CHAPTER 1

The Wind Will Carry Us: Cinematic Scepticism

The Wind Will Carry Us opens with long takes of a car zigzagging down a road in the Iranian countryside. This is to say it opens with a sequence that, to anybody who knows Kiarostami's work, will be immediately recognisable as typical of it: *Life and Nothing More* returns repeatedly to such sequences, and ends with a brilliant one; similar sequences turn up in *Taste of Cherry*; *Through the Olive Trees* concludes with a long shot of its protagonists zigzagging across a field; we see the hero of *Where is the Friend's Home?* meandering in a similar pattern on more than one occasion.[1] The opening of *The Wind Will Carry Us* is intriguing and, with its muted semi-screwball feel, a little funny.[2] By the time of this film's release, however, the car on the screen was bringing this cinematic history with it. Thus there is something self-aware or even self-effacing about these opening shots: Kiarostami seems to be referring here not only to his previous works but also perhaps to himself, and to the by then internationally recognisable figure called 'Kiarostami'. So if Nancy is right to say that long aerial takes are Kiarostami's "signature"[3] – that "a person or a car's zigzagging path on the background of an unchanging landscape traverses, like a single trajectory, five movies . . . and turns into an emblematic summary of all the films"[4] – then perhaps this is complicated here by a certain irony. We might say that in the opening sequence of this film Kiarostami *cites his own signature*, with all the philosophical complications such a gesture entails.

For what is it to cite one's signature? As Jacques Derrida argues, there is an ontological tension in the very idea of a signature, insofar as it is both an "absolute singularity" – a means by which we secure the identity of a particular person, plus a singular event of writing – and an eminently "repeatable, iterable, imitable form".[5] Despite the fact that it is singular, a signature is also a repetition of previous signatures, and it becomes what it is through iteration (such that, for instance, one's first ever signature cannot really qualify as such). But how much iteration does it take? And won't each iteration also be a unique, singular event? To clarify this problem, suppose someone untrained in forgery has a stamp made of a handwritten example. If fraudulence were to be suspected, the fact that the signature being employed is always exactly

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the same could give the game away: the signature, if it is to convince, must be more than a mere replica (we might say that it has to have life in it). Yet of course, an untrained attempt at forging by hand will not convince either, because it will be insufficiently similar to the original. To be convincing a signature must be both singular *and* an imitation. So what is the difference between a signature and the citation of one? The meandering car is a giveaway that we are watching a Kiarostami film yet – deployed as it is with such deliberateness at the very beginning of *The Wind Will Carry Us* – it also gives away the fact that Kiarostami's signature is, like any signature, a technique that can be repeated, indeed mimicked or parodied. Importantly, however, this self-effacing gesture is not *simply* ironic, and it is not only in spite but also partly because of its reflexivity that the opening sequence of this film in particular is intriguing and gently funny. After all, gestures of self-effacement – ironic nods to the mediality of cinema – are perhaps as typical of Kiarostami's films as long aerial takes of zigzagging cars. If Kiarostami is citing his own signature, then that is also his signature.

Thus I want to disagree with Nancy when he writes that "there is no room for reflexivity"[6] in Kiarostami. Yet I share the intuition that appears to be guiding Nancy's statement. For what's remarkable about Kiarostami's films is how his relentless problematisation of the real, his dogged insistence on the mediality of the cinematic image, does not leave us in a free play of significations unmoored from their referents: if the opening sequence of this film is an example of 'intertextuality', it is not because Kiarostami is spruiking some pop postmodernism. Further, his repeated attempts at turning our attention to his medium do not produce a *Verfremdungseffekt*. Or if they do, this distancing is highly absorbing. Note that this is not really paradoxical: my argument is that it is through undoing our desire for access to the world that Kiarostami can reconnect us with it. It is like being brought back to reality, though an epistemologically deflated, mundane one (which is to say, not the one we were wishing for). Kiarostami evokes the real – or as Nancy wants to say, provides a certain kind of *evidence* for it – in upsetting our claims to know it with certainty and security.

As the car rolls along, we hear a conversation between its passengers. The men are arguing over directions, looking for a single tree that should mark the point at which they need to turn. This is a bit comedic, for of course there are many 'single' trees on these hills.[7] When the characters see the tree (they do so before we do), there seems to be no mistaking it: someone exclaims, "It's so big!" about ten seconds before a large tree appears on screen. A couple of minutes into the sequence the shot changes, and we are given views from the side windows of the car: farmers are working in the open field. If these are

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point of view shots, they are multiply framed and reframed: we are watching a screen, seeing through the eyes of characters who are themselves viewing the field through the frames of the windows. Add to this the fact that this shot – the view out the side window from the interior of a moving car – is another of Kiarostami's signatures (as is the fact that our characters are lost and need to ask for directions): we are not only viewing the point of view of the characters as they view the scene through a window; we are also provoked to recall a series of similar views from Kiarostami's other films. The dialogue during the sequence is remarkable not only for its humorous repetitiveness, but also for how that repetition has the weird effect of getting what is said to seem to address the viewer. Here are some of the phrases we hear during this sequence:

> This is the winding road. We're on it.
> I'll tell you what there is.
> It says a tall, single tree. There are a lot on this hillside.
> There it is. There, look, a single tree!
> Jahan, take a look. Up there!
> What a big tree! Look at it.
> Two more up there. It's beautiful!
> Slow down a bit.
> Someone's been sleeping!

On the one hand, then, we have extreme reflexivity: self-effacement; self-reference; views of views of views of views. Mobilising the unique powers of film to raise questions of knowledge, Kiarostami goads us into the epistemological quagmires characteristic of modern scepticism, in which our claims to know the world – indeed our very sense of being connected to it – are called into doubt. On the other hand, we have a demand being made of the viewer: *look!* It is a call to presentness; it demands you wake up and pay attention (in his essay on Kafka, Benjamin quotes Malebranche: attentiveness as the "natural prayer of the soul"[8]). At one stage during the sequence someone quotes a poem:

> Near the tree is a wooded lane,
> greener than the dreams of God.

The couplet is taken from Sohrab Sepehri's 'The Token', a line from which provided the title for *Where is the Friend's Home?*[9] Yet the reference to the earlier film does not undermine this film's poetics (on the contrary). Once again the same confluence is at work: Kiarostami is both reminding us of the constructedness of his images, and demanding that we attend to them

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intensely. As Elena puts it: "The complex mirror game created by Kiarostami . . . consistently breaks away from the mannerist dimension from which these experiments with form usually suffer."[10] If Kiarostami distances us from the real, it is a distancing that draws us into new intimacy with it.

The film follows its protagonist as he takes a film crew to the village of Siah Darreh in Iranian Kurdistan. They are there to shoot what is apparently some kind of documentary, intending to record the traditional funeral and mourning rites surrounding the death of an elderly woman, rites in which female mourners use their fingernails to scar their own faces. This is disclosed very slowly, however. At first all we know is that they have some kind of arrangement to meet a local man, who has sent his young nephew out to intercept them on the road. The boy says he knows why they are in town, but they request he keeps it secret, chucklingly telling him to tell anyone who asks that they are looking for lost treasure. The decision to withhold vital information is characteristic of the film, which also never shows us the faces of a number of important minor characters (including those of the protagonist's crew), and never quite takes us into the interior of a house. Problems of knowledge are thus reflexively foregrounded from the start: just as the protagonist and his crew do not know where they are in the opening sequence, we spend much of the film in the dark as to who they are, what they are doing, and why. The narrative of the film turns on a non-event, for the men quickly realise that the old woman whose funeral they have come to shoot is sick, but not quite dying. So they are forced into morbid waiting, the crassness of which underlines their haughtiness, their tendency to regard the village and its people with a kind of detached arrogance. Much of the 'action' (if that is the right word) thus centres on the filmmaker's time in the village, and how he slowly comes to acknowledge the lives going on around him and the strange beauty of his surrounds. This is punctuated by a number of phone calls from his impatient Tehrani producer, which require him to jump in his car and drive up a nearby hill to get phone reception. A man – whose face we never see – is digging what looks like a grave up there.[11]

One of the most important scenes comes when the filmmaker picks up the local schoolteacher, and speaks with him about the real reason for his presence in the village. Things are ambiguous. The protagonist gives the schoolteacher a ride on the return leg of one of the drives he takes uphill; he has on his dashboard the human femur he found on the hill and, for reasons that aren't clear, decided to keep. This is part of their conversation:

> Schoolteacher: You seem to have problems. One problem!
> Protagonist: Any affair has its own problems.

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> S: Anything over a hundred years old is considered an antique.
> P: What are you talking about?
> S: You don't work underground?
> P: Because of this bone, you think we're looking for treasure or antiques?
> S: I don't think that. I'm almost sure of it. You haven't come for the ceremony?

What's strange about the exchange is how the schoolteacher seems simultaneously to affirm two mutually exclusive theories: that the men are in town looking for treasure or underground artefacts; that the men are in town to film the local ceremony. Of course, we don't take him to believe the childish cover story, but he appears to think there is truth in it. In my reading, he is right: the men are in town to film the ceremony, but they have projected something onto it, something that sets it up as treasure-like. For in a sense what they are after is an archaeological remnant – follow Benjamin and call it aura, or follow Cavell and call it an unbreakable connection to the world – a pre-modern way of experiencing, living, and dying. And you might say that this is precisely what they don't get (at least in the form in which they were expecting it), because they eventually leave without obtaining what they (thought they) wanted. For at the end of the film the woman does finally die, but the filmmaker seems to have lost interest in whatever it was that was originally driving his project. He watches part of the ceremony, snaps a few photographs, then drives away, stopping to throw the bone into a stream. The film closes abruptly now, and once again with another signature: its only non-diegetic music starts up in this closing sequence. The key question of the movie seems to be: what happens to the filmmaker such that he loses interest in his project? Why does he abandon his plans to film the ceremony?

I take the conversation with the schoolteacher to have been crucial (and in this scene he really is an educator, not only for the local children but for the filmmaker and by extension us the audience; note that Kiarostami himself cut his teeth as an educational filmmaker working for Kanoon, or Iran's Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults[12]). In particular I am referring to what the schoolteacher says when asked of his opinion of the ceremony. He tells a story about his own mother, who participated in the ceremony after the death of her husband's boss's cousin. The woman ended up competing in a game of one-upmanship with the other women whose husbands were employed at the factory – she was left with two terrible scars as a result. And of course, it was for show, not what we would usually take as a real expression of grief (for the schoolteacher's mother had no connection to the dead man), but rather a desperate attempt to preserve

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her husband's job by winning favour with the factory owner: the ceremony is, as the schoolteacher puts it, "connected to the economy". "There was a lot of competition at the factory between the men to hold onto their jobs . . .", he says. "[E]veryone displayed themselves, pushed themselves forward to please the boss." So the ceremony the filmmaker came to document is – no doubt like his own work as a filmmaker – compromised by its position in an economic system predicated on the exploitation of abstract labour, in which people appear to one another not as subjects but as objects, and in which one subset of people – those who do not own the means of production – must sell their labour power to the subset of those who do to survive. This world puts serious pressure on the very possibility of authenticity, understood as a commitment to living for oneself rather than acting for the eyes of others. Robert Pippin characterises it in terms of a worry "that everything that one does might not be one's own but rather everywhere already has taken account of others", a worry about "social independence and genuine individuality".[13] What I take the filmmaker to have learned, then, is that his own idea of a village populated by locals living in an entirely different world was a projection: that the image of tradition with which he was working – a particular image of a pre-modern experience of meaning, perhaps even a mythical experience of it – is a kind of fantasy. It is not quite that the villagers are inauthentic, but that they too are subject to the same pressures and worries, and so that they live in his world.

Interestingly, a similar projection appears to be at work in Nancy's own reading of the film (his refusal to acknowledge the reflexivity in Kiarostami is probably symptomatic of it). At a few moments in *The Evidence of Film*, he opposes "worlds where presence . . . is first of all given (as it is in the symbols and rites of traditional bereavement) . . . " to "the world that is ours", a world in which "the given is withdrawn".[14] While Nancy is undoubtedly right to say that Kiarostami is interested in the "relation between ancient Iran and modern Iran"[15] (indeed it is useful to read the whole film in terms of the problem of modernity, or of so-called 'modernisation'), it seems to me that part of what makes this work so compelling is how it gets us thinking about the modern image of tradition. Things are more complicated than Nancy makes out. Arguably what Kiarostami shows is that there really is no completely unmediated experience of the world, no world where "meaning is given"[16] in the way Nancy implies; rather, this is a fantasy internal to our own world, in which we feel that things have become irremissibly mediated. This is not to say that things weren't different in pre-modernity. It is to say that the image we project onto pre-modernity is a fantasy of capitalist modernity, perhaps one that is constitutive of it. There is something like a myth of myth at work here: an idea

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that there are people out there who live without distance from themselves, who are fully immersed in some communally based system of meaning. What the filmmaker wanted, and us with him, is not necessarily belief itself, but the belief that others believe, the certainty that others have the certainty he feels he lacks (in psychoanalytic terms, this would be a form of fetishism). What the filmmaker gets instead – both in this scene and over the course of the film – is a lesson about his own desire to capture tradition on film, about his own fantasy of what it is and where to find it. Indeed the schoolteacher's lesson places the protagonist and his camera in a curious proximity to the factory owner, as the 'audience' for the staging of the ceremony. In a certain sense the protagonist is positioned not only as having projected his own desire onto the villagers who were to perform for his camera, but also as complicit in the destruction of its object, insofar as his desire for authenticity will effectively turn the villagers into performers, if he is to pursue his project.[17] (Consider here how the factory owner may have responded to the women participating in the ceremony at his cousin's funeral, for one imagines he was aware they were performing for him. Was he impressed by their ceremony in spite of this fact? Or perhaps impressed *because* of it?[18])

It should go without saying that this is our education too, and the filmmaker stands in for our own desire as viewers attracted to – or perhaps indeed repelled by – a certain type of film. Remember that this movie followed *Taste of Cherry*, which won the Palme d'Or, marking an important moment in the Western reception of Kiarostami, as well as for his standing in his home country.[19] As he accepted the prize on stage at Cannes, Kiarostami received a kiss on the cheek from Catherine Deneuve – an event that saw him condemned by conservative critics in Iran[20] (timing was no doubt an important factor here, as debate had already been developing on the place of Iranian films in Western festivals,[21] and Khatami – former Minister for Culture and political moderate with a policy of entering into dialogue with the West – was about to be elected as President of the Republic, despite fierce opposition to him in Parliament[22]). Yet Kiarostami's Iranian detractors are by no means all conservatives. Placing Kiarostami's reception in the context of the country's domestic politics, the tastes of international art house audiences, and the new economic and diplomatic ties established in the late 1990s between Iran and the West, Farahmand argues that Kiarostami's films betray "political escapism".[23] For Farahmand, their detached protagonists disavow "equal exchange and a compassionate involvement"[24] with other characters, standing in for Western viewers and their aloof enjoyment of exotic subjects and locations. Kiarostami's cinema thus protects its Western viewer from "any shock, unpleasant encounter or guilty conscience. He can maintain his

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distance and remain uninvolved, be fascinated, securely appreciative of the exotic locales, as though viewing an oriental rug, whose history he does not need to untangle."[25] She goes on: "the internationally adored Iranian auteur is not popular in his home country, where he is commonly suspected of 'making films for foreigners'".[26] I want to read *The Wind Will Carry Us* – with its reflexive critique of the desire to capture authentic, pre-modern culture on film – as a rebuke to certain orientalist tendencies in the international reception of Kiarostami, and a riposte to his Iranian critics, especially those who see him as deliberately performing an ethnographically inclined 'Third World' exoticism.

This polemical aspect of the film is perhaps at its clearest – and most equivocal – during the underground sequence, where the protagonist pursues a young woman into the dark space beneath her home, ostensibly in search of the milk she has been providing to the worker on the hill, who appears to be her lover. As the young woman milks her cow for him, she silently refuses his repeated requests that she step into the light and show him her face – a loaded demand for unveiling made all the more questionable in coming from a relatively wealthy and powerful Tehrani man.[27] As Dabashi registers, the scene is especially significant in the context of Kiarostami's wider body of work, which has often insisted on "not showing . . . private moments . . .".[28] Perhaps we should also read it as a deliberately ambiguous challenge to censors,[29] toying with restrictions on the depiction of unveiled women (for we never quite see her face[30]), and women indoors with men to whom they are not married or related (for are they really indoors?).[31] In any case, the scene is charged to say the least, which may explain Dabashi's own remarkably hostile reaction to it. Taking the protagonist – I would say rightly – as a "vulgar man intruding into the private passions of young woman", he describes the scene as a "brutally accurate picture of dehumanization",[32] and even as "one of the most violent rape scenes in all cinema".[33] Thus for Dabashi *The Wind Will Carry Us* is the film in which Kiarostami "sealed his own doom":[34] a "nightmarish negation of every film he ever made . . .".[35] Coming as it does from a critic who elsewhere praises Kiarostami in equally extreme terms,[36] one wonders how to explain this reaction. Less surprising – because consistent with her other claims – is Farahmand's critique of the protagonist as a "tourist/reporter peeping into holes and caves while awaiting a woman's death".[37] On my reading, Dabashi and Farahmand are right in their judgements, but they do not really apply to Kiarostami's film. Rather, *they are judging the film its protagonist is trying to make*, which is precisely an "ethnographic study of a village" carried out by a "First World anthropologist".[38] While misdirected, then, the responses are quite understandable, insofar as

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the protagonist's film is where Kiarostami stages just the kinds of fantasies – and one can see how they could appear nightmarish to an Iranian – that these critics rightly attack. As Mottahedeh puts it, specifically in the context of a discussion of *The Wind Will Carry Us*:

> It is evident . . . in the multiple reflexive moments that refer to questions of ethnographic fetishism and in representations of 'the exotic' throughout his work that Kiarostami is resistant to, and indeed critical of, any posture that attempts to situate his characters as ethnographic tallies of dress and custom among primitive culture in the Third World.[39]

In missing this film's critical and reflexive, anti-ethnographic edge, Dabashi and Farahmand have really sided with Kiarostami himself. Part of the philosophical and political value in *The Wind Will Carry Us* consists in the links it draws between the orientalist, indeed colonial desire to capture an exotic culture on film and the sceptic's desire for certainty, as two inflections of our craving for the real. When he stops projecting onto the villagers, the protagonist is giving up an attachment that is not merely metaphysical.

This is achieved through an education in looking. The protagonist learns that what he was looking for does not exist, or does not exist in the form he thought it did. In learning this, he also learns to look differently at what is right in front of him. What's interesting about the filmmaker's education is that it seems to be coextensive with the breakdown of his fantasy: as he stops projecting onto the villagers, he starts to see the world rightly (and vice versa). This is a look that can take place after the desire for unmediated access has been given up. In Nancy's parlance, what the filmmaker comes to learn is "a possibility of looking that is no longer exactly a look at representation or a representative look".[40] I am referring to the moments in the film in which the filmmaker's attention is captured by events that, at least in terms of the narrative, are insignificant: a busy dung beetle; mongrel dogs playing in a field; a boy chasing a soccer ball; an apple as it rolls with haphazard grace; a woman hanging out her clothes to dry. These moments call out for the filmmaker's attention, and they do so insofar as they are unimportant or peripheral to what he wants, incidental to his desire for unmediated access. And again, what happens to the filmmaker happens to the viewer too: Kiarostami's strategy, in this film and in his work more generally, is to effect a breakdown in the viewer's ability to tell the difference between the real and the artificial, a signature and its citation, the original and the copy, the important and the peripheral, and so on. The neat trick of his cinema is that it is only by paralysing our claims to knowledge in this way that he can bring us out of our

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scepticism. Or rather: not out, but through, and all the way to the presentness of the world, unrepresentable – for existence is not a predicate; it is no fact *in* the world; it is not *about* it – but not for that reason ineffable – for it just *is* the world; it is mundane.

This is why I want to resist Nacim Pak-Shiraz's reading of Kiarostami's project, which is also indebted to Wittgenstein, and which also tries to take his films not as illustrations of pre-existing philosophical ideas or theories, but as doing a certain kind of philosophical work of their own.[41] Leaning very heavily on Wittgenstein's infamous conclusion to the *Tractatus*, Pak-Shiraz claims the Viennese philosopher as a proponent of a form of mysticism predicated on drawing a strict border between what can be said and what can only be shown.[42] The problem is not just that this account has been demonstrated to be internally incoherent, relying as it does on claims that it must, by its own lights, regard as nonsensical.[43] It is also that reading Kiarostami as bringing our attention to the limit of the sayable (and in doing so, perhaps, as pointing or hinting beyond that limit) is to inflate his work metaphysically, and in such a way that fails to get at the very ordinariness of what he really has to show. I do not read Kiarostami's as a cinema of the ineffable, and do not see it as proceeding via some cinematic equivalent of the *via negativa* of apophatic theology. He is interested not in ultimate reality but in plain reality. As Dabashi says, what compels in his work is its "stripping of the real from all its violent metaphysical claimants".[44] Placing this in the context of the quasi-neo-Platonism underlying the official ideology of the Islamic Republic, Dabashi writes that "[a]t a time when our entire culture was inundated with the most pernicious consequences of metaphysical violence, [Kiarostami] made the sensual simplicity of the real shine through every distorting layer of metaphysics superimposed on its evident matter-of-factness".[45] To say that Kiarostami educates us in a mode of looking that is not representational is not to say that he teaches us to glimpse unutterable truths. What he gets us to see is just the ordinary itself – or, if you like, life. Nancy puts it quite evocatively:

> The evidence of cinema is that of the existence of a look through which a world can give back to itself its own real and the truth of its enigma (which is admittedly not its solution), a world moving of its own motion, without a heaven or a wrapping, without fixed moorings of suspension, a world shaken, trembling, as the winds blow through it.[46]

In Kiarostami, this mundane and wholly secular world is what we are called upon to acknowledge. As he shows, it is only after our letting go of the desire to know it with certainty, to possess and be possessed by it – which in the

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filmmaker's case was enacted through a projection of such certainty and possession onto those that were to become his subjects – that acknowledgement can occur.

If acknowledgement is a mode of knowledge, then it is one that brings its limits to light. This is the basis of Wittgenstein's interest in statements of the order of 'I am in pain': it is a quirk of philosophers to take such statements simply as expressing a claim about how things are, and so a claim that could be doubted, as though the proper response to such a sentence is something like 'I believe you.' As Cavell puts it in 'Knowing and Acknowledging': "your suffering makes a claim upon me. It is not enough that I know (am certain) that you suffer — I must do or reveal something (whatever can be done). In a word, I must acknowledge it . . .".[47] In *The Wind Will Carry Us*, the filmmaker learns something similar of the world: that it is only when he has jettisoned his desire to possess it – to have his scepticism cured – that he can come to attend to its presentness to him. Because if the sceptic is right to point out I do not really know if the world exists outside of me, or if others exist, or if my words mean what I take them to, then this lack of surety forms the condition of the possibility of my being surprised by it in the first place (and by others, and by myself).[48] This is not a solution of the sceptical problems characteristic of modernity, but another way of responding to them; to employ Heideggerian terms, it is an ontic modification of the ontological truth that the human relation to the world *as such* is epistemically unassured. It is a modification in which the world is not taken as something in which we believe, and thus as something for which our belief needs philosophical justification – or bolstering through a fetishised relation to an exotic other who believes – but as something with a form and sense of its own, as something that makes a claim on us. If Cavell is right to understand philosophy as "the education of grown-ups"[49] then Kiarostami's is a lesson in looking at the world, and letting it make that claim.

Notes

1. Aerial tracking shots of cars return in *Certified Copy* and *Like Someone in Love*. Devin Orgeron provides an account of Kiarostami's films as exemplars of the road movie genre (see *Road Movies*, 183–99). Elena shows how the motif of the road has been crucial for Kiarostami since his first experiments as a filmmaker (see *The Cinema of Abbas Kiarostami*, 20–1). However, Farhang Erfani argues quite persuasively that things are more complex, reading Kiarostami in Deleuzian terms in order to complicate the notions of movement and journeying in his work (see *Iranian Cinema and Philosophy*, 24).

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2. Such sequences in Kiarostami could perhaps be taken as highly subdued – if such a thing is possible – instances of the aesthetic of the "zany" so brilliantly analysed by Sianne Ngai (see *Our Aesthetic Categories*, 174–232). These zigzagging cars and persons may be participating in something like a slowed down, indeed contemplative form of zaniness.
3. Nancy, *The Evidence of Film*, 10.
4. Nancy, *The Evidence of Film*, 24. The five movies Nancy has in mind are *Where is the Friend's Home?*, *Life and Nothing More*, *Through the Olive Trees*, *Taste of Cherry*, and *The Wind Will Carry Us*.
5. Derrida, 'Signature Event Context', 20.
6. Nancy, *The Evidence of Film*, 18.
7. There is probably a joke to be made here about Nancy's *Being Singular Plural* (the central idea of which actually trades on just this paradox).
8. Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka', 812.
9. See Zanganeh, *My sister, guard your veil; my brother, guard your eyes*, 97–8.
10. Elena, *The Cinema of Abbas Kiarostami*, 89.
11. The man – played by Bahman Ghobadi, who worked as Kiarostami's assistant before embarking on his own remarkable filmmaking career – tells the protagonist he is digging a hole for "telecommunications". Though it is not clear exactly what he means by this, I take it as referring to the encroachment on the village of technological modernity (and as such, as another instance of the threat also represented by the protagonist himself).
12. Rosenbaum writes: "Practically all of [Kiarostami's films] qualify in one way or another as didactic works, analogous to what Bertolt Brecht called *Lehrstücken*, or learning plays" (Saeed-Vafa and Rosenbaum, *Abbas Kiarostami*, 9).
13. Pippin, *After the Beautiful*, 92.
14. Nancy, *The Evidence of Film*, 34.
15. Nancy, *The Evidence of Film*, 36.
16. Nancy, *The Evidence of Film*, 40.
17. It may be worth invoking Robert Flaherty's 1922 film *Nanook of the North* here, which records the daily life of an Inuit man and his family. The movie is famous not only for being perhaps the first documentary, but also for how its director staged certain important scenes. As Rothman puts it:

> Flaherty did not, in the manner of a cinéma-vérité filmmaker, simply film Nanook and his family going about their lives. Many actions on view in the film were performed for the camera and not simply "documented" by it. The

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> filmmaker actively involved his subjects in the filming, telling them what he wanted them to do, responding to their suggestions, and directing their performance for the camera. (*Documentary Film Classics*, 1)

Rothman goes on to argue that the film "is implicated" in the destruction of "Nanook's way of life" because it was sponsored by a French fur company, and so participates in importing into it "the social and economic structures of Western civilization" (2). I wonder, however, if some might regard Flaherty's acts of filming in similar terms, as they effectively required Nanook and his family to perform – rather than simply live – their lives. As I believe Rothman demonstrates, however, this would be an oversimplification, insofar as "Nanook's relationship to the camera, the camera's relationship to him, is part of his reality, part of the camera's reality, part of the reality being filmed, part of the reality on film, part of the reality of the film" (3). Regardless, something profound – and deeply relevant to Kiarostami's own concerns – is captured in that very oversimplification. The field of problems that Rothman is both invoking and attempting to demystify here is like a synecdoche of the metaphysical attachments and desires – as well as the anti-metaphysical lessons – displayed and undergone by the protagonist of *The Wind Will Carry Us*.

18. If the latter, then he must possess a particularly sadistic version of what Fried calls a "sensibility or mode of being . . . corrupted or perverted by theater" ('Art and Objecthood', 168). I treat Fried's concept of theatricality in Chapters 4 and 5.
19. Initially it had been held back from Cannes, apparently on the grounds that it had not already been shown at Tehran's Fajr Film Festival, then a condition of submission (see Elena, *The Cinema of Abbas Kiarostami*, 123). After some negotiation between the Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati and Cannes director Gilles Jacob, the film was eventually submitted, arriving after the official deadline (see Farahmand, 'Perspectives on Recent (International Acclaim for) Iranian Cinema', 95). Farahmand goes on to highlight a wider issue: "Iranian filmmakers cannot independently submit their work to international festivals and film companies. The task is handled by Iran's public and private sectors through the ultimate authority of FCF" (93). The FCF is the Farabi Cinema Foundation, a state-run non-profit that works under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. It advises screenwriters on producing scripts for review by inspectors, plays a role in the allocation of production equipment and film stock, controls the acquisition of rights for foreign films, and provides subsidies for select Iranian projects (see 90).

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20. Hamid Sadr writes:

> This two-second transgression of Islamic propriety instantly set off a polemical firestorm in Iran. On Kiarostami's return from France a welcoming reception at the airport was derailed by angry fundamentalists; Kiarostami was spirited through customs and out through a side door. (*Iranian Cinema*, 238)

See also Pak-Shiraz, *Shi'i Islam in Iranian Cinema*, 173.

21. See Devictor, 'Classic Tools, Original Goals', 73–4.
22. For an excellent account of the liberalisation of Iranian cinema during the Khatami period, see Sadr, *Iranian Cinema*, 237–52.
23. Farahmand, 'Perspectives on Recent (International Acclaim for) Iranian Cinema', 101.
24. Farahmand, 'Perspectives on Recent (International Acclaim for) Iranian Cinema', 100.
25. Farahmand, 'Perspectives on Recent (International Acclaim for) Iranian Cinema', 101.
26. Farahmand, 'Perspectives on Recent (International Acclaim for) Iranian Cinema', 103. For a more detailed account of negative responses to Kiarostami in Iran, see Saeed-Vafa, *Abbas Kiarostami*, 50–1.
27. Mottahedeh provides unparalleled analyses of the scene in her fascinating *Displaced Allegories* (see 91–6, 128–30).
28. Dabashi, *Close Up*, 253.
29. For an excellent discussion of the complex role of censorship "as both a prohibitive, excisionary power and a productive, generative one" (173) in pre- and post-Revolutionary Iranian cinema, see Khosrowjah, 'Unthinking the National Imaginary', 128–83. I return to the issue of censorship in Chapters 3 and 5.
30. As Mottahedeh argues, the cinema screen in Iran is regarded as a public space, even when it depicts women in private, such that women must appear covered even when depicted at home (see *Displaced Allegories*, 8–10).
31. This speculation has some weight behind it: censors delayed the film before it was shown at the Fajr Film Festival (see Mottahedeh, *Displaced Allegories*, 96). As Khosrowjah acknowledges, while the new regime augured more moderate cultural policies, censorship codes remained in place, coming instead to be interpreted more liberally (see 'Unthinking the National Imaginary', 171).
32. Dabashi, *Close Up*, 253.
33. Dabashi, *Close Up*, 254.

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34. Dabashi, *Close Up*, 252.
35. Dabashi, *Close Up*, 254.
36. Just a few pages earlier Dabashi writes: "In the long and illustrious history of Iranian cultural modernity, from poetry to drama, from fiction to every kind of performing art, no one came close to what Kiarostami ultimately achieved in teaching us *to be* otherwise" (*Close Up*, 251–2).
37. Farahmand, 'Perspectives on Recent (International Acclaim for) Iranian Cinema', 101–2.
38. Dabashi, *Close Up*, 254.
39. Mottahedeh, *Displaced Allegories*, 100. Later she writes that "the decisive underlay of Kiarostami's cinema is a critique of the morbid effects of ethnography . . ." (138).
40. Nancy, *The Evidence of Film*, 10.
41. See Pak-Shiraz, *Shi'i Islam in Iranian Cinema*, 170–2.
42. See Pak-Shiraz, *Shi'i Islam in Iranian Cinema*, 177–80, 183–4.
43. Cora Diamond and James Conant have done the most to challenge such readings, presenting in their stead exemplary accounts that 'resolutely' insist on taking Wittgenstein's statements about nonsense seriously. See Diamond, 'Throwing Away the Ladder' and 'Ethics, Imagination and the Method of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*'; see Conant, 'Must We Show What We Cannot Say?', 'Throwing Away the Top of the Ladder', 'Elucidation and Nonsense in Frege and Early Wittgenstein', and 'The Method of the *Tractatus*'.
44. Dabashi, *Close Up*, 252.
45. Dabashi, *Close Up*, 251.
46. Nancy, *The Evidence of Film*, 44.
47. Cavell, 'Knowing and Acknowledging', 263.
48. As Cavell puts it in his essay on King Lear: "since we cannot know that the world exists, its presentness to us cannot be a function of knowing" ('The Avoidance of Love', 324). Or as Mulhall writes: "the world's existence – unlike the existence of a given object in the world – is not something in which we 'believe,' not an 'opinion' that we hold on the basis of evidence" ('Can There Be an Epistemology of Moods?' 33).
49. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 125.

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