the analysis of the material a complicated task if it is not appropriately structured.

Meaning in the empirical material works on different levels, and as I worked on them, I realized that one path would be to disregard some of these levels to prevent a messy discussion of affect. But, works on affect theory showed that a certain amount of messiness is inherent when dealing with affect, as long as the mess is structured. One cannot simply put research on affect into different and separate compartments because, first and foremost, affect is a force and a force of encounter; it is best understood in relations and movement.

Instead, I used the body as the primary tool for structure since it works perfectly as a metaphor, but it is also of the utmost importance in research on affect. Almost all the works on

¹²⁴ Gallese, p. 39.

¹²⁵ M., Gregg and G. J. Seigworth (Eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010, p. 4.

affect theory deal with the body at some point, and there are numerous theoretical discussions devoted only to the body. By choosing body as my anchor, I discussed the different theoretical approaches necessary for my analysis in the next chapter, and I showed how this anchor sometimes drags seemingly contradictory theories to the discussion.

I went back and forth between different theories, debates on the photographic image, and the dynamic tension between them. This dynamism was called for due to the nature of the subject and the empirical material. A classic linear safe passage would not have led to a compelling analysis of the material, nor would it not have made clear the current studies of affect.

The same way that affect works on us in a moment, and in an abundance of moments, and as it lives and breathes, the photographic image does the same; it gives us extraordinary details, simultaneously as it gives us big pictures, it captures small moments and significant historical events, it shows behavior patterns, and it shows touching instances. Both affect and photography keep us in an intense sense of movement and pause, which is the magic of the affective engagement with the photographic image. One cannot touch the light but can reach out as closely as possible for the same feeling of touch if one is agile and gentle enough.

I have aimed to lay the ground for my analysis in the next chapter through the discussions of the current chapter, and I use the structure and the theoretical toolbox I acquired through this chapter to analyze my empirical material in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: The Dissection Table – Analysis of the Empirical Material

*All Adam's race are members of one frame,
Since all, at first, from the same essence came.
When by hard fortune one limb is oppressed,
The other members lose their wonted rest.
If thou feel'st not for other's misery,
A son of Adam is no name for thee.¹²⁶
Sa'di (1184-1283), Gulistan (The Rose Garden)¹²⁷*

There is certain awe in looking at a body on the dissection table, a defenseless, exposed body waiting to be poked and probed. Seeming fragile yet in the actual process of cutting it open, one realizes how deeply intertwined the layer are, how hard some organs are to cut, and how messy the scene becomes. It provokes an alienating feeling, looking at something that looks very much like yourself yet extremely distant from you as a living, moving body with the power to defend yourself and act and react.

In the previous chapter, I took the body of empirical material as the source for provoking thought; through that, I summoned a variety of theoretical approaches, sometimes even contrasting each other, that resonated with the different layers of the material. I positioned the material and my analysis concerning these theoretical discussions to formulate a structure resembling the body on a metaphorical level. I showed that the body exceeds the metaphorical level, as many theorists have argued from various viewpoints.

Now that the body of material is situated, I take this formulation and the theoretical framework to look at it. The reconsidered approach to implementing several different yet relevant theories as a tool for analysis will be operative in studying my empirical material in the present chapter.

¹²⁶ *banī ādam a 'zāy-i yak digarand/ kih dar āfarīnīsh zih yak gawharand/ cho 'uzwī bih dard āwarad rozgār/ digar 'uzwhā rā namānad qarār/ to k'az miḥnat-i dīgarān beghamī/ nashāyad kih nāmat nahand ādamī*
بنی آدم اعضای یکدیگرند/ که در آفرینش ز یک گوهرند/ چو عضوی به درد آورد روزگار/ دگر عضوها را نماند قرار

¹²⁷ Sa'di (1184-1283), *The Gulistan (Rose Garden)*, trans. E. B. Eastwick, Hertford, 1850.

2.1. Cells, Tissues, and Organs

The cells in the structure of this analysis are the individual photographs and the individual texts on each frame. These are the first points of encounter and potentially provoke the most conscious affective reaction in the beholder. Before one makes the connections between frames and understands the overall meaning of the series, the cells are the initial touching point.

A man holding a gun, a man holding a sign, hands covered in blood, wounded bodies being carried, fists up in the air, crowds of citizens facing the oppressive forces, distressed individuals, these all individually affect the beholder. They hit, at first one by one, and then each of the next punctures adds to the previous ones, increasing the effect on the beholder, adding up to the affective quality.

Each photograph represents its complex system of signs and summons references in the beholder's inventory of past experiences and encounters. The same happens with each text on each frame; even though with less power than the visuals, they work with the beholder's linguistic lexicon, the poem verses connect to the beholder's knowledge of them and their historical context and previous uses, and the other texts do the same by telling an anecdote and referring to certain words and their connotations.

These first punctures are then resonated to become a more powerful puncture utilizing their relativity; in each frame, the photos relate to one another and open up a new layer of meaning, which I call Tissues and Organs, and I discuss them together. The tissues are the relation between the photographs in each frame and the relation between the text and the photographs in the same frame. The combined force of the photographs is captioned by the text, which adds a layer of meaning to the force of affect provoked through the visual impact on the beholder. All serve as substitutes to the overall meaning M aims to convey with the series. In discussing the tissues, the juxtaposition frames of the pre- and after 1979, I will discuss, are the most powerful in giving the overall sense.

To keep the flow of discussion, I continue by analyzing the Organs, which are the "textual narrative line" and the "visual narrative line". The textual narrative line is the message M tries to give to the beholder, and supplements it with photographs; the photographs are, on one level, evidence for what *is happening* and what *has happened*, a combination that makes the 'repetition circle,' and on another are the self-evident powerful tools to affect the beholder into connecting and empathizing with M's message. There is a reverse flow between the two Organs;

photographs occupy more space at the beginning of the series, hit first, and hit powerful; their affective force also increases as we go forward within the series. Simultaneously, the texts become more prolonged, and eventually, the last frame is only a text, M's statement and her position on the subject of resistance.

2.1.1. *Individual Bodies and Related Bodies*

Vittorio Gallese's embodied simulation theory, which I discussed extensively in chapter one, shows, through neurological studies, that there is a functional mechanism in the human brain, which is the basis of body awareness and social understanding.¹²⁸ Gallese explains that when the visual stimuli, for instance, seeing someone else being touched on a particular body part, activates the same neurons as if the perceiver were being touched on the same spot.¹²⁹ Interestingly enough, Gallese explains that this trigger does not stop on the level of feeling the same;¹³⁰ according to his experiments, vision, sound, and action, all work within a system that activates not only feeling something but also a 'plan to act, a simulated potential action'¹³¹ in Gallese's words.

Looking at individual photos in the series, the cells, there are a number of them where we can see the representation of emotions and actions on bodies. The two photos in frame 3 show hands covered in blood (fig. 12) and individuals showing their blood-covered hands to the photographer (fig. 13). On one level, it is the universal understanding that blood is an indicator of a wounded body, and in the context of protests, a palm covered in blood is a symbol saying there was extreme violence here. On another level, when one looks at the blood-covered palm, based on Gallese's theory, it is as if their hand is covered in blood.

Looking at such photographs immediately makes the beholder remember how it feels to have blood on your hand; the warmth and the stickiness of blood are felt, and they can feel the touch of the warm body that has been the source of that blood. You can feel the warm liquid getting thicker and stickier until it eventually dries, and looking at people showing their hands to

¹²⁸ V., Gallese, 'Embodied Simulation: From Neurons to Phenomenal Experience', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, Springer, 2005, p. 24.

¹²⁹ Gallese, 'Embodied Simulation', pp. 25-26.

¹³⁰ Gallese, p. 27.

¹³¹ Gallese, p. 27.

the camera, triggers the urge in you to do the same, to plan for pressing your hand on an imaginary wound that is nowhere near you and to show the others that someone has been wounded.



Figure 12. Photo 1 on Frame 3, belonging to presidential elections in 2009



Figure 13. Photo 2 on frame 3, belonging to the pre-1979 protests

Up to this point, the beholder has already been affected physically and even primal, but that simulated plan to action works on the cognitive parts of the beholder's brain. They know what this gesture symbolizes and the social context for such gesture; their conscious knowledge adds to the affective quality of the image.

Considering the beholder has been affected, if we move to the tissues' level, the relation between the two photos tells the beholder that it has happened in the past, the photos that belong to the pre-1979 are all in black and white throughout the series, and people's clothing also confirms this, and it probably will happen again in the future. The text on the frame points out the same thing.



Figure 15. Photo 1 on frame 4, belonging to the pre-1979 protests



Figure 14. Photo 2 on frame 4, belonging to student protests in the 1990s

The next frame connects these already provoked affects and conscious knowledge to a wounded body. A wounded body that is being touched, (figs. 14, 15) making hands covered in blood and weighing on the people who are carrying it, the same simulation process is triggered in the beholder's brain, and they are affected by what they see. Again, there is a symbolic connotation; the beholder knows and has seen other photos of carrying a wounded body. The conscious knowledge and the logical causal line add another level of being affected in the beholder, amplified by the text emphasizing repetition, on an expectation for this to happen again in the future. The connection between the two frames makes the affective force stronger and moves the beholder to the next frame.

In his paper 'Embodied Simulation: From Neurons to Phenomenal Experience,' Vittorio Gallese explains the coupling between affect and sensory-motor is a potent factor that enables

individuals to achieve more abstract goals.¹³² It is an interesting point I want to emphasize more; if we agree with Gallese, then we can, even without the need to bring in other theories, conclude that our compelling corporeal physical connection to other bodies, enables us to understand other people's actions and emotions, and to feel empathy for them, and also to derive more abstract takes on affect and how it works. As tempting as this sounds, to have the ultimate explanation for the big why I see this theory as a foundation to discuss the material to point to other levels that affect works on us in the photographic image.

Our very basic physical functions make us capable of being affected by the photographic image, among many other things, and this is a starting point to think about the photographic image's affective potential. The process of identification and juxtaposition in this thesis' empirical material and the added personal interpretation by M makes this affective force more powerful. The chain of relations between the photos and the texts, and the way they work together to form the overall narratives, I claim, is the crucial element of affect; affect resonates and vibrates, on, through, and within the embodied; it is dynamic.

This dynamism is also evident in the rhythm of affective qualities throughout the series; after the previously discussed painful frames representing the impacts of violence, frame 5 (figs.



Figure 16. Photo from frame 5, 'fist in the air' gesture, belonging to the pre-1979

¹³² V., Gallese, 'Embodied Simulation: From Neurons to Phenomenal Experience', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, Springer, 2005, p. 37.

16, 17) shows the symbolic gesture of the raised fist, which on a corporeal level, the act itself provokes a feeling of power, a change from being vulnerable to powerful and confronting. The repetition theme is still dominant, and the text confirms that as well. While also there is a twist, it is the first time that the text reveals its target, an imaginary child, and tells that child ‘repetition is the main rule of the world,’ while the photo from the pre-1979 protests shows a woman holding her child while having her fist up.



Figure 17. Photo from frame 5, ‘fist in the air’ gesture, belonging to November 2021 environmental protests

The slowed-down rhythm continues in the subsequent two frames until it again escalates with the last frame of dual juxtapositions. In frame 8, (fig. 8, chapter 1) there are two photos, one from the pre-1979 protests, showing a woman shouting in despair having another woman put her hand on her shoulder to calm her down, both women are unaware of the camera while the rest of the crowd are paying attention to something outside the photo. The other photo is from the farmer’s protests showing a middle-aged man who seems to have been hit, showing anger,

despair, and frustration. Both of these photos show individual bodies, which then affects the beholder on the physiological level Gallese has described, making a powerful last impact for the juxtapositions as the next frame offers a collection of photos from different events, from various subjects, only to serve as additional evidence for M's point on repetition.

2.1.2. Contagious Punctures

Margaret Olin starts her paper¹³³ 'Roland Barthes's "Mistaken" Identification' by bringing up the importance of 'the moment of identification,' which she deems equally important as the moment the light enters through the diaphragm. She emphasizes that it is vital in photography for someone to identify, group, and place photographs together in albums or art books.¹³⁴ She clarifies then that 'it is not just the identification *of* a subject but often identification *with* it. [Original emphasis]'¹³⁵ I want to stay with the identification *with* photographs for a while from an affect theory point of view. How does one identify with a photograph? I would say their personal experiences and social memories are somehow touched; that touch results in identifying with the photo.

Borrowing from Charles Sanders Peirce's semiology, there is something that 'startles' them¹³⁶ by pointing to something else that triggers an internal and subjective response, and this happens on different levels. The affective qualities of the photograph and the affective capacity of that person collide and provoke something, an emotion, and correspondingly an action, the act of identifying.¹³⁷ Roland Barthes bases his theory of photography in 'Rhetoric of the Image'¹³⁸ on photography's indexical nature, and he explains it with his famous Panzani pasta advertisement, which I will not discuss here, yet he mentions that the symbols in the ad have a natural *being-there* of objects. Olin elaborates that this replaces an index loosely borrowed from Peirce's

¹³³ This paper is later included in Margaret Olin's book *Touching Photographs*.

¹³⁴ M. Olin, 'Touching Photographs: Roland Barthes's "Mistaken" Identification', *Representations*, Vol. 80, No. 1, 2002, p. 99.

¹³⁵ Olin, 'Touching Photographs', p. 99.

¹³⁶ C. Peirce, 'What Is a Sign?', *The essential Peirce: selected philosophical writings*, ed. Peirce Edition Project, Indiana University Press, 1998, p. 8

¹³⁷ W. J. Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era*, Cambridge, Mass., 1992.

¹³⁸ R., Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image', Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard, New York, 1985, pp. 21–40.

semiology.¹³⁹ I take this *being-there* and its relation to Peirce's index to discuss the role of identification and affect in my empirical material. Olin argues that 'a photograph is both an icon and an index; 'it is like an icon with a seal of approval, or, as Barthes calls it, a "certificate of presence."'¹⁴⁰

Correspondingly, instead of looking at photos as the object of study with the lens of *being-there*, I look at M, as the beholder and the author, in her identification and selection of photos. In her identification, there is another sense of *being-there*, an embodied sense. This *being-there* then means, for the beholder, a sense of presence *in* the photographs and not vice versa; it *moves* the beholder to the actual physical place of the moment captured in the photograph. This movement triggers the identification, the selection, the affective capacity to show the same thing to others through the juxtaposition of photos, to share the emotion of *being-there* with M, with the bodies in the photos, and eventually to feel the same emotions as the bodies in the photos, to empathize and understand the pain and trauma and probable hopelessness.

I argue that by having affect in mind, the indexicality and the notion of *being-there* switches from the photo to the beholder. The stronger this identification is in the author's body, the stronger the juxtapositions would be in their affective capacities. The dynamic index then opens up more possibilities to think about what photos can do and how the circle of movement works, from seeing to feeling to doing.

Olin discusses Barthes's two approaches towards the photographic image in the 'Rhetoric of the Image' and *Camera Lucida*; the former dwells on the thing, and the second on the person.¹⁴¹ I take the two Latin terms Barthes uses in *Camera Lucida* to discuss photographs, *studium*, and *punctum*, to build up parts of my analysis on the affective potential of the juxtapositions in my empirical material. As Barthes explains, *studium* marks the denotation of a photo's cultural or educational possibilities 'rational intermediary of an ethical and political culture'¹⁴² this then is pierced by the *punctum*, breaking into the personal field.¹⁴³ As such, this is

¹³⁹ M. Olin, 'Touching Photographs: Roland Barthes's "Mistaken" Identification', *Representations*, Vol. 80, No. 1, 2002, p. 100

¹⁴⁰ M. Olin, 'Touching Photographs: Roland Barthes's "Mistaken" Identification', *Representations*, Vol. 80, No. 1, 2002, p. 100.

¹⁴¹ Olin, 'Touching Photographs', p. 101.

¹⁴² R., Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, New York, Hill & Wang, 1981, p. 48.

¹⁴³ M. Olin, 'Touching Photographs: Roland Barthes's "Mistaken" Identification', *Representations*, Vol. 80, No. 1, 2002, p. 101.

what happens when one sees the single images in the series first, then the juxtaposition of them makes a resonance, making the piercing power stronger, drawing on the beholder's previous visual lexicon; it 'works within them'¹⁴⁴ as Barthes puts it and I discussed in the last section.

Other images outside this set have worked with M and other beholders seeing her stories later on. Before making the series, those other photos triggered M into making the connections, and for the other beholders, some elements in the series somehow wake the already existing relationships up, bringing them out from the depth of one's mind, provoking the depth of their mind, provoking their empathy and affect. Barthes writes about this delayed working of images in his experience of seeing Van Der Zee's photo (Sunday Best) as he recalled a photo of his family:

I realized that the real *punctum* was the necklace she was wearing; for (no doubt) it was this same necklace (a slender ribbon of braided gold) which I had seen worn by someone in my own family, and which, once she died, remained shut up in a family box of old jewelry. . . I had just realized that however immediate and incisive it was, the *punctum* could accommodate a certain latency (but never any scrutiny).¹⁴⁵

I want to linger on the juxtaposing photos in the series. It is as if the *punctums* (plural) are the reasons that trigger such connections and, hence such juxtapositions. While consequently the two present *punctums* in the dual juxtapositions on each frame trigger yet more emotions in the beholder having the endless visual references. Margaret Olin notes that in this remembering, Barthes has presumably moved the *punctum* from one photograph to another.¹⁴⁶ Olin's discussion of the mistaken memory in Barthes' *Camera Lucida* brings forth a significant aspect of *punctum*: it may take many different forms, opening up the possibility for comprehension¹⁴⁷ and not necessarily an actual indexical relation.

After she discusses the Winter Garden photograph in *Camera Lucida* and how it might have been non-existent, Olin mentions that 'if the *punctum* is displaced, like an alibi, then the detail that is not there, the "that-has-been," never was. And neither was the indexical power of the

¹⁴⁴ R., Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, New York, Hill & Wang, 1981, p. 87.

¹⁴⁵ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp.87–88.

¹⁴⁶ M. Olin, 'Touching Photographs: Roland Barthes's "Mistaken" Identification', *Representations*, Vol. 80, No. 1, 2002, p. 107.

¹⁴⁷ Olin, 'Touching Photographs', p. 107.

photograph. [Original emphasis]¹⁴⁸ Yet it has power, with or without the indexical value. One might then wonder, from where does the power come? Then what are the consequences for the theory of photographic indexicality? When and if one image does not exist (in Barthes' discussion) and their existence, therefore the photographic indexicality has little impact on their power regarding *punctum*, then where would this lead to discussing photography's indexical power?¹⁴⁹

Emma Shachat, in her MA thesis, *The Avatar and The Index*, questions the indexicality of the analog photograph from a different angle in relation to analyzing the indexicality of digital images, building up on prior discussions on the digital medium.¹⁵⁰ It is another interesting way of approaching the discussion of index that resonates with parts of Tom Gunning's argument I discussed in chapter 1. All these different critiques of the photographic image show how it is a complex subject and how we must reconsider our approaches, especially with the new mediums of the photographic image in both production and circulation.

Margaret Olin's argument stands no matter whether the photo is digital or analog when the *punctum* does not exist (indexically in a photo), yet it somehow affects the beholder; what is the source of that power? Might it be that thinking about the *punctum* concerning affect needs more nuance? Is it something in the beholder, as one might argue about Barthes, his sadness, the key? And in the case of this thesis, the trauma of the past events? The trauma that might trace back to people, to bodies, that have been, at some point in front of the camera, gone through something and left a trace.

Olin more or less answers the questions mentioned above in the case of Barthes: 'Barthes's "identification" of these people links multiple photographs in a chain of identificatory [*sic*] relationships. His community of photographs that "exist" for him links his family to a series of strangers. [Original emphasis]¹⁵¹ M has unconsciously made the same connection and has expressed them too in juxtapositions. The personal touch of her series, though, appears most in the text and the act of putting the series together and not in photos per se. Yet, when a beholder, another Instagram user, sees the series, something similar happens, the *studium* and *punctum* get

¹⁴⁸ Olin, p. 112.

¹⁴⁹ Olin, p. 112.

¹⁵⁰ E., Shachat, *Avatar and Index: Digital Corporeality in the Art of Ed Atkins*, unpublished MA thesis for Master's of Visual Culture, Lund, Sweden, 2020.

¹⁵¹ M. Olin, 'Touching Photographs: Roland Barthes's "Mistaken" Identification', *Representations*, Vol. 80, No. 1, 2002, p. 114.

to work and affect that said beholder. Bodies, metaphorical and natural, affect each other, in an endless chain, through complex entangled agencies; endlessly.

‘[H]e places himself “in the situation of a naive man, outside culture, someone untutored who would be constantly astonished at photography,” [Original emphasis]’¹⁵² Olin writes. M is one of such, as are many people scrolling through their Instagram stories, as are the ones in front of the camera. Jill Bennett, in *Empathic Vision*, discusses how art can deal with trauma. She has considered specific artworks as works on trauma that are not transparently representing trauma but address the realm of experience in some sense. She emphasizes the meaning rather than the form.¹⁵³

Correspondingly, I argue that layers of representation in the empirical material can be, and are being, explained by providing enough contextual information proposing more meaning than is evident from their *form*. Bennett refers to Leo Bersani, who discusses that there is always the risk of reducing trauma or painful experience to an aesthetic concern when working with an art theoretical framework.¹⁵⁴ I also claim that it is not enough to have the contextual information about what is happening (in the sense of imagining the spectator contemporary to the date these photos were taken) and its political grounds. But also events that occurred after and are still happening in the social context, and a sense of empathy with people who went through those events.

¹⁵² Olin, ‘Touching Photographs’, p. 114.

¹⁵³ J. Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Artefact, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 4.

¹⁵⁴ Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, p. 5.

2.2. Systems

The systems in this analysis are the three most considerable layers of relations, “Relation between the visual whole and the narrative whole”, “Relation of the visual whole with the context”, and “Relation of the textual whole with the context”.

The two narrative lines complement each other; when following the textual line, the photos play the role of visual testimony to the point that M is making with the text. In frame 2, the person in the photo is holding up a sign that reads: ‘Basiji! (the name commonly used for the militia forces in Iran) do not shoot at my head; it bothers my mother, shoot at the center of my chest,’ (fig. 18) which works as an anchor connecting all the photos to the text early in the series.



Figure 18. The man with a sign on frame 2, belonging to November 2021 environmental protests

It is calling on the forces of law on their violence and referring to a mother-child relationship to provoke empathy on their side, yet it seems like a satirical statement of what has happened before in such protests as well as a manifestation of bravery. The man knows it is probable for him to die. He wants to have some agency in his death, so his mother suffers less. The narrative of the visual whole goes from an individual point of view to a series of juxtapositions and then to an overall demonstration of violence throughout the years, relating to the timeline of events in Iran. The black and white contrast, the uniforms, and the clothes are all visual indicators of the timeline. There are representatives of the law present in the photos and then people, on two sides, performing. M is wondering, through the series, if the law would ever stop protecting itself to protect the bodies it was in place to protect in the first place. The photos

are evidence of the contrary and the repetition of the contrary. One, and probably M herself, might wonder, would these series, these performances be capable of *doing* something after all? Analyzing the systems helps shed much light on the affective qualities of the series. So far, we have seen that affective qualities can be discussed based on several theories. Of course, one can go pretty deep by only looking at the material semiotically concerning the context but semiotically analyzing the material only goes so far.

2.2.1. *Performing Systems*

Laura Levin, in her review essay ‘The Performative Force of Photography,’ emphasizes the contexts in which photography is received and how the intersubjective relations work within that context. One can think of photographs as speech acts (the way J. L. Austin describes them¹⁵⁵).¹⁵⁶ Ariella Azoulay has worked on these intersubjective relations and the reception contexts in her book *The Civil Contract of Photography*, where she examines the role of photographs used by stateless persons to call on the international community to pay attention to the situation in Palestine, West Bank and Gaza; she defines these photographs as acts of communication.¹⁵⁷ Azoulay uses speech act theory to state that photographs are like statements (énoncé), and it is through recognition, it gains its meaning.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, she argues that these photographs go beyond asking for an empathic response and asking for the beholder’s action to help change their status as non-citizens.¹⁵⁹

M conveys a sense of not belonging through her textual narrative by expressing her concern for an unborn child. Her observations of the repeated events indicate that the law regards citizens as non-citizens and grants them no rights, not even the right to live. She distances the forces of law from herself and anyone who empathizes with her when she describes them as robots, non-human. M describes these robots as being governed by a law that is the object of resistance; therefore, any action against it is a crime according to that law.

¹⁵⁵ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1975 [1955].

¹⁵⁶ L. Levin, ‘The Performative Force of Photography’, *Photography and Culture*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2009, p. 329.

¹⁵⁷ A. Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, New York, Zone Books, 2008.

¹⁵⁸ Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, p. 25.

¹⁵⁹ Azoulay, p. 25.

Walter Benjamin, in the ‘Critique of Violence,’ discusses violence in a system of *just ends* and *just means*; considering violence as means, he says, ‘a criterion for criticizing it is immediately available.’¹⁶⁰ When the *ends* is upholding the law, then the means for it is justified and encouraged, although the morality of using violence to reach just ends is yet questionable.¹⁶¹ The textual narrative of the series reflects on a state of hopelessness concerning these forces of law; referring to them as robots has a connotation that they lack any sense of empathy toward pain with only one objective: shutting down any resistance or acts aiming to change the law. The action M is calling for is a simple notion, for individuals to save their lives, bringing the photos as evidence of any act of resistance being a hopeless act leading to death.

Azoulay wonders what it would mean for a spectator to recognize their temporal co-presence with a photographed body. She questions the distinctive dichotomy of the photograph ‘as an inert, mechanically reproduced image’¹⁶² that records the past and performance as something of the continuous preset and liveness nature. She explains it in the context of morality, describing herself as less immoral if she assumes that the photographed bodies were there, existent, and are still there when she looks at them through the photographs.¹⁶³

Azoulay refers to this way of thinking as a ‘civic duty toward the photographed persons who haven’t stopped being ‘there’ [Original emphasis]’¹⁶⁴ Even though M’s account of the photographs has the same approach to spectatorship as Azoulay’s, it is not as hopeful and optimistic as hers. M has removed herself from *there* and asks the unborn child to do so, too. She emphasizes that nothing is more important than life, and her hope does not lay in the fact of changing what there is for the people who are *there*. It is a weak glimpse of hope for the precious life to have a future away from ‘there.’

Azoulay proposes that the spectator should watch the photograph instead of looking at it. She argues that watching entails considering a temporal dimension for the photograph, bringing in time and movement for the interpretation.¹⁶⁵ Watching the series, instead of seeing it, makes the affective qualities of photographs stronger; it brings a sense of *being-there* in the beholder, and makes the beholder part of the collective photographed body, enduring the violence,

¹⁶⁰ W., Benjamin, ‘Critique of Violence’, *Benjamin, W. Selected Writings, vol. 1: 1913–1926*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 236.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² A. Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, New York, Zone Books, 2008, p. 16, quoting Gilbert, 1998: 21.

¹⁶³ Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, p. 16.

¹⁶⁴ Azoulay, p. 16.

¹⁶⁵ Azoulay, p. 14.

bleeding, and being *affected*. It is not only the atrocity of single photos that is at work to achieve a speech act, the relations and juxtapositions are also equally important and powerful. You, as a beholder, look at the photos, look at them next to each other, look at them going frame to frame and read the text; the chain emphasizes the atrocity and affects you; the message that M is communicating affects you.

Many of the photos belonging to the period after 1979 were taken by citizens who wanted to get the news out to other parts of the country and the international community. The more they are shared, the more the sense of being part of a collective body improves. Diana Taylor, in her book *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, not only discusses the performative qualities of the photographs themselves but argues that the process of taking them at a significant public moment also needs to be interpreted as a political act, ‘a need to make sense and communicate.’¹⁶⁶ M also resonates with that need, demonstrated earlier in the screen grabs and citizen photos.

Taylor reads photography in this context as a form of participatory citizenship.¹⁶⁷ This type of citizenship then uses the performative force to mark its place in the confrontation. An interesting indicator of this performative force is the camera and the photographer’s position in the photos of the pre- and after 1979. In the after 1979 photos, the photographer is in the middle of the crowd, part of the collective body, and not just a reporter looking from the margins. The aesthetic qualities of the photos (which is something that classically is evident in *powerful* photos of pre-1979) then, is mostly beside the point. The pre-1979 photos are taken by journalists and trained photographers, while the after 1979 photos are taken by citizens on the resistance side. The civic contribution and participation in the current visual discourse are essential aspects. Taylor claims that individual citizens then use photographs to feel personally involved to claim to ‘have been there.’¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Diana, Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Durham, NC and London, Duke University Press, 2003, p. 243.

¹⁶⁷ Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, p. 252.

¹⁶⁸ Taylor, p. 252.

2.3. *Body, Reborn and Affected*

Laura Doyle starts her book *Bodies of Resistance* with this question: ‘[i]f, as bodied creatures, we walk always within the contours of a culture, shaped by its codes and disciplines, how do we realize in the flesh any gestures of resistance?’¹⁶⁹ This question refers to some terms that I showed were important in my analysis, while in this section, I focus on embodied aspects of resistance regarding my empirical material. The terms Doyle mentions are: we are *bodied creatures*; secondly, *realizing in flesh*; and thirdly, *gestures of resistance*.

In this thesis, there are layers to such notions; one is in the individual physical bodies depicted in the photos, experiencing emotions, expressing emotions, and acting and reacting to those emotions. Another one is their representations in the photographs and how these emotions and actions are depicted, through a system of signs and symbols, through bodies as indicators of these emotions and actions. The third layer is the effect of these representations on the beholder and how they relate to each other; this virtual perception then provokes affect and causes emotions. M puts them together to communicate her point while resonating with the former notions as something independent in its embodied gestures.

This last layer, *the body*, is the one that I will discuss here, its embodied characteristics, although it is entirely on an immaterial platform. I argue that even this is an act of bodily resistance, even though secondary, and even though it might require the perceiver to pause and understand its embodied acting abilities. The embodied affect and resistance are somewhat contagious, from the body to body, from bodies to photos, from photos back to bodies, and then again from the body to body. Therefore, the set of stories (and stories of the similar nature) act as mediators to spread the affect, no matter their materiality. The mediators then make a circle, or rather a spiral of emotion-action; it goes on and on; it sometimes dies out and sometimes gets bigger.

Thinking about the stories set as a mediator opens up more space for thinking about how we interact with such material. Erika Larsson in her book, *Photographic Engagements*, has made an interesting discussion about the simple acts related to such material and its tactility as ‘a discourse of vision and touch.’¹⁷⁰ Larsson draws upon the ideas of different theorists to explain

¹⁶⁹ L. Doyle. (ed.), *Bodies of Resistance: New Phenomenologies of Politics, Agency, and Culture*, Evanston, Ill, Northwestern University Press, 2001, p. xi.

¹⁷⁰ E., Larsson, *Photographic Engagements: Belonging and Affective Encounters in Contemporary Photography*, Gothenburg and Stockholm, Makadam, 2018, p. 134.

this notion. She refers to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who claims it is a mistake to keep a distance from the embodied experience very early on when trying to understand a phenomenon. Larsson argues that when we reconsider the massive discussions of gaze and change the focus to acts such as clicking (or, in the context of this thesis touching the smartphone's screen to hold on a story to look at the photos or read the text, touching the like and share buttons, and other related functions.), it becomes apparent that vision and touch are inseparable.¹⁷¹

As Larsson explains based on Olin and the media theorist Wendy Hui Kyong, this relation of touch and vision is evident when one feels a sense of power as the perceiver when they can do these embodied acts.¹⁷² Sara Ahmed in 'Happy Objects' suggests thinking of affective and embodied acts as *sticky*, or as 'what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects.'¹⁷³ Larsson refers to Ahmed and continues to explain that with this way of thinking acts such as liking and sharing on social media shape the notion of 'how bodies turn towards things.'¹⁷⁴ Larsson explains how for Ahmed, 'it is around the orientation towards or away from objects that we can observe the formation of groups.'¹⁷⁵

Thinking about the stories set as a body towards which the beholder is oriented, touching the screen and interacting with frames, separately and as a whole, creates a sense of belonging to a group. There is a shared feeling of hopelessness towards the future of first, a group that has endured violence in the years before 1979 and second, a group that is enduring violence now.¹⁷⁶ The latter is also the group that the camera is positioned within it, oriented against the violent forces of the other side.

My research process started with thinking about the material as a whole. But in the present analysis, I have brought this discussion to the last to give the reader a gradual understanding of the material. It is important to mention that analyzing the material of this nature and looking at affective aspects in it is not, and maybe cannot, be linear. It is a process that zooms in on the smallest of the details and zooms out to see the bigger picture and the social context and the communication to a more extensive network of people, almost simultaneously. It

¹⁷¹ Larsson, *Photographic Engagements*, p. 134.

¹⁷² M., Olin, *Touching Photographs*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2012.

¹⁷³ S., Ahmed, 'Happy Objects', M. Gregg and G. J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2010, p. 29.

¹⁷⁴ Ahmed, 'Happy Objects', p. 31.

¹⁷⁵ E., Larsson, *Photographic Engagements: Belonging and Affective Encounters in Contemporary Photography*, Gothenburg and Stockholm, Makadam, 2018, p. 135.

¹⁷⁶ This notion reminds me of a common chant among protesters in different occasions after 1979, that says 'Don't be afraid! Don't be afraid! We are all together!'

is, of course, not simultaneously in a literal manner, but affect works almost simultaneously on different levels; hence when one becomes aware of how affect works, the analysis, too, happens on all levels simultaneously.

Margaret Olin describes that the gestures of making, sharing, and viewing photographs turn the images into ‘presences that populate the world like people and act within it to connect people.’¹⁷⁷ This metaphor resonates with what I mentioned earlier, the juxtaposition of the photos, the act of putting them together, and the fact that M has felt the need to do so, seeing them and interpreting them, and turning them into a short photo essay about how the social and political situation affects her. Talking to an imaginary child, to the future, brings up another *body* into the world, a presence that populates the world, and it needs to be seen and understood as a body is, a collection of cells and tissues and organs and systems.

Sontag describes photography as ‘one of the principal devices for experiencing something, for giving an appearance of participation.’¹⁷⁸ It exemplifies the attempt Iranian people make to connect and participate in a context where many other ways of participation are not available due to extreme oppression and sometimes fatal consequences. Participation is a crucial notion here, taking photos to participate, sharing photos to participate, or convincing one to participate in some way or even not to participate in fear of probable death.

As I mentioned before, the photos belonging to the after 1979 period, seen individually, serve as evidence of the violent actions of the government forces. When chosen and grouped, like in the present empirical material, they still serve as tools for a variety of purposes, calls to action, raising awareness or provoking empathy to name a few. The aesthetic values are pushed to the margins in the photos of after 1979, and instead, the affective and embodied qualities are emphasized. Even when their truthfulness is questioned, the affective performances are intact as it serves as a potential for action.¹⁷⁹ It only highlights the importance of looking at the affective qualities of photographic material in visual culture and reconsidering the methods we implement in such studies.

¹⁷⁷ M., Olin, *Touching Photographs*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2012, p. 14.

¹⁷⁸ Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, New York, Rosetta Books LLC, 1973, p. 128.

¹⁷⁹ E., Larsson, *Photographic Engagements: Belonging and Affective Encounters in Contemporary Photography*, Gothenburg and Stockholm, Makadam, 2018, p. 130.

The significance of such photos lies in a continuous everyday embodied behavior, taking photos, sharing photos, and re-sharing with added affective notions. M, possibly unconsciously, builds on both aesthetic and affective qualities of the pre-1979 photos, the classic example of indexical and iconic *touching* photos, and juxtaposes them with the seemingly more fragile digital low-quality photos and screengrabs of videos to communicate a more affectively powerful message.

2.3.1. Resisting Body

The Islamic Republic has complete control over all the news providers in Iran, which means any news from these sources has gone through heavy censorship; this has led to people relying on the social media; citizens post photos and videos from protests and any other instances of resistance and the government violence. News channels outside Iran (such as BBC Persian) then rely on these citizen reports; this reliance became evident during November 2019, when a nationwide series of protests started, and the government cut the access to the international web for a week. International news channels did not have the visual material they usually acquired from social media during that week. Ordinary citizens also could only rely on verbal information and anecdotes on the extent of the violence. That experience has made it clear for Iranian citizens that they should take photos and videos and share them on social media before anything similar happens in the early minutes of any protest.

In the case of November 2019, the citizen photographs then served as evidence of the violence, and international human rights organizations and news providers used them alongside other evidence to confirm the number of casualties.¹⁸⁰ Based on these facts, when the photos of protests are shared, they also have a connotation of acting as part of a community; you affectively show you care because you know the importance of sharing the photos and discussing them since you have seen the effect of such actions. You are part of that collective body. M is looking for hope as part of a collective body that has gone through years of trauma; while she expresses hopelessness, she waits for a touch from other parts of the collective body.

¹⁸⁰ Reuters for instance confirmed 1500 casualties. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-protests-specialreport-idUSKBN1YR0QR> (accessed 20 May 2022).

Although this evidence aspect of the photographs is important in understanding their affective qualities to trigger a response, it is also important to note, as Larsson explains, referring to scholars such as Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, and their followers that ‘the ability of photographs to trigger visceral reactions often creates a false sense of “knowing” an event, thereby making visible its inner dynamics.[Original emphasis]’¹⁸¹ One can indeed argue that each one of these images brings that sense to the surface in the audience; when these images are juxtaposed to communicate a point, they become different and therefore need an other way of interpretation. Even though they still have affective qualities, the new layer of meaning they communicate makes the primary affective properties different. Putting the events next to each other through photographs gives more context in contrast to a single photograph; the juxtaposition and the act of identification and selection move beyond the photographs just being something that triggers; it opens up venues for deeper discussions going beyond the false sense of knowing and seeing the inner dynamics.

M is not just trying to provoke feelings; sharing and putting the images together is, in fact, a nonviolent way of making a point on the consistent violence of the law in a totalitarian regime and the hopelessness it entails. It is like a manifesto for the Iranian middle-class citizen’s life through images of resistance. A bigger picture only comes to attention when seeing the material as a whole, resonating with layers and layers of many decades of trauma. It comes from a sense of *seeing* the pattern happening again, even with the most peaceful protest in November 2021.

The bigger picture here is how even the most peaceful protests turn violent by the very force of the law, and then the general discontent for the violence of the law resurfaces or instead is emphasized. Which almost always loses momentum and leads to hopelessness again since the forces of the two sides are not in an equal balance. M only calls for the child to seek hope elsewhere, to save the individual body, the precious corporeality of existence. Which is even a more powerful meaning to be communicated; it almost even feels contradictory to what the images are showing; resistance in the images, regardless of the violence, has another connotation in them; the photos from before belong to a successful revolution, something that resulted in overthrowing the violence of the Monarchy and its system of the law. It is as if M wishes for the newer acts of resistance to go in the same direction towards victory and then to hope for a better

¹⁸¹ E., Larsson, *Photographic Engagements: Belonging and Affective Encounters in Contemporary Photography*, Gothenburg and Stockholm, Makadam, 2018, p. 137.

future when the cycle of repetition breaks. But in accentuating the notion of repetition, there is again hopelessness that the loop will never break; the precious life is the only thing that matters.



Figure 19. The first girl of Enghelab Street

This hopelessness's roots are, for instance, traceable in previous incidents of nonviolent acts in the Iranian context. One was the Girls of Enghelab (Revolution) Street movement, where a woman climbed on a utility box while holding her headscarf tied to a stick and waving it to the crowds on December 27th 2017 (fig. 19). It was a simple act of being a woman, wearing what she wanted, which was not even out of the cultural norms, and demonstrating it peacefully. A video of her shot by an anonymous citizen was circulated on social media, and a screengrab of it went viral. She was soon arrested, nevertheless other women followed in her footsteps on different occasions until 2019, the government reaction became more and more violent towards the same peaceful act. It is an example of a photo that by itself does not provoke much affective response, especially in an audience not familiar with the rules of *hijab* in Iran, but for someone knowing the context, it is indeed an act of resistance, and symbolic, with her having a white headscarf on a stick. As such, there are incidents in the Islamic Republic's history when step by step, every single act of normal life goes to the list of forbidden acts, prosecutable as acts against the national security limiting the ordinary citizen's life more and more.

As I showed in the example above, acts of sharing these photographs can be seen to affectively connect people against an oppressive force that is limiting the borders of an everyday life. It is, though, more apparent by seeing these acts as affective and embodied rather than mere photographic representations. The passing around of these sticky objects, as Sara Ahmed puts it, is what gives them affective values. Margaret Olin ends her reading of *Camera Lucida* by proposing that the significant indexical power of the photograph lies in the relation between the photograph and its beholder, rather than it and its subject, which she calls a ‘performative index’ or an ‘index of identification.’¹⁸²

The body is back on its feet, performing before our eyes.

2.4. Chapter Conclusion

As we saw in this chapter, analyzing affective qualities in the photographic image requires a reconsideration of the methods we are commonly used to in this field, most notably because the subject of affect calls for such reconsideration. The thesis’ material as well called for such reconsideration. I used the body metaphor to structure the analysis in this chapter, following what the material dictated in chapter one in defining the theoretical framework.

A reconsideration in the approach to theorization and to formulation of a methodological approach is not only called for in art history but is deeply connected to the discussion of emotions and their embodied aspects when dealing with studies of affect. Now that I have gone through the dissection of the material and circled back to the body as a whole, it is apparent that such reconsideration is beneficial.

The many relations that govern human encounters and the photographic image’s connection to this net of relations are the significant factors that tied the analysis processes together in this chapter. As we saw, the body metaphor was crucial for the process; it served as an anchor for the many dynamic aspects of affect that are hard to grasp and harder to collect in one place, while one cannot dismiss any of them to make such a study more organized. The affect’s nature and its deep connections to the body were also important in making this metaphor more

¹⁸² M., Olin, *Touching Photographs*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2012, pp. 114-115.

than just a metaphor; instead, it showed how referring to the body as the *home base* of discussion can be beneficial to studying affect in visual material.

Throughout the analysis, I kept thinking about my initial question, ‘why do these images affect me the way they do?’ which I believe is a bonus to studying affect; it constantly relates to the researcher personally. The affective force of the material never died out on me in this chapter; the dissection clarified the things that were first just emotions I felt and turned them into knowledge while staying an alive body to keep affecting me as a beholder.

Thesis Conclusion and Further Perspectives

In this thesis, I explored the affective qualities in a set of Instagram stories juxtaposing photos of the pre- and after 1979 Iranian revolution protests. This exploration aimed to answer the overall question of “How can the power of photographic images in an era of social media be elucidated based on theories of affect?” by asking the overall question, another inevitable question arose that needed to be answered first: “How is an affective reading of a type of material of mixed and complex nature formulated?”

To answer these questions, I structured this thesis into two chapters; in the first chapter, I highlighted the theoretical debates around affect, the photographic image, and affect in the photographic image. I used these theorizations as the spine to formulate an analysis structure. In doing so, and by going back and forth between the empirical material and the theoretical discussions around the subject, the different layers of the material were identified. These layers all had affective qualities in themselves and in relation to one another.

In chapter two, I used this structure to look closely at the empirical material to answer the overall question of the thesis. By looking closely at different layers of the empirical material’s body, I traced different affective forces working in various ways and showed how this thesis’ material uses these forces to affect the beholder.

Early in the research process, I had a hypothesis that the body played an essential role in formulating an analysis structure; the theoretical debates about the body I brought forth showed that it indeed plays a central role. The theoretical tensions between the body as a metaphor and as a carrier for affect and its source resulted in structuring the empirical material’s analysis by using the body as a metaphor. This metaphorical body then became part of the analysis itself as an actual body, both individual and collective.

The body became the first blueprint to guide the investigation in accessing the affective qualities of the empirical material in chapter two. However, in chapter one, the theoretical discussions related to different parts of this metaphorical body became its spine and the thesis’s theoretical framework.

Elaborating on the complexities of affect and theoretical approaches to it and the complexities drawn from a theoretical discussion of the photographic image made a tightly intertwined net of discussion through which the affective shimmers were captured. It was crucial throughout chapter one to keep the dynamic theoretical tension alive, as Brian Massumi wrote, to

avoid depending on the hard, theoretical ground so that the study of affect would feel less like a free fall¹⁸³ but maybe more like a controlled jump, I would like to add.

Affect is chaotic, and human beings are also chaotic, yet there is a sense of order in this chaos as well;¹⁸⁴ keeping this chaotic nature alive while maintaining the order to propose a coherent analysis resulted in a sense of movement throughout this thesis, between different layers of the empirical material and between various theoretical debates. A classic linear passage would not have led to a compelling analysis of the material nor it would not have made clear the current studies of affect.

The answer to the overall question then was that the photographic image's nature—which is its potential to give us extraordinary details and a big sublime image—collides with the way affect works on us, in a moment and an abundance of moments, as a living entity, the same way we experience being in a relationship with others. Both photography and affect keep us in a limbo of intense movement and pause, a rhythm that goes on infinitely and changes infinitely, which also changes us infinitely.

To capture and communicate this sense of dynamism, I also left some room for the reader in my analysis in chapter two, some space to dwell and untangle more of the intertwined layers of the affective photographic image. By doing so, I also maintained the integrity of the material so that I would not exhaust the metaphor and would not exhaust the analysis. These rooms to dwell serve as spaces for further questions on affect and the photographic image.

One path to further questions is to delve deeper into developing methodological approaches derived from the empirical material and theorize these approaches exclusively for visual culture studies, which echoes what Jill Bennet has aimed to do in the *Empathic Vision*. Another is to work toward affective encounters of the photographic image with a more significant focus on social media and its potential to summon forces of affect.

The photographic image itself opens up many paths when it is considered outside the classic theoretical approaches to gaze or indexicality. And instead approached through participatory affective and performative acts, especially when it is put in relation to the different

¹⁸³ B. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 2002, p. 8.

¹⁸⁴ Brian Massumi discusses this chaos and its connection to theoretical traditions in the introduction of *Parables for the Virtual* quite interestingly.

historical contexts of photography itself as a practice in art and as a something that has become part of every ordinary person's daily ritual.

Throughout writing this thesis, I realized that actively working on affect also has an affective force in it. There is a power in turning the unconscious force of affect, which works on the emotional level, into conscious knowledge. My initial personal question kept coming back to me, 'why am I so affected by these photos?' I realized, to my surprise, it was because I was not a floating brain entity in space, disconnected from the world and what was happening in it. I was, I am, a bodily being, occupying space in the world, a combination of speed and slowness, with a skin that can be touched, both physically and virtually. In a war-torn world, where news and the consequent photos of affected bodies circulate instantly, I am affected; I have no choice but to be affected. So it is for any other living being.

However, there is one condition for this inevitable incident of being affected. On the 11th of May, while in the final stages of writing this thesis, I had the opportunity to attend two lectures by Margaret Olin and Vittorio Gallese, both of whom this thesis relies on heavily. Olin's lecture was called 'Photography, A Performance of Attentiveness,' and Gallese, during the Q&A session, mentioned that neurologically speaking, we as human beings are bound to empathize the moment we pay *attention* to something, the moment we look, we empathize. This attentiveness is the condition.

Consciously paying attention to affect is also under the same condition; it makes you bound to be affected. Apart from the constant hurtful feeling when you pay attention and get affected, the constant tingling in your neck and chest and fingers, the sensation of hearing your heart beat, and the warmth in your face from seeing other affected bodies; it also entails that you might *act*.

Appendices

Appendix A: Translation of the interview with M; in writing on 18 May 2022.

Mohseni: I saw the stories the same day you posted them when the protests in Isfahan got bigger, and the police started shooting people, but when I went back to them later, I saw you have saved them as highlights under the name ‘The Repetition Circle,’ could you explain what triggered the idea of posting the stories? And if there is anything else you want to add about them.

M: It seemed to me that the violence’s path reproduces itself. Even when people get rightfully angry and then get even angrier because of the others’ violent behavior, they are capable of doing anything. This makes me sad. I just thought about it, and I wanted to get it out of my head and save it, even if it is only for myself because I might forget it if I don’t. The virtual space [my Instagram account] is like a personal diary for me, personal to the extent that it can be shared with others. It happens that many of these others are acquaintances, friends and relatives, and colleagues. That is why I post my ideas there. Maybe also in an attempt to trigger something for them too. A trigger that I might not want to communicate to them directly or engage in an argument about it. Maybe this trigger can encourage them to see things differently. But as I said, more than anything, it is for me to document memories.

Mohseni: What was the basis for choosing the photos to relate to each other? You mentioned before that you searched for different dates in history and chose from what you found. Could you explain a bit more about this process? And why did you decide on a dual juxtaposition?

M: When I thought about repetition, I immediately thought of dual juxtapositions. In fact, I think many people would think of the same thing. I wanted to document it for myself. I don’t remember when was the first time that I thought of the repetition idea, but definitely, it was long before this. I also think people understand things better through comparison. I am like that myself. If someone would say that this is not called anger and would try to play with words to deviate the things, by juxtaposing these photos, you can show them that anger is anger. You might be empathetic to the anger in one era and not the other. But you can show how people’s behavior is similar in situations of anger and violence. Definitely, the sociologists know more

about this. But I, as a human being, can see this similarity based on my intuition and experience and understand it through comparison, and with these photos, probably others can too.

Mohseni: One of the stories was a collection of different photos from different protests. Could you explain about choosing photos for that collection as well?

M: Very intuitive and based on what caught my eye. From my memories of the photos. I knew that I had seen such a photo before or I could find it with a bit of search. Everyone has a mental archive without knowing. You either know exactly what photo it is that you are looking for, or you know what kind of photo you are looking for. You have seen the similar many times. For example, you know, probably there are many photos of someone standing next to an overthrown sculpture. Maybe you don't have a specific photo in mind, but you will find a similar one in every nation and in every revolution if you search. There is a certain logic to it. There is a symbol. There is a sculpture, and the revolutionary people would definitely overthrow that sculpture. No matter it is south America or Iran. And when this [overthrowing a statue] happens, it will probably be documented. So you can just search and find it based on the assumption that it exists.

Mohseni: The text that accompanied the photos was also interesting. Why was it talking to an imaginary child? It was about both the past and the future, could you explain this too?

M: I have this [recurring theme] in many of the things I write for myself. Talking to an imaginary child. I don't have a child, but this is probably the only place where I can, in a limited manner and up to a limited age, tell them what is good and wrong. I don't want to, and I can't prescribe things to others. I understand why an angry person is angry, I am not an exception myself, but I just think that path leads to this cycle of violence without it being the intention.

One part of the repetition concept also refers to your lived experience. The experience that everything is repeating itself, in different shapes and forms.

Mohseni: In all of these, the thing that is interesting for me is that except for the triggers in the material (photos and words and an event in the world), there are internal triggers as well. What feeling caused you to choose these photos and put them together?

M: As I said, I have had thought about the concept of repetition, but in fact, when I first saw the first photos and read the news, it became more clear to me. In fact, the process was that I don't know when but with my first encounter with an angry crowd who were also victims, I had a sense of Deja Vu. I felt it is the same. And this was there until I made these stories.

Mohseni: You have recently moved to another country; the text and the photos conveyed a sense of hopelessness. As if you have already seen the future of the past, and now you have reached a time when this seems like it has already been and what is the point of it all if the result is death. Is there a connection? Breaking out of the loop? Are these even conscious things for you?

M: I don't know, maybe. Maybe not. But there is surely an unconscious connection. I resisted again migrating for many years, and I stayed in Iran. Even now, I don't call it migration; I am close. So far, I haven't been able to call it migration. It is as if I want to have some hope. But the truth is considering the circumstances and having difficulties maintaining a normal life; you unconsciously want to break the vicious circle.

Mohseni: Is there anything else you would want to add?

M: Just that I don't want my name to be mentioned anywhere.

Appendix B: Persian texts in the frames and translations

Frame 1:

نشر از نامردمی در پرده چشم شکست

English: The betrayal's dagger broke into my eye

Frame 2:

Text on the sign:

بسیجی تیر را به سرم نزن
مادرم اذیت می شود
بزن وسط سینه ام

English: Basiji! Do not shoot at my head; it bothers my mother; shoot at the center of my chest

Text on the frame:

سینه مالامال درد است ای دریغا مرهمی / دل ز تنهایی به جان آمد خدا را همدمی

English: My chest is brimful of pain; alas, a remedy! My heart is dying of loneliness; for God's sake, (send) a companion!

Frame 3:

آنچه در گذشته رخ می دهد در آینده رخ داده

English: What is happening in the past, has happened in the future

Frame 4:

آنچه در آینده رخ می دهد در گذشته رخ داده

English: What is happening in the future, has happened in the past

Frame 5:

فرزندم! تکرار اساس کار چرخش دنیاست

English: My child! Repetition is the main rule of the world

Frame 6:

وگرنه آنقدر متنوع نیست که به تو خوش بگذرد. منتظر نباش. همه چیز شبیه هم است

English: It [life] is not as diverse that you would have fun. Do not wait; everything looks the same.

Frame 7:

Text on the photo:

مگه آب نمی‌خواستید؟ اینم آب! # اصفهان

English: Weren't you asking for water? Here is water! #Isfahan

Text on the frame:

تو احتمالا بین دو یا سه یا چهار تکرار زندگی کنی. و بعد بروی. تاریخ را بخوان.

English: You will probably live between two, three or four rounds of repetition and then leave.

Read the history.

Frame 8:

فقط امیدوارم آنقدر خوشبخت باشی که جایی به دنیا بیایی که تکرارهایش با غم و خون و اندوه عجین نشده باشد

English: I just hope you are lucky enough to be born where its repetitions are not so intertwined with sadness, blood, and sorrow

Frame 9:

فرزندم!

اگر یک جایی گم شدی نگران نباش. مثلا یاددت نیاید که ۵۷ بود یا ۶۷ یا ۷۸ یا ۷۹ یا ۸۸ یا ۹۶ یا ۹۸ یا ۹۸ یا ۹۸ یا ۱۴۰۰ یا؟! چون واقعا همه چیز هی شبیه هم است و تو حق داری. فقط سعی کن زنده بمانی که «جان» تو ارزشمندترین است.

فرزندم!

سعی کن قاطی مرده‌ها نشوی، چون من دوست دارم و می‌دانم زنده بودن بیشتر به درد می‌خورد تا مرده‌ات.

English: My child! If you got lost somewhere, do not worry. Do not try to remember if it is 57¹⁸⁵ [1979] or 67 [1988] or 78 [1999] or 79 [2000] or 88 [2009] or 96 [2017] or 98 [2019] or 98 [2019] or 98 [2019] or 1400 [2021]! Because everything is similar, over and over, and you are right not to know when it is. Just try to stay alive because your 'life' is the most valuable of all. My child! Try not to become one of the dead because I love you, and I know you being alive is more precious than you being dead.

¹⁸⁵ These dates refer to the Persian calendar.

Frame 10:

فرزندم!

خودت را قاطی چرخه‌ها نکن.

برو یک جای دور که قدت اندازه قد بقیه باشد.

تو در دنیای سیاست مثل فلرتیشیا هستی در برابر گالیور. می‌تواند با یک انگشت شوتت کند.

آرمان و وطن و اینها را بریز دور.

برو آنجا که بود چشمی و گوشه با کس

برو آنجا که تو را منتظرند!

دلبندم.

تا می‌توانی از بوی خون کف خیابان دور شو. اینها رباتند. ربات‌های مسلح، که فکر می‌کنند پشت بازی کامپیوتری نشسته‌اند و اگر توی چشمت شلیک

کنند، امتیازشان فول می‌شود و می‌روند مرحله بعد. اینها بی‌همه‌چیزند. تو می‌میری و هیچ نامی از تو در تاریخ نمی‌ماند. فوق فووش همان چرخه‌ای که

توش هستی تو را بخاطر بیاورند که می‌خواهم صد سال سیاه بخاطر بیاورند.

زنده بمان. زندگی هر چقدر هم کثافت باشد، باز هم یک شانس است. ازش استفاده کن

English: My child! Do not involve yourself in the loops. Go somewhere far where you are as tall as the others. In the world of politics, you are like Flirtacia next to Gulliver; he can shoot you with a finger. Throw away 'the hopes and dreams,' and 'your home country' and all the stuff. (Reference to a poem: Go where people look and hear you, go where there is someone waiting for you!) My dear. Get as far away as you can from the scent of blood on the streets. These are robots, armed robots, thinking they are playing a computer game, and if they shoot you between the eyes, they would get the highest score and go on to the next level. These are unscrupulous. You will die, and your name will be lost in history. At best, the same loop you are in will remember you, which I prefer them not to! Stay alive! As shitty as it might be, life is still a chance; use it.

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