FARZANEH HEMMASI

تهرانجلس

TEHRANGELES DREAMING

INTIMACY AND IMAGINATION IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S IRANIAN POP MUSIC

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To my mother and father

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INTRODUCTION

In 2004 I traveled from Tehran to Kish, an island in the Persian Gulf just off Iran's southern coast. Since the late 1980s developers and businesspeople have transformed Kish into a free-trade zone and tourist attraction to compete with nearby Dubai. Today the island boasts fancy hotels, shopping malls, restaurants with live entertainment, and cultivated palm trees. It also maintains female-only beaches so that Iranians of both sexes can enjoy the water while upholding public-morality laws. Even so, the island has a reputation for less stringent morality enforcement than the mainland, which is crucial to attracting visitors and residents. On my visit that summer, I saw many young women sporting gauzy, brightly colored headscarves and very thin white shirts over their clothes, a contrast to the thicker overcoats and scarves women wore in Tehran.

I was sitting in the back seat of a taxi driven by a young man in his twenties when the music emanating from the stereo caught my attention. I

heard a thumping *bandari* dance beat—a groove associated with the Persian Gulf—and Persian lyrics about Kish Island:

It's the land of fire—Kish is, Kish is, Kish is!
It's where you can still be in love—Kish is, Kish is, Kish is!
Its nights are blue—Kish, Kish, Kish!
We won't be separated from it, will we? Kish, Kish, Kish.[1]

Despite all its resonances with my present geographic location, I knew immediately this music was not produced in Iran. The giveaway was the lead singer's female voice. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, women have not been permitted to sing solo in public or have their solo singing voices recorded because of the immoral thoughts or actions they might inspire in male listeners. Instead, the lighthearted danceable pop I heard that day had made its way around the world to Kish from "Tehrangeles"—a portmanteau combining "Tehran" and "Los Angeles"—the Southern Californian home of an extensive Iranian expatriate culture industry.

Tehrangeles popular songs, music videos, and performances are spaces of desire and imagination where new, remembered, and as-yet-unrealized forms of Iranian identity and Iran itself are rehearsed. These take shape and are propelled through a transnational assemblage of media, policies, circulating representations, projections, and counterprojections that link expatriates and their home country in a long-term long-distance relationship. One example of Tehrangeles cultural producers' fabrication of an alternative Iran is the video accompanying "Kish," the song I heard in the taxi.[2] I first saw the video when I returned to Tehran; it was playing on satellite television in a family friend's living room. On the television screen, Tehrangeles vocalist Sepideh whipped her long blond hair back and forth as she danced on a Southern Californian beach, a stand-in for the Persian Gulf island's sandy shores. Moments later, she appeared in a low-cut negligee, sometimes reclining on a four-poster bed, sometimes posing in the sand as the waves lapped her body, all the while singing of a nightly dream that she'd returned to Kish. In other scenes, she was joined by a group of men and women dancing and playing instruments by a bonfire on the beach. Throughout the video, Sepideh flaunted her unfettered enjoyment of the pleasures of public singing, dancing, flirting, and fantasizing in a place that both was and was not Iran. The vocalist's imagined presence within her homeland was just as fantastical as the expatriate video version of Kish: most prominent Tehrangeles cultural producers have not visited Iran in de-

FIGURE I.1 Tehrangeles music videos' circulation into Iran brings Sepideh and her fantastical version of Kish Island into the country. Screen grab from "Kish," directed by Koji Zadori, on the DVD *Caltex Records 20 Music Videos*, Caltex Trading, Inc., 2007.

cades because they could be charged with public immorality, collaboration with opposition groups, or other crimes against the Iranian state. The music and the expatriate satellite television broadcasts that transport Sepideh's seductive performances into taxicabs and private homes are likewise prohibited within the country. Nevertheless, Tehrangeles popular culture has been an unremarkable, quotidian presence in Iran since the Iranian Revolution, entering the Iranian mediascape via cassette tapes, videocassettes, compact discs (CDs), file sharing, and the satellite dishes that, although prohibited, litter Tehran's roofs. In Tehrangeles media's transnational circulation, the sound and images propagated by Iranians in Southern California are constant reminders that counterrevolutionary ways of being are available outside the nation's borders and, through media, inside Iran as well.

Tehrangeles Dreaming explores a relatively ordinary activity—immigrant music and media production expressing longing for the homeland—in the context of its producers' extraordinary ambitions: to create globally circulating popular music and media that reach and remake Iranian culture in the realm of the imagination and on the ground. The relationship of Tehrangeles cultural production to territorial postrevolutionary Iran is characterized by a mixture of desire, opposition, distance, closeness, ambivalence, and, above all, a dynamic, productive synergy. In this book I show how Iranian expatriates in Southern California have used popular music and media to instantiate and claim enduring intimacy with their distant

compatriots. Tehrangeles pop is a vehicle for homeland-diaspora connections and conflicts, and much more: it is where public forms call up intimate sentiments, memories, and urges; diasporic commerce abuts international politics; commercial pop overlaps with governmental propaganda; and freedom of expression is tempered by fears of exposure. Drawing on ethnographic research in Los Angeles, musical and textual analysis, and close attention to the music, video, and television programs that contribute to this transnational Persian-language mediascape, I argue that Iranian popular culture produced in Southern California exemplifies the manner in which culture, media, and diaspora have combined to create practices and identifications that respond to, but are not circumscribed by, the nation-state and its political transformations. These counter the revolution through both their initial refusal to disappear and their ongoing rejection of some of the revolution's central tenets: the moral purification of domestic public culture and public space, the denunciation of the deposed Pahlavi government and its cultures, the supremacy of Shiite Islam in national identity, and the rejection of Western cultural and political influence. Expatriate cultural producers interpret their products' popularity as evidence that the Islamic Republic has not fully met its citizens' needs and desires, and that they and their products may better represent "the people" than the Iranian government. "Giving the [Iranian] people what they want" is at once a business strategy and an ideological orientation that impacts how and why Tehrangeles popular culture sounds, looks, and travels the way it does.

The political potential of popular music and media is front and center in some expatriate cultural producers' actions and intentions. From their earliest days in exile, Tehrangeles performers have used popular music to respond to and intervene in Iranian national politics. This trend was inaugurated in 1979 with prerevolutionary star–turned–Tehrangeles founder Shahram Shabpareh's "Deyar" ("Homeland"), which is widely considered to be the first Persian-language pop song produced in Southern California.[3] Around the same time, fellow exile pop star Dariush Eghbali released "Vatan" ("Homeland"), an impassioned ballad that described the Iranian people after the revolution as an "imprisoned clan" and a "sacrificed tribe," and Iran as a bird with "broken" and "blood-soaked wings."[4] Tehrangeles songs and music videos depicting "Iran in ruins" (*Iran-e virān*) quickly made their way into Iran, where they contrasted sharply with the official celebration of the revolution. Both Tehrangeles's political edge and its reach into Iran have continued into the present. As this book describes, expatriate pop icons Googoosh (Faegheh Atashin) and Dariush have gone to great efforts

to sing to and for the Iranian people from afar. Drawing on her prodigious talents and well-known biography of gender-based victimization, in the diaspora Googoosh has undertaken an array of politically inflected projects, including performing a song as a female version of "Iran herself" and creating a televised pop singing talent competition with the explicit goal of offering young Iranian women the opportunity to sing in public. Dariush's decades of rousing patriotic anthems, videos, and live performances have cemented his reputation as Tehrangeles's foremost "political singer" (*khānandeh-ye siyāsi*). He further combines music, media, and activism through his Ayeneh ("Mirror") Foundation, a Southern California–based nonprofit organization that uses satellite television and social media to send messages of support to Persian-speaking audiences worldwide.

The recuperation of prerevolutionary nationalist symbols and ideologies is another common way Tehrangeles cultural productions directly engage politics. Southern Californian television stations such as National Iranian Television (NITV) or Omid-e Iran ("Hope of Iran") refer to themselves and their missions in distinctly national terms, display the prerevolutionary flag, adopt pre-Islamic imagery, and even feature media personalities who speak a Persian purified of its many Arabic loanwords.[5] Skits parodying Muslim piety and insulting the Islamic Republic's leaders likewise blossomed in Los Angeles after the revolution. Tehrangeles television stations' many call-in talk show hosts can be heard openly cursing "the Islamic regime" between interviews with members of political opposition groups while branding their programs as avenues for open political expression and debate otherwise unavailable through Iranian state media.

While most Tehrangeles performers do not consider themselves activists or "political" (*siyāsi*), one of my aims in this book is to show how seemingly apolitical musicians and musical forms become entangled in the political. I have never heard anyone refer to Sepideh as a political singer, but the politics that thread through her visual, auditory, and discursive self-representation render her designation as apolitical inadequate as well. On her artist website, Sepideh describes herself as a "strong, sexy, proud, yet independent Persian woman . . . [unbound] by any taboo . . . [and] breaking away from the previously perceived Persian female image that has always been the victim throughout Iran's post-Islamic history!!!" She continues, "I am a part of all the proud and strong Persian women who . . . show the world we are not less than any man . . . !!!"[6] Sepideh's reference to women's victimization in "post-Islamic history" blames Islam for women's subordination. It also invokes a fantasy of a pre-Islamic Iranian society compara-

tively more favorable toward women.[7] Her self-designation as "Persian" is especially common in Tehrangeles as a way of invoking the vaguely positive imaginaries surrounding the Persian Empire, Persian carpets, and Persian cats as opposed to the threatening Islamic Republic of Iran. Finally, Sepideh describes her clothing and sexually suggestive performances—which contrast strikingly with domestic compulsory veiling laws and prohibitions on female singing—as emancipatory, taboo-breaking behaviors that speak (back) to Islam, patriarchy, and the world. Explaining her music and appearance in this way, Sepideh instructs her audiences to understand her performances in relation to cultural and political contestation even as her song lyrics and visual presentation largely steer clear of the markers of Tehrangeles nationalism described above.

Regardless of Sepideh's intentions, the singer's virtual presence in Iran stymies the state's attempts to maintain control over public morality (*akhlāq-e 'omumi*) and its public sphere—and is therefore a political challenge on multiple fronts. Iran's current public morality laws, outlined in the postrevolutionary Iranian Islamic Penal Code, forbid "haram [religiously prohibited] acts" that contravene "public prudency and morality." This section of the code obligates women to veil in public.[8] It further criminalizes producing and brokering "immoral media" and assigns specific punishments for "anyone who displays and shows to the public, or produces or keeps . . . advertisements, films . . . or anything . . . that violates public prudency and morality."[9] By these standards, Sepideh, her creative collaborators, those circulating the media in which she appears, and her audiences within Iran are all acting not only inappropriately but illegally. Should Sepideh ever realize her fantasy of returning to Kish, even if she comported herself appropriately once physically within the country, the vocalist could be tried for crimes against public morality. This is because, according to the code's article 7 (book 1, chapter 1), Iranian citizens can be held accountable for breaking Iranian laws while they are abroad.[10]

Those familiar with postrevolutionary Iran will be quick to note that plenty of technically illegal activities take place in private and public without consequence. Likewise, the interpretation and implementation of morality and other laws can be selective, irregular, and unpredictable. The practical, everyday, and legal delineation of the moral from the immoral, and the religiously licit (*mashru'*) from the illicit, is context dependent and contested. Music is a shining example of official flexibility in defining the im/moral. During the revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini unequivocally dismissed music as sinful and distracting from reality.[11] This con-

ceptualization of music's negative effects on listeners can be traced back through centuries of local custom and Shiite jurisprudence. However, he shortly made exceptions for revolutionary anthems and other ideologically aligned musical works (Siamdoust 2017, 87–94). In 1989, Khomeini officially changed his earlier position with a fatwa permitting "the sale of musical instruments so long as they are used for mashru' purposes." Once again, moral ambiguity was built into his conditional approval. The fatwa refers to musical instruments by the pejorative epithet *ālat-e lahv*, or "tools of frivolity," which is typically used in religious writings to malign music. This language therefore simultaneously confirms instruments' negative associations, approves their sale for "licit purposes," and leaves what constitutes a licit purpose open to interpretation.[12] The fatwa was then used to rationalize many kinds of previously off-limits musical activities. After 1989, music schools opened, concert halls hosted live performances, and musicians appeared on television—although with their "tools of frivolity" obscured behind large floral arrangements in a nod to historical prohibitions (Nooshin 2005a; Siamdoust 2017; Youssefzadeh 2000). Since the late 1990s, the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance has come to grant recording, distribution, and performance permits to male performers of almost every style of music, even genres like rock and rap that were at one time disfavored because of their overtly Western associations. This dramatic shift in the status of music is an example of expediency (*maslahat*) or pragmatism supplanting rigid ideological adherence. Maslahat characterized many of Khomeini's religious-cum-policy decisions and has since become a hallmark of the mature Islamic Republic of Iran.[13]

Not everything is flexible, however. As of the time of writing, the official expansion of the moral has not extended to women's solo singing voices. Like the Islamic Penal Code's illegalization of women's uncovered hair in public, the continuing official exclusion of women's solo singing voices from public performances and recordings rests on their conceptualization as threatening to "public morality and prudency." This situation represents an obvious barrier for Sepideh's return to Iran, but it also provides an opportunity: public morality policies ironically augment the economic value and subversive potential of women's voices and their dancing, uncovered bodies.[14] Tehrangeles music and media producers are clear-eyed about the synergistic relationship of domestic prohibitions to expatriate business strategies. As Tehrangeles television producer Kourosh Bibiyan told me in 2007, expatriate satellite television stations "are not better [at attracting audiences] than [Iranian state media] except in music, because *they* cannot

have . . . ten half-naked girls singing and dancing!" A similar logic of "giving the people what they want (and can't get in Iran)" applies to expatriate media personalities' and musicians' open criticism of the Iranian government, which is also curtailed in state media. Attending to Tehrangeles cultural production in its transnational context demonstrates how the Iranian mediascape has tested national, moral, and political boundaries.

The rest of this introduction lays out the contexts contributing to the formation of the Tehrangeles culture industries. I make a condensed presentation of the book's main theoretical interventions in the areas of social imaginaries, intimacy, and transnational-national politics, which are then fleshed out in the subsequent chapters. I explain the thought process behind the terms I employ to describe Tehrangeles cultural producers and productions, describe my research, and situate both my interlocutors' work and this book in a larger traffic of representations of Iranian culture and politics.

THE PREREVOLUTIONARY HISTORY OF A POSTREVOLUTIONARY PHENOMENON

Like many diasporic and postrevolutionary cultural formations, Tehrangeles popular culture is both future oriented and deeply concerned with the past. Like other musicians and media producers who have fled revolutions—Cubans in Miami, Vietnamese in Orange County, Mainland Chinese in Taiwan after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, to name a few—the founding cohort of Iranian music and media producers in Southern California became champions of salvaged and alternative versions of national culture precisely as they met with rejection in their home country.[15] Some historical context is required to more fully appreciate which elements of prerevolutionary popular culture have become meaningful in Tehrangeles. My history will also illustrate how Tehrangeles artists and media producers understand the value of their contributions to what it means to be and feel Iranian.

The musicians and media producers who founded Tehrangeles experienced firsthand Iranian music's radically shifting moral and political position across the twentieth century. In the early part of the century, many Muslims avoided professional music making in part because of dominant, religiously derived understandings of *musiqi* (artful instrumental music), *ghanā* (artful song), and *lahv* (frivolity, diversion, amusement) as illicit ac-

tivities. These beliefs coincided with a wide variety of musical and sounded performance genres that could be heard in mostly private or semiprivate settings, including the royal court, Sufi lodges, elite homes, gymnasiums (*zurkhāneh*), and coffeehouses (Chehabi 1999). The combination of Iranians traveling abroad and bringing back new ideas and the increase of foreigners and foreign media in the country stimulated the growth of urban sites of leisure like theaters and concert halls. As more Iranians publicly took part in activities beyond those explicitly approved by Shiite authorities, musical activities were increasingly incorporated into public life. In the span of a few decades, Tehran transformed from a city where music was rarely publicly heard and women wore veils on the street to a place with an active, cosmopolitan nightlife where one could take in a concert of live music, view an Indian or Egyptian movie musical, watch a female dancer onstage, and dance the tango at a local nightclub—all while drinking alcohol and mixing with members of the opposite sex (Meftahi 2017; Rekabtalaei 2018). The Allied Forces' occupation during World War II added fuel to this fire, as did the Pahlavi government's national radio broadcasts that prominently featured foreign and domestic music. For Tehrangeles cultural producers born in the 1930s and 1940s, during their childhoods music making was only just becoming a legitimate public entertainment. By their adolescence, music was widely available and more socially acceptable—at least in some quarters.

Many individuals in Tehrangeles cultural industries' founding cohort consider the 1950s to the 1970s to be the "golden age" (*dowrān-e talā'i*) of both Iranian popular music and Iran itself. It was in this period that they first entered the professional music business and, in some cases, became celebrities whose personas, musical works, and films shaped national popular culture. Musicians who were active during these decades generally delineate prerevolutionary popular music into two main categories: the populist *mardomi* (people's) genres and the sophisticated, Western-leaning, sentimental *musiqi-ye pāp* (pop music) genre of the young, aspiring cosmopolitans. Street-smart, colloquial mardomi music derived primarily from local versions of Arab popular music and the repertoires of Iranian urban popular entertainers called *motreb*. The style was associated with urban working-class cabarets and cafés and was popularized through the *filmfarsi* film genre, which commonly featured working-class characters and musical café scenes. The genres included under the mardomi umbrella tended to use Iranian and Arab instruments as well as violin, accordion, and clarinet—these played with Iranian and Arab tuning and in locally idiomatic ways.

In keeping with its imported name, musiqi-ye pāp was more Western in its musical references and performance conventions. Musiqi-ye pāp typically incorporated complicated arrangements for predominantly Western instruments; sentimental, sometimes literary lyrics; and youthful, fashion-plate star vocalists. Pāp performers moved among film, television, radio, the recording studio, and the stage, sometimes performing for the royal family. Musiqi-ye pāp and mardomi were further distinguished by the fact that pāp was included on state radio and television, while mardomi was almost completely excluded. Mardomi and its stars were coded as low, vulgar, and traditional in the sense of being antimodern while, conversely, pāp stars' visual and sounded qualities manifested the glossy, cosmopolitan, sophisticated, and Western-leaning dispositions the Pahlavi state hoped to cultivate in its populace.[16]

All of this changed following the Iranian Revolution. While many in the Tehrangeles cultural industries nostalgically recall Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's reign, many others regard it as a time of political repression, pernicious foreign intervention, moral corruption, unequal distribution of wealth, and loss of authentic identity. Especially galvanized by leftists and Islamists, beginning in the 1960s anti-shah movements spread throughout Iran and culminated in the late 1970s with massive protests and a general strike that included an estimated 10 percent of the national population (Kurzman 2004, vii–viii).[17] In 1979, after months of unrest, riots, and killings, the shah admitted defeat and left the country with his family, never to return. The diverse coalition that had brought about the revolution gave way to Islamist dominance and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a novel political system developed and led by high-ranking Shiite jurist Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Under the "rulership of the jurisprudent" (*velāyat-e faqih*), the Islamic state took responsibility for safeguarding public morality according to historical, contemporary, and rapidly evolving clerical interpretations of Islamic law and local custom. In 1980 Khomeini famously compared music to opium and called for its "total elimination," a position in line with historically dominant, conventional Shiite understandings of music as immoral. Along with members of the political opposition, violent counterrevolutionaries, prostitutes, and drug dealers, celebrity vocalists were summoned to the dreaded revolutionary tribunals because, as Ayatollah Mohammad Mohammadi Gilani explained, "everyone knows that it was through these singers that we had so much moral corruption in our society."[18] High-profile musicians', actors', and media producers' contributions to popular culture

were reframed as corruption and crime. There was no legitimate space for them or their work in Iran. For many of the popular musicians who fled the country either before or after their brush with revolutionary justice, the Islamic Republic's establishment marked the end of their careers within Iran and the beginning of their careers in exile.[19]

TEHRANGELES PEOPLE

The sudden influx of popular musicians and media producers into Los Angeles was critical in establishing this diasporic hub's distinctiveness, but Iranians had already been flocking to Southern California and the United States more generally throughout the prior decades. Friendly relations between the US government and the sha, (who had the American and British governments to thank for engineering the 1953 coup securing his rule) meant that from the 1950s to the end of the 1970s, there were many Americans in Iran and many Iranians in America. California was especially popular with Iranians pursuing higher education. In the 1970s, roughly fifty thousand Iranian students attended American colleges and universities, with many electing to attend the Golden State's high-quality yet affordable state universities (Shannon 2017). Some of these students and their families settled in the United States, and especially in California, establishing enough of a presence to sustain Iranian-oriented restaurants and other businesses that have lasted to this day. Some students also returned to Iran, bringing back their foreign education—and in my father's case a foreign wife as well. In 1971 my Iranian father received his doctorate from the University of Indiana; he and my Euro-American mother married in the same year. Shortly thereafter, they moved to Tehran and then to Shiraz. Both of my parents taught at what was then called Pahlavi University. I was born in Shiraz in 1975, and our social circle included many families consisting of an Iranian husband and American wife with the same basic origin story as our own.

The political unrest of the late 1970s and the eventual 1978–1979 revolution spurred the departure of thousands of Iranians and most foreigners as well. Given its already established Iranian community and a climate and mountainous landscape recalling Tehran, Los Angeles was an obvious choice for those with the means to choose where they landed. Families with connections to the monarchy, members of political opposition groups, and individuals from religious minorities persecuted under the Islamic Republic

were among the first to leave Iran and settle in Los Angeles. (After leaving Iran in 1980, my family considered moving to Los Angeles as well, but because my father found an academic post in northern California, we eventually resettled there.) Today Iranians live in large numbers from San Diego to Ventura County, with especially visible populations in the western Los Angeles neighborhoods of Westwood, Beverley Hills, and Santa Monica, and throughout the towns lining Los Angeles County's San Fernando Valley. Shiite Muslims, Jews, Christians, Baha'is, and Zoroastrians are all represented in Southern California, as are Iranians of Persian, Azeri Turkish, Armenian, Assyrian, Kurdish, Arab, and other ethnicities (Bozorgmehr 1997, 2011; Kelley, Friedlander, and Colby 1993). Immediately following the revolution and the termination of Iranian and American diplomatic relations, US borders were closed to most Iranians hoping to move to or study in America. Despite these challenges, over the intervening decades Iranians have continued to enter the United States as economic migrants, asylees, refugees, and especially university students. However, the majority of individuals and families who established Iranian Southern California and the Tehrangeles media industries arrived from Pahlavi Iran.

The accidental founders of Tehrangeles pop were in California at the time of the revolution for nonpolitical reasons. Singer and songwriter Shahram Shabpareh and the vocalists Ebi, Shahrokh, and Shohreh Solati were in the United States to perform for local Iranian audiences, while music producer Vartan Avanessian was in Southern California on a business trip. When news of the shah's ouster and the Islamist triumph reached them, these musicians decided it was better to remain in the United States than risk repercussions for their "morally corrupting" activities. Especially in their early decades, the Tehrangeles culture industries represented the adaptation and continuation of Pahlavi music and media producers' careers and professional networks. Vartan Avanessian, Jahangir Tabaraei, and Manouchehr Bibiyan—prolific music producers with large catalogs of recordings and strong social and professional networks across the prerevolutionary domestic Iranian culture industries—were crucial to establishing the Tehrangeles music business in the 1980s. Prerevolutionary musiqi-ye pāp celebrities including Vigen Derderian, Dariush, Ebi, Shahram Shabpareh, Siavash Ghomeishi, Hassan Shamaeizadeh, Leila Foruhar, and Shohreh Solati were all in Los Angeles by the late 1980s. Singers specializing in light classical repertoire like the female vocalists Hayedeh, Mahasti, and Homeira also moved to Southern California, as did mardomi singers like Sousan and Abbas Ghaderi. Numerous well-known lyricists like Shahyar Ghanbari, Touraj

Negahban, and Zoya Zakarian who were active in the prerevolutionary industry also moved to Los Angeles, along with composers and arrangers like Manouchehr Cheshmazar, Farid Zoland, Jahanbakhsh Pazouki, and others with whom they had collaborated in Iran. Tehrangeles-based musicians also worked with their colleagues who landed in western Europe, including composer Esfandiar Monfaredzadeh and lyricist Iraj Jannatie Ataie. By the 1990s, Tehrangeles was the primary destination for aspiring Iranian pop musicians. Tehrangeles stars who first made their names in Southern California include the duo Andy and Kourosh, Moein, Faramarz Assef, Omid, Mansour, and Shakila; the prolific producer Schubert Avakian is also in this category. First-generation immigrants fleeing the revolution, and individuals like Sepideh who moved to the United States as children or teenagers during the Iran-Iraq War, are more often participants in the Iranian music industry than second-generation youth who grew up in North America.[20] There are also more men at all levels of the music and media industry, with women active primarily as vocalists and lyricists. The concentration of power in the hands of Tehrangeles's founding cohort—most of whom are now aged between fifty and ninety—has meant that this group's perspectives have been somewhat disproportionally represented in Tehrangeles media, even when younger vocalists, musicians, or spokespeople are the ones speaking or singing.

Taken as a group, Iranians in the United States have made their mark as "high-status immigrants," boasting impressive levels of academic achievement, entrepreneurship, and financial success in comparison to both many other immigrant groups and Euro-Americans as a whole (Bozorgmehr and Douglas 2011; Bozorgmehr and Sabagh 1988). The founding generation of Tehrangeles popular culture doesn't quite fit this profile: for many in this group, their greatest financial success and fame were in prerevolutionary Iran and didn't necessarily translate into the more modest conditions of the diaspora. Instead, an important stream of Tehrangeles performers' income comes from performing at wealthy Iranians' festivities, first in Los Angeles and later elsewhere in the diaspora. Entrepreneurship has been crucial to Tehrangeles music and media companies: a plethora of Iranian-owned terrestrial and internet radio stations, audiovisual production and reproduction businesses, cable and satellite television stations, nightclubs and restaurants, party and concert promoters, and other companies and individual ventures have generated the business infrastructure for this popular music's local and international distribution and performance.

Southern California's Persian-language popular music is stylistically

varied, including sentimental ballads, patriotic songs about the homeland, songs about exile, covers and adaptations of prerevolutionary classic songs and genres, and lots and lots of dance music. When Iranians speak of "Tehrangeles pop" or especially *los ānjelesi* pop (pop "of Los Angeles"), they typically mean upbeat dance music performed by a soloist singing light, colloquial lyrics. This also has affective associations: Tehrangeles pop is generally thought of as music meant to enliven a social gathering and put listeners in a good mood. In Tehrangeles today, a few musicians limit themselves to the sort of prerevolutionary, smooth, Western-leaning, sentimental pop style (e.g., Ebi) while others are primarily mardomi artists (like Ahmad Azad), but many others compose and perform across genre boundaries to appeal to as large an audience as possible. Tehrangeles also has a less commonly acknowledged serious side, which is on display in certain artists' morose romantic pieces and in patriotic and "political" songs evoking Iran's present "ruin" and its future potential. Finally, one of the expatriate culture industries' greatest sources of income and material has been the creative remediation of popular music from the "golden age," roughly concurrent with Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's reign.

LOCATING TEHRANGELES

When either Iranians or non-Iranians speak of a "Little Iran" or "Little Persia" neighborhood, they are usually referring to the intersection of Ohio Avenue and Westwood Avenue, where many of the city's oldest Iranian-owned businesses are concentrated: Attari Sandwich Shop, the music store Music Box LA, Sholeh Restaurant, and Gol o Bolbol Ice Cream. Within these few blocks, visitors can purchase Iranian groceries, pick up tickets for an upcoming pop or classical concert, buy Persian-language magazines and books produced in Los Angeles and in Iran, and order a plate of rice, grilled tomato, and kebab. Other small businesses with Persian lettering advertise immigration services, beauticians, passport photos, and music lessons. Impressed by the number of Iranian establishments on this stretch of Westwood that bore the names of prerevolutionary Iranian businesses, anthropologist Fariba Adelkhah suggests that these few blocks were "une espèce de réinvention ou de reconstitution quelque peu nostalgique du Téhéran des années 1970" (a kind of reinvention or somewhat nostalgic reconstruction of 1970s Tehran; 2001, 3). If one walks north on Westwood and makes a right before Wilshire, one finds, tucked behind a public library and a park-

FIGURE I.2 A young woman models a patriotic baseball cap at Balboa Park's annual Sizdah Be Dar festival in 2007. Photograph by the author.

ing deck, the Pierce Brothers Memorial Park and Mortuary where Iranian businesspeople, artists, scholars, political figures, and pop music stars are buried alongside American celebrities including Peggy Lee, Dean Martin, and Burt Lancaster. Beverley Hills is also a kind of Iranian neighborhood marked by a high concentration of especially Jewish Iranian residents and the infamous "Persian palace" mansions built for Iranians (Maghbouleh 2017, 39–48). Jamshid "Jimmy" Delshad was mayor of Beverley Hills between 2007 and 2008, and then again between 2010 and 2011. Elsewhere in Los Angeles County, otherwise public spaces become temporarily Iranian for special events like the pre-Islamic Chaharshanbeh Suri festival on the beach in El Segundo, where people jump over fires before the New Year, or the Sizdah Be Dar festival on the thirteenth day of the New Year that brings Iranians to the San Fernando Valley's Balboa Park. Iranians also take over various large-capacity performance venues like the Gibson Amphitheater when Tehrangeles pop stars play to the local crowd.

Tehrangeles music and media businesses are neither in Westwood nor in Beverley Hills—these are several miles northwest in the more affordable and more ethnically diverse San Fernando Valley. During my fieldwork

FIGURE 1.3 A stand at the Balboa Park Sizdah Be Dar festival in 2007 sells patriotic caps with a distinctly Tehrangeles bent: the lion, sword, and sun image from the prerevolutionary flag; the word "Iran"; and the winged Faravahar, a pre-Islamic Zoroastrian symbol that has become a popular secular sign of Iranian heritage. Photograph by the author.

and on subsequent visits, I would wander Westwood in the morning, have a bowl of *āsh-e reshteh* (noodle soup) at Attari, and then drive north on the 405 over the Sepulveda Pass, getting off at the Reseda or White Oak Avenue exits to meet someone at a Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf café for an interview or chat. Ventura Boulevard boasts many Iranian businesses and synagogues with Persian signage directly along the avenue and in its numerous strip malls, where they are often sandwiched in with other "ethnic" stores. I would sometimes stop at a strip mall with a Persian-language sign advertising *terāfik eskul* ("traffic school"), which also included a Himalayan restaurant and the small shop Shemshak Juice selling fresh-squeezed pomegranate juice and willow-tree water imported from Iran. Iranian entertainment businesses are more hidden. Cabaret Tehran, a major performance venue for Tehrangeles pop musicians, has a daytime alter ego as the lunch spot Mediterranean Express; its nightclub persona is unapparent until around eight in the evening, when the pink neon Persian-script Cabaret Tehran sign is

FIGURE I.4 A stand organized by monarchists at the Balboa Park Sizdah Be Dar festival features a portrait of Reza Pahlavi, son of the deposed monarch Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and his wife, Farah Diba. Photograph by the author.

turned on and crowds of nattily dressed Iranians smoking, chatting, and drinking tea fill up the patio for an evening of karaoke or a live performance by a Tehrangeles vocalist. Music and media production businesses, and the transnational networks that carry Tehrangeles products to international Iranian audiences, are even less apparent to casual observers. My visits to music company headquarters and television stations took me to unassuming business complexes near auto repair garages and donut shops that gave no hint of the colorful popular culture their tenants produced. Since the 1980s, music and television entrepreneurs have collaborated with and even opened offices close to one another—for instance, during my fieldwork the television station Jam-e Jam and the music company Avang were on the same floor of a Ventura Boulevard office building, while the music company Taraneh and the television station Omid-e Iran were in the same industrial park.

Tehrangeles artists extend their audiences beyond the local through regular international tours. Tehrangeles vocalists make frequent trips to cities in North America and western Europe with large Iranian diaspora populations, sometimes playing small clubs and sometimes major venues, as when Googoosh played Royal Albert Hall in 2013. While several million Iranians

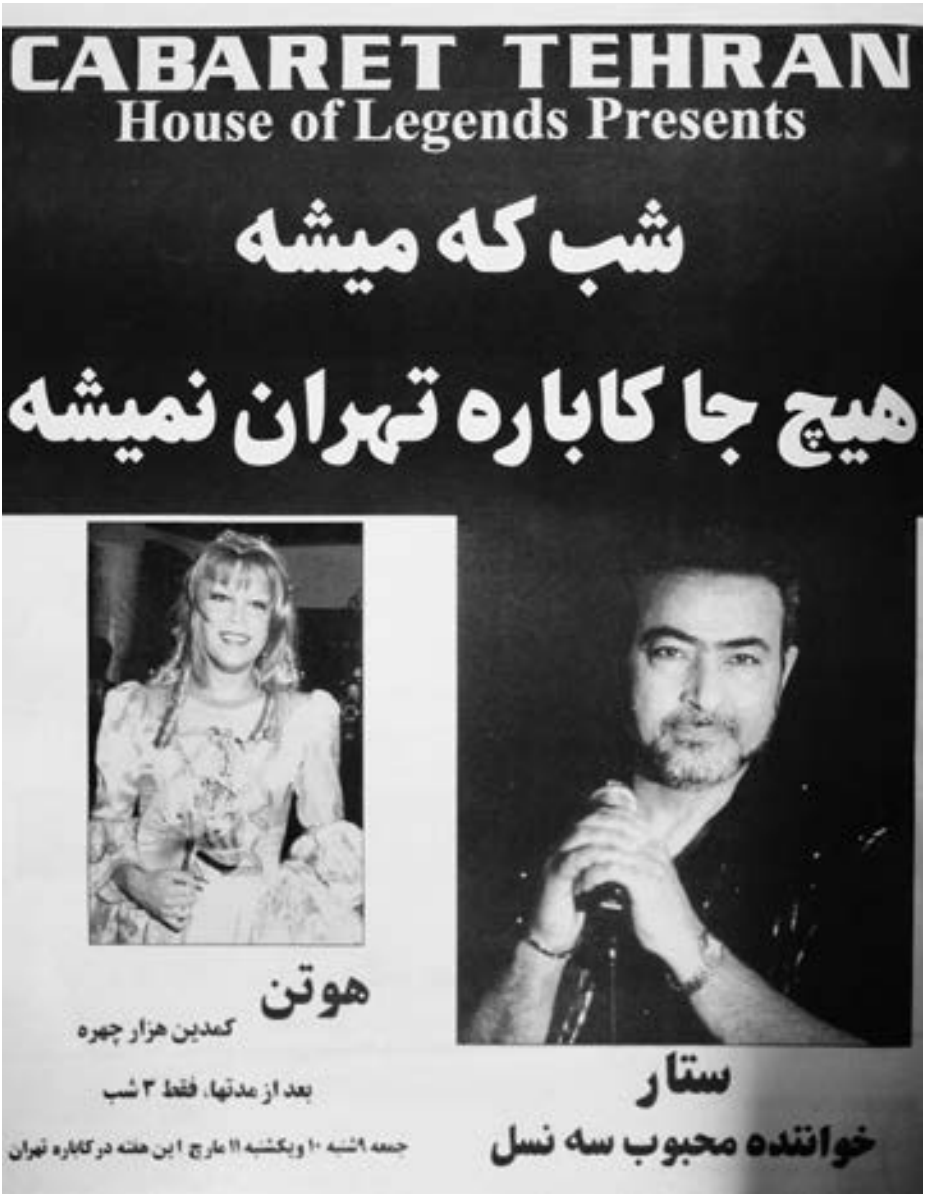

FIGURE 1.5 A 2007 advertisement for Cabaret Tehran appearing in the local Iranian periodical *Javanan* (*Youth*) *Magazine* contains a minimal amount of English. The Persian text at the top of the page reads, "When night falls, there's no place like Cabaret Tehran." The artists performing are the comedienne Houtan and the prerevolutionary–turned–Tehrangeles pop singer Sattar, "a beloved singer for three generations." *Javanan Magazine*, May 15, 2007, p. 65.

now live in the West, Tehrangeles artists' largest potential audiences are, naturally, within Iran. However, because Tehrangeles artists don't generally visit Iran, and because there are very few countries to which Iranian passport holders can travel without a (difficult-to-acquire) visa, it has taken some creativity for Tehrangeles artists to reach the domestic market. As of 2019, the only countries Iranian citizens can visit without a visa are Armenia, Dominica, Ecuador, Georgia, Haiti, Malaysia, Micronesia, Serbia, Turkey, and Venezuela.[21] Tehrangeles performers have attempted to meet Iranian residents partway by regularly staging large concerts in Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, and Malaysia as well as in a few other neighboring countries popular with Iranians, like the United Arab Emirates. These lucrative tours often take place during the Iranian New Year season, which coincides with the vernal equinox and is a national holiday. Since the mid-2010s, some Tehrangeles artists—Sepideh included—have begun performing on Iranian-oriented luxury cruises embarking from the Turkish Mediterranean. The combined costs of plane flights, hotels, and concert tickets are prohibitively expensive for average Iranians, but the events are popular and profitable enough to have kept Tehrangeles artists coming back year after year. Some Tehrangeles artists also entertain at lavish weddings; I heard tales of a very well-established Tehrangeles vocalist being paid $25,000 plus expenses to perform at an Iranian couple's wedding in Dubai.

By far the most common way in which audiences access Tehrangeles music is via mass media. During my fieldwork in the mid-2000s, satellite television broadcasts of Tehrangeles music videos and programs featuring or hosted by Tehrangeles performers were the primary transnational carriers of expatriate popular culture. These satellite television stations are free to air, meaning that they are accessible to anyone with a satellite dish pointed at the right celestial coordinates—no subscription is required. Iranians the world over own satellite dishes, including inside Iran, where they are illegal but largely tolerated. Since the mid-2000s the internet has become an increasingly important avenue for selling, advertising, and disseminating Tehrangeles popular music. Instagram is currently very popular within Iran and with Tehrangeles pop musicians; it is also one of the few foreign social media sites that are not blocked in Iran—at least at the time of writing. However, satellite television continues to be effective in reaching domestic audiences because fewer people have internet in their homes; the state's internet filters and policies of keeping internet speeds low are also factors. While filter breakers and virtual private networks are available in Iran, and while the state also uses satellite-jamming technology to attempt to block

FIGURE 1.6 An online poster advertises Sepideh's 2018 international tour. The locations listed have significant Iranian migrant populations or are countries Iranians can visit without visas (here, Turkey and Georgia). Screen grab from Sepideh's official website, accessed March 20, 2019, http://sepidehmusic.com.

foreign broadcasts, overall it is less trouble to install a dish on one's roof and point it toward the Hotbird satellite orbiting Earth at thirteen degrees east. The satellite television business began in Southern California in the early 2000s and has since spread to the United Arab Emirates, Germany, Turkey, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Several Western governments have also embraced Tehrangeles and other Iranian expatriate popular culture as part of their "cultural diplomacy" initiatives. Voice of America Persian Language Service, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Radio Farda (Radio "Tomorrow"), and BBC Persian produce high-quality Persian-language television and radio broadcasts and internet programming for domestic and diasporic Iranian audiences; these include interviews, videos, and performances by Tehrangeles pop musicians.[22] Like satellite dishes, none of these media outlets are officially permitted, but they are nonetheless widely accessed in Iran.

As the foregoing account makes clear, Tehrangeles musicians and media producers and their productions are imbricated in an assemblage of private and governmental, diasporic and domestic, and commercial and political networks and conflicts. The Iranian state interprets unofficial media as part of "soft war" (*jang-e narm*) on Iranian citizens by Western and Iranian opponents seeking to foment a "velvet revolution" (*enghelāb-e makhmali*) (Naficy 2012; Price 2012; Rahimi 2015; Semati 2012; Sreberny 2013). Participating in this assemblage therefore puts Tehrangeles musicians in a precarious position vis-à-vis the Iranian state.[23] At times, Iranian officials have questioned, harassed, arrested, and criminally charged Iranians who work with or appear on these outlets, including Iranian citizens who live and work abroad

(Michaelsen 2018). A standout example is the Tehran Revolutionary Court 28's March 2017 announcement, published in domestic media, that it had sentenced Googoosh in absentia to sixteen years in prison. Her crimes were "propaganda against the Islamic Republic" and "creating centers of corruption and corrupting the public."[24] Googoosh has not set foot in Iran since her departure in 2000 and is extremely unlikely to return to Iran to serve her time, but she remains accessible to domestic audiences through foreign government and expatriate media and through concerts in neighboring countries—at least one of which was sponsored by the US government–funded Radio Farda.[25] While the Revolutionary Court sentence is best understood as symbolic, it exemplifies how Iranian expatriate popular music and musicians intertwine moral, commercial, and political concerns, and how transnationally circulating popular music produced halfway around the world becomes embroiled in tense relationships between homeland and diaspora, and state and international actors—all of whom have competing stakes in the Iranian nation.

THE DEGENERATE LOS ĀNJELESI SINGER

Like traveling Tehrangeles music and performers, stereotypes of Tehrangeles Iranians and Tehrangeles singers also circulate between the diaspora and Iran. The Los Angeles Iranian stereotype is not so different from common perceptions of "Hollywood people" and their shallow money-mindedness. "Persians" in Los Angeles are wealthy or want to be perceived as such; wear flashy, expensive clothes and jewelry; embrace surgical enhancements; drive fancy cars; and live in ostentatious mansions in exclusive neighborhoods. They are anti-intellectual, petty, and superficial. Tehrangeles Iranians have the additional dubious distinction of being obsessed with their pre-Islamic or Aryan roots and at the same time out of touch with contemporary post-revolutionary Iran. A plethora of songs, skits, television programs, and films made by Iranians elsewhere in the diaspora and in Iran play on the Tehrangeles Iranian stereotype.[26] Take, for example, "Iruni-ye LA" ("LA Iranian"), a song by the Iranian British expatriate hip-hop group Zed Bazi:

Dear wealthy Aunt Fati
Bought a house on Hollywood Boulevard
I say, "Aunt Fati, are you ready to party?
I'll come to your house tonight and we'll go to Café Latin."

She says, "Don't call at 5 o'clock because I'm at the gym
Every night I eat salad [because] I'm on a diet,
My eye color is the same as my [blue] jeans
Now, let me check out your six-pack [abdominal muscles]."

After establishing their superficiality, Zed Bazi describes Tehrangeles Iranians' confused identity:

Here [in Los Angeles] we're happy for no reason (alaki khoshim)
We wear sandals,
We want to be Western (farangi)
We want to be "Vanak kids" [a Tehran neighborhood]
We say, "West Coast, motherfucker"
Every time we stand up[27]

Since the advent of the American A&E television network's reality television show *Shahs of Sunset*, focusing on a glamorous group of young, wealthy, second-generation Jewish and Muslim Iranians cavorting around Southern California, mainstream American television audiences have had increased access to Tehrangeles stereotypes.[28]

One of the most recognizable and ridiculed figures Iranians associate with Tehrangeles is the los ānjelesi singer (*khānandeh-ye los ānjelesi*) and the music she or he performs, which is also called "los ānjelesi." *Los ānjelesi* literally means "of Los Angeles" but also indexes a host of other attributes, especially frivolity, shallowness, cheapness, superficiality, and low-quality, crass commercialism. Above all, los ānjelesi pop is dance music meant for parties. While far from everything produced by Tehrangeles artists is dance music, music with danceable rhythms was historically the most profitable and therefore the most prolific style, making the association between Tehrangeles and dance music hard to shake. Having witnessed expatriate television interviews become tense or hostile when it was suggested that a musician was los ānjelesi, I never dared to use the term for fear of offending my interlocutors. Calling a musician los ānjelesi has the added insult of inscribing an individual as "of Los Angeles" (its literal meaning) and therefore not primarily "of Iran" (*irāni*). As an example, Southern California–based vocalist and songwriter Mehrdad Asemani protested on an expatriate talk show that the los ānjelesi moniker was "made up by the Islamic Republic" to insult musicians like himself. "I'm not from Los Angeles," he angrily exclaimed. "My father's not from Los Angeles—I'm a kid . . . from Hafez Street! I fought in the war with Iraq. I wasn't born in Los Angeles!"[29] The

los ānjelesi taint has also extended to me as someone misguided or ignorant enough to consider Tehrangeles pop worthy of study. Confused looks, polite avoidance, and peals of laughter are among the reactions I have received when telling Iranians my research topic. While attending a party in 2006 in Toronto at the home of an expatriate journalist, I was introduced to another well-known journalist who had recently fled Iran following the closure of the reformist press. After a few pleasantries, I told him that I would soon be heading to Los Angeles to study its Iranian music scene. He paused for a moment and then leveled a dismissive scowl at me. "So, you want to study shit-*shenāsi*?" he growled. His improvised combination of the English word "shit" with the Persian suffix for "-ology" (*shenāsi*) denigrated my research and me as well. I was, apparently, a "shit-ologist" (*shitshenās*).

Despite their postrevolutionary geographic inscription onto Southern California, the negative discourses surrounding professional performers and the upbeat party music they play have their roots in a national history of religious, elitist, and leftist prejudices against immoral and "degenerate" (*mobtazal*) entertainments and the professionals who produce them.[30] *Tehrangeles Dreaming* positions these disparaging sentiments as extensions of Iranian national changes, concepts, and politics of culture into the diaspora and back again. Today cultural elites and the postrevolutionary state tar Tehrangeles pop musicians with the same brush as their low-status professional entertainer ancestors known as *motreb*, relocating the negative legacy of the motreb, immorality, and degeneration outside of Iran and into exile. Los ānjelesi music is "bad music" (see Washburne and Derno 2004), and los ānjelesi singers are "bad people" who callously target audiences' basest desires for entertainment, titillation, and distraction. In official Islamic Republic discourse, Tehrangeles cultural producers are both immoral and *farāri*, or escapees—people who fled the country without serving time for their moral crimes. They are pathetic, faithless self-exiles who abandoned their homeland in its moment of need and are now deservedly cursed with permanent separation and irrelevance. At worst, they are agents in a soft war who "spread corruption" via expatriate media, including those funded by Western governments, treasonously attempting to undermine the state from afar. This book documents some of the main ways Tehrangeles cultural producers negotiate these charges through cultural production: creating alternative histories in which they are not villains but heroes, making politically committed music and attempting to politically mobilize transnational audiences, and arguing for dance, dance music, and levity as necessary elements of being and feeling Iranian.

THE TERMS OF SEPARATION

One commonality shared by most individuals I interviewed for *Tehrangeles Dreaming* was their extended, open-ended, physical absence from territorial Iran. The terms of their separation were emotionally complicated and not always something we discussed; when it came up, I noted a tendency to mention fear of potential consequences were they to return.[31] Many of my older interlocutors who have been outside the country for decades used the terms *ghorbat* or *tab'id* to describe their condition. *Tab'id* translates as political exile, while the multivalent term *ghorbat* implies both the state of being away from one's home and the psychological or metaphysical experience of estrangement. Tehrangeles musicians of the founding generation are doubly estranged from postrevolutionary Iran. The first estrangement is their ideological exclusion from the nation: when the postrevolutionary government declared popular music and musicians immoral and degenerate, it also designated these individuals as obstacles to the country's new direction. Their main options were to reform, retreat, or remove themselves. Physically departing Iran and not returning for decades, or perhaps ever again, is the next level of estrangement. Unfamiliarity with postrevolutionary Iran is built into Tehrangeles's foundations. Expatriate music pioneers Shahram Shabpareh, Ebi, and Dariush all left before the Islamic Republic's consolidation and have therefore never experienced firsthand the transformed society toward which so many of their songs and videos are directed. Estrangement can occur even in encountering Iranians from postrevolutionary Iran, as revealed to me in my conversation with an elderly Tehrangeles media producer. Since the revolution, this man had resided in Los Angeles, where he made television programming aimed at both diaspora and Iran-based audiences. He had not returned to Iran in part because he feared what might happen when officials learned he was in the country. Instead, he arranged to travel to a resort in Turkey popular with Iranian tourists to see for himself "what Iranians from Iran were like." He found his luxury hotel to be as nice as anything one would find in the United States, but he was shocked that the female Iranian tourists wore headscarves as they mingled with other guests in the hotel's elegant lobby. They were outside of Iran and away from the Islamic Republic's compulsory veiling laws—why wouldn't they opt to socialize in public without wearing hijab? He dismissed my suggestions that the women might have maintained their modest covering out of piety, or that they had worn scarves in public their entire lives and might feel uncomfortable without them. No, he retorted, that wasn't it at all. They

had "censored themselves" (*khod-sānsuri kardand*). Traveling to Turkey put him in physical proximity to people living in postrevolutionary Iran, but the experience did not overcome his feelings of estrangement. It may even have intensified them.

Over the years, I have begun to conceive of Tehrangeles cultural producers who remain outside of, and committed to, their homeland as "expatriates." Though this term comes with the sense of having chosen to leave one's home, and is therefore distinct from the fear, persecution, and hardships that impelled some of my interlocutors to relocate, I choose this term for its open-endedness. I am especially seduced by the aptness of its constituent parts—*ex-* (outside) and *patria* (native land)—which is the crux of Tehrangeles cultural producers' predicament and the source of some opportunities as well. I sometimes use "exile" in discussions where individuals have described their separation as permanent. I reserve "diaspora," a term not very much used by my interlocutors in Los Angeles but common in academic literature about Iranians living abroad, to refer to the totality of Iranians residing outside of Iran. Some scholars of migration prefer to employ "diaspora" for some later stage of migrant collective identity that is defined by "relations of difference" from both host and homeland societies (see Tölölyan 2007). What I find among older Tehrangeles residents, by contrast, is a population that has lived outside of Iran for decades but asserts its continuity and connection with homeland populations through an imagined transcendent Iranian culture in/and/as mass-mediated communications. I apply "diaspora" to refer to the steady Iranian out-migration to North America, an ever-growing and very diverse group of people. Finally, I use "diaspora" as "a category of practice" that is "used to make claims, to articulate projects, to formulate expectations, to mobilize energies, [and] to appeal to loyalties" (Brubaker 2005, 12).

THE MEANS AND DREAMS OF CONNECTION

Insofar as Tehrangeles cultural producers' separation from Iran is central to their experiences and self-regard, much of their work and discursive self-presentation rests on their assertion of an enduring connection to their compatriots at home. These assertions take different forms: references to large groups of devoted fans in Iran, statements that they know what the Iranian people want and how to give it to them, or even claims to influence people and political outcomes within the country through their music and

media productions. *Tehrangeles Dreaming* examines expatriate imaginations of influence on, and intimacy with, their global Iranian audiences.

My decision to call these connections "imaginary" and to title the book *Tehrangeles Dreaming* is consciously double-edged. Iranians on every side of the political spectrum can be heard deriding Tehrangeles media producers for delusions of grandeur and their unverifiable claims of popularity in Iran. The "dreaming" in the book's title acknowledges that desire and fantasy are productive activities with indeterminate empirical effects. Dreams exist in an unresolved relation with the real. Dreaming also connects to my treatment of expatriate cultural producers' media work as "modern social imaginaries" (C. Taylor 2002). One of the core observations of the social imaginaries literature is that mass media and technologically mediated communications are the primary means through which we become acquainted with and feel ourselves to belong to groups whose members we may never meet (see Anderson 1983; Appadurai 1996; Axel 2002; Warner 2002). Our knowledge of these groups, and the world beyond our proximate environments, derives from the interplay between representations (especially discourse and media), their circulation, and the imaginations these representations and circulations contain and stimulate. This is equally true for the worlds and people in which we have no interest and those we learn to identify as "our own"—specific people like family members from whom we are physically separated and people we may never meet but nevertheless feel we know, like celebrities and politicians. Representation, circulation, and imagination are likewise the building blocks of powerful abstractions like society, nations, diasporas, markets, publics, the *'umma* (the totality of Muslims), the "global community," and so on, to which we can claim membership, from which we can be excluded, and that operate without much relation to us at all. When Tehrangeles cultural producers are dreaming of Iran or imagining their connections with Iranians through media production, circulation, and communication, they are contributing to these social imaginaries. At different points in the book, I relate the dialectic of physical and temporal distance and music-, media-, and communications-enabled closeness that I argue is central to Tehrangeles popular culture to some of the social imaginaries listed here—particularly nations and publics—to shed light on the struggle to gain knowledge of things and people with the vast yet always limited resources available to us. Social imaginaries may be fictional but are nevertheless the kinds of "dreams that matter" (Mittermaier 2011).

The space between the known and the imagined can be occupied by hope

and possibility, but also by fear. Recurrent nightmares of surveillance, conspiracy, and insecurity are also themes in *Tehrangeles Dreaming*. These are the dark sides of social imaginaries: the comforting assertion that "we are all connected" can quickly give way to the paranoiac's overwhelming realization that "it's all connected" to unseen forces and political plots (Apter 2006, 366). Iranians have long considered paranoia a shameful national affliction, an illogical and pathological response to past events and—when employed by the state—an effective means of controlling and rallying the populace through fearmongering (Abrahamian 1993; Dadkhah 1999).[32] Rather than discount them, I take paranoia and conspiracy theories as "kind[s] of political imaginar[ies] . . . within a transnational context in an age where a surfeit of information is matched only by the difficulty of obtaining relevant information for political decision making" (Iqtidar 2014, 5). Paranoid imaginaries are a reaction to the partialness of knowledge and the untrustworthiness, inherent partiality, and biased ordering of facts according to political agendas. This is not to declare the inherent truthfulness of a notion like soft war or some expatriate Iranians' fear of governmental surveillance, but to say that, in many cases, there is evidence to support these interpretations. These perceptions become experiential reality for musicians, media producers, and state policy makers alike, and in turn shape the self-protective choices they make and their sense of what is *possible*.

Within the traffic of representations and cultural forms, I treat popular music as a privileged category of mass-mediated expressive culture with affordances that make it particularly efficacious in linking expatriates and their geographically dispersed diaspora and homeland audiences. Music's status as concrete, palpable, and historically and culturally contingent and its simultaneous diffuseness, open interpretability, and potential nonindexicality account for its flexibility. We experience music as hailing various social identifications that may be specific, yet to be articulated, or beyond articulation at all. Music producers and audiences describe music as calling into being collective forms of identification and shared experience, making these into sometimes fragmentary and fragile, and sometimes more durable, "aggregations of the affected" (Born 2011, 379). Stimulating affective responses—particularly joy (*shādi*) and sorrow (*gham*)—is a vital, and sometimes controversial, aspect of Tehrangeles musicians' labor and their role in mobilizing their audiences emotionally and politically.

Music's dual public and intimate quality is particularly important to *Tehrangeles Dreaming*. Throughout the book, I use "the intimate" and "intimacy" in two distinct yet interrelated ways. The first is the intimate as

that which should be shielded from the public for propriety's sake. This understanding of intimacy overlaps with "the private" to a certain extent, but the connotations of social closeness and sexuality of "intimacy" more accurately capture my meaning. Which practices and bodies falls under the category of the intimate is not constant in Iranian modernity but relates to both individual understandings and historically shifting definitions of morality, gender, and sexuality. These change in different diasporic contexts as well. As discussed above, even as certain forms of music and certain musicians retain some stigma, the overarching change in music's moral status in Iranian modernity evinces its flexibility. The long history of Shiite custom and jurisprudence that defines lahv (frivolity), ghanā (artful song), and *raqs* (dance) as corrupting, immoral, and therefore prohibited was eventually overcome as postrevolutionary decision-makers gradually approved many musical forms out of pragmatism. The barriers to acceptability have proven to be higher where women and their public expression of sexuality are concerned because of their role in producing, and literally reproducing, the nation. If women are the backbone of the family, and families are the building blocks of the nation, then "women's honor is not a private [individual or familial] concern, but a public one" (Osanloo 2009, 185). Tehrangeles popular culture transgresses Iran's officially mandated moral order by making public women's uncovered bodies and singing voices, which, according to Iranian law and Islamic custom, should be revealed only to their husbands or their intimate circle (*mahram*—individuals a woman cannot legally marry). Mass-mediated, transnationally circulating expatriate popular music thus complicates the Iranian state's regulation of the intimate, the moral, the public sphere, and the nation's boundaries all at once.[33] It is a public form that can become intimate, and an intimate form that is readily transferable to the public (Dueck 2013; Stokes 2010).

The second way I use "the intimate" and "intimacy" is in reference to deep familiarity within a group. Here I am inspired by Michael Herzfeld's (2005) notion of cultural intimacy: the practices and structures of feeling that assure people of their common sociality. I show that while cultural intimacy is often articulated in terms of a people's enduring, transcendent predilections and traits, just what constitutes the stuff of intimacy is also historically contingent and contested. Media is crucial to the sense of intimacy and familiarity (*āshenāi*) that Tehrangeles cultural producers describe enjoying with their dispersed compatriots. This connects their activities and claims to an "intimate public" of the sort described by Lauren Berlant (2008) in relation to twentieth-century women's literature and popular

FIGURE I.7 Media afford distant audiences intimacy with Sepideh. Screen grab from "Kish," directed by Koji Zadori, on the DVD *Caltex Records 20 Music Videos*, Caltex Trading, Inc., 2007.

culture and by Martin Stokes (2010) in terms of twentieth-century popular music in Turkey: the circulating commercial texts that "express what is common" among a group of people, "a subjective likeness that seems to emanate from their history and their ongoing attachments and actions" (Berlant 2008, 21). The culturally intimate in Tehrangeles music and media can also appear as the open representation of shameful or unsettling social phenomena like drug addiction, nonheteronormative sexuality, or even an undignified love of dance music. Knowledge and expertise are central to my use of "intimacy," as is the labor of intimacy and affect. Tehrangeles musicians and media producers claim access to the stuff of cultural intimacy because they claim to know (and have produced) Iranian culture, because they know what people want, and because people love them. It is a circular relationship growing out of mutual, intimate knowledge and affection between themselves and their dispersed audiences.

THE CHAPTERS

The book's chapters examine several interrelated aspects of Tehrangeles music and media's offerings and follow musicians and media producers as they contend with the legacy of the "dissolute musician" stereotype and with their elective and involuntary political engagements. The book's chapters begin with examples of Tehrangeles cultural producers' political ambivalence and end with two Tehrangeles celebrities' conscious integration of the political into their expatriate personas and works.

Chapter 1 examines the discourses and politics surrounding a popular rhythmic dance groove colloquially called *dāmbuli* or *shesh-o-hasht* (six and eight). Though central to many traditional Iranian musical genres, this rhythm was restricted for about twenty years in postrevolutionary domestic musical productions because of its associations with dance and eroticism. During precisely this period, expatriate pop musicians incorporated dāmbuli into their productions to such an extent that the groove became associated with Tehrangeles itself. I draw on interviews with Tehrangeles musicians who both denigrate and celebrate dāmbuli, and with the audiences who desire it, to show how musical sound can index and elicit experiences of intimacy and shared sociality in the face of the pervasive ideologization of culture.

The creation of alternative national music histories in Tehrangeles is the subject of the following chapter. I focus on four figures in prerevolutionary popular music who relocated to Tehrangeles—music and television producer Manouchehr Bibiyan, singer and songwriter Shahram Shabpareh, and music producers Vartan Avanessian and Jahangir Tabaraei—and their efforts to create accounts of Iranian music that acknowledge their contributions to national history and culture. These figures grapple with their rejection in the revolution, and their subsequent reputation for producing socially irrelevant pop in Tehrangeles, by producing narratives in which they depict themselves as modernizers, emissaries of joy, and saviors of Iranian music itself.

Chapter 3 is about Tehrangeles performers as desirable, desiring, and dangerous subjects vis-à-vis homeland-based audiences. I link desire for return to the homeland to the erotics of expatriate media, showing how Tehrangeles popular culture revives sexually ambiguous and provocative aspects of Iranian history and transmits them back into the country. The chapter presents three scenarios of expatriate return to Iran: the literal return and subsequent imprisonment of gay male dancer and choreographer Mohammad Khordadian, a fictional film documenting a trip to Iran by a sexually ambiguous Tehrangeles vocalist, and the experiences of straight female vocalist Shahrzad Sepanlou negotiating her sexualized image as perceived by Iran-based audiences. I argue that these accounts together offer a complex picture of expatriates' representation of "sex in public" (Berlant and Warner 1998), which, in violating the nation's moral purity and geographic boundaries, confounds Tehrangeles performers and the Iranian state alike.

The last two chapters zero in on two expatriate musical celebrities and their claims to represent and reach the nation from exile. Here I think

through how Tehrangeles cultural producers conceive of their political responsibilities and potentials in relation to Iran-based audiences. Chapter 4 shows how prerevolutionary female pop diva Googoosh and her collaborators use her personal history of victimization as a provocative metaphor for national suffering. To particularize the cultural and historical resonances of voice-related terminology in Googoosh's repertoire, the chapter begins with a short history of voice and romantically and politically motivated complaint in twentieth-century Iranian sung poetry. I then turn to a discussion of diaspora Iranians' metaphorization of Googoosh during her twenty-year period of postrevolutionary "silence," and Googoosh's own adoption of these metaphors in her subsequent postrevolutionary comeback. In the diaspora, Googoosh uses her outsized voice and persona to perform as the Iranian nation "herself." Because the female voice is the most restricted musical medium in Iran, the very act of representing "Iran as a singing woman" is laden with political challenges and opportunities. Documentary film, music videos, songs, concerts, interviews, and her eponymous televised talent competition are among the media through which Googoosh "sings the nation's tears."

Charismatic male pop icon Dariush Eghbali is the subject of chapter 5. The chapter tracks Dariush's transformation from the drug-addicted "sultan of sadness" to a postrecovery "messenger of hope" as it explores his unique combination of transnational, media-based political and humanitarian activism. As I show, Dariush works at the intersection of sentimentality, nationalism, and the principles of the American recovery movement to mobilize a notion of "shared suffering." Relating Dariush's attempts to transform Iran and Iranians from afar to Khomeini's long-distance mass-mediated reach into Iran during his decades of exile, the chapter investigates the combined political affordances of charismatic celebrity and expatriate media. Dariush's patriotic songs and videos, the media productions of his nonprofit Ayeneh (Mirror) Foundation (focused on addiction recovery), and his live concerts are analyzed in relation to the intimate publics they attempt to produce. This chapter incorporates my ambivalent reactions to Dariush's performances and media to draw attention to the complexity of his reputation among diverse Iranian audiences. This also serves to bring readers into my affective experience of his celebrity and works.

The final chapter offers perspectives on what has changed and what has remained stable in Tehran-Tehrangeles relations over the forty years that have passed since the coterminous establishment of Islamic Republic of Iran and the Southern Californian expatriate industries.

THE POLITICS OF IRANIAN POPULAR MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

Postrevolutionary music scholarship published within Iran typically avoids socially and politically sensitive topics. This can be explained in part by the historical and analytical bent of domestic music scholarship and many Iranian musicologists' performance backgrounds. But some of politics' relative absence is an effect of domestic scholars sticking to less potentially inflammatory topics as a means of navigating their local context. By contrast, studies of Iranian popular music published outside of Iran, most of which are authored by diasporic Iranians, tend to privilege politics above other topics. The limiting aspects of postrevolutionary Iranian music policy, and the "resistant" potentials of popular music, especially, have received the bulk of scholarly attention. This resembles the Tehrangeles tendency to view the homeland primarily in terms of repression and deprivation and overlook other aspects of life in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The titles of articles and books on Iranian popular music clearly manifest this inclination. Postrevolutionary popular music is a key player in a process of state and citizen "subversion and counter-subversion" (Nooshin 2005a); Tehran's soundscape is a politically "contested space" (Siamdoust 2015), while postrevolutionary music is the "soundtrack of the revolution" (Siamdoust 2017); and the songs of unofficial rock musicians are "reverberations of dissent" (Robertson 2012). The scholarship on female vocalists also follows this pattern, regardless of genre: women vocalists are "singing in a theocracy" (Youssefzadeh 2004) and must "carve a space in post-revolutionary Iran" (Mozafari 2012) to represent their own and others' "marginalized voices" (Nooshin 2011). I, too, have contributed to this trend by describing Tehrangeles pop as a "transnational public beyond," and in many ways opposed to, "the Islamic state" (Hemmasi 2011); by depicting prerevolutionary domestic popular music as "intimat[ing] dissent" (Hemmasi 2013); and by discussing the "political metaphorization" of female pop icon Googoosh's sounded and silent voice (Hemmasi 2017a, 2017b). *Tehrangeles Dreaming* also contributes to this trend.

This dynamic is part and parcel of the larger postrevolutionary politicization of music, diaspora-homeland interactions, and the Islamic Republic of Iran's fraught international relations. Writing of both diasporic and non-Iranian music scholars, Laudan Nooshin (2017) notes a troubling tendency to "fetishize" Iranian popular music as "resistance." In Tehrangeles pop itself, in my account of it, and in most of the case studies listed above, what

is being resisted is the Islamic Republic and not, say, Western imperialism, any of Iran's many rivals, or the US government's current Iranian sanctions or ban on Iranian visitors. Because members of the Iranian opposition and Western observers of both conservative and liberal persuasions have seized on accounts of popular "defiance" against the Iranian state as indications of its latent instability, "resistant" musicians and the scholars who write about them run the risk of underscoring simplistic, harmful characterizations of Iranians and Iranian society. At best, these pile on to Iran's already dismal international reputation, while, at worst, they can be interpreted as justifications for foreign intervention.[34] Some expatriate musicians may embrace externally led regime change, as may some scholars; my informed guess is that many, many more do not. To focus on academics: regardless of our awareness or intentions regarding these potentialities, the fact that Iranian intelligence officers have at times questioned, arrested, and imprisoned diasporic scholars of Iran (supposedly) for their research and publishing activities has led some of us to self-censor or avoid returning to the country. Scholars and scholarship are therefore enmeshed in similar imaginaries of power and paranoia as Tehrangeles cultural producers. Taken in whole, this situation is evidence of a widespread perception that circulating representations of Iran and Iranians—be they scholarly, journalistic, or artistic—are politically productive and disruptive in powerful and unpredictable ways. Just how, when, and where such representations become impactful depends on the context and interpretation at least as much as (but probably more than) the intent. This is precisely the situation *Tehrangeles Dreaming* investigates with regard to expatriate music and media producers, and it likewise informs the conditions from which my scholarship emerges.

All of this is to say that I am cognizant of the need to "carve a space" (Mozafari 2012) for Iranian musicians that is not entirely defined by politics. I also recognize the importance of this to my interlocutors as well as the larger spectrum of Muslim and Middle Eastern cultural producers and media workers with whom they will unavoidably be compared. But the pervasiveness of the contrasting political imaginaries and political conditions with which Tehrangeles musicians and music scholars contend means that to suppress political contestation and conditions in my account would be to tell half—or less—of the story. *Tehrangeles Dreaming* attempts to face head-on the challenges and opportunities that come with the pervasiveness of politics in Iranian musicians' and media producers' work alongside the politics of representing them at all.

HOW THIS BOOK CAME TO BE

The research for this book began in 2005 as part of my studies in ethnomusicology. It is also the product of my years of engagement with Tehrangeles pop in the company of my Iranian American family and friends, and with family in Iran, most of whom reside in Tehran and Kashan. My mother is Euro-American, and I grew up in the United States in mostly non-Iranian environments, but this didn't seem to prevent my interlocutors from identifying me as Iranian American. They typically treated me as if I understood something of the context and content of their music, and often referred to "our culture" (*farhang-e mā*) or to "we Iranians" (*mā Irāni-hā*). The fact that when I began my doctoral research I was young and spoke accented, grammatically incorrect Persian reminded my interlocutors of their children, grandchildren, or other Iranian American youth they knew. A few of my older interviewees said they were driven to speak with me out of a desire to secure their legacy in Iranian music and were eager to educate me about their contributions to "our history." I was comfortable speaking with men who were part of the same generational cohort as my father and uncles and with whom I could occupy the attentive, admiring "good [Iranian] girl" (*dokhtar-e khub*) role—a lucky coincidence since this generation happened to be the power-holding group during my fieldwork. My comparatively far fewer conversations with women, in turn, inevitably included discussions of gender-based discrimination and their accordingly limited creative roles, both because this was important to their creative work and because they rightly surmised I could relate to their stories as a fellow Iranian woman. I could also relate to the sense of profound loss of homeland that suffused my interlocutors' work and perspectives. My parents and I left Iran in 1980 in the months between the Islamic Republic's establishment and the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War. We departed with just two suitcases, abruptly abandoning our house, family, friends, and former lives. Though I was a few months shy of my fifth birthday when we left, I have vibrant memories of my early childhood in Shiraz and visits to my relatives in Tehran. I have also experienced long periods of separation from Iran. My points of connection to this book's subjects, then, are culturally and biographically based.

Even so, during my research I was also an outsider with limited access to the inner workings of the Tehrangeles music and media scene. I had not spent significant time in Southern California before my fieldwork research period and didn't have social or familial connections to industry members. My interactions in Tehrangeles were further conditioned by the

fact that I was "studying up." While being a graduate student and then postdoctoral fellow at two different Ivy League universities meant that I was not exactly short on cultural capital, many of my interlocutors' male gender, celebrity, international professional connections, advanced age, and—in some cases—wealth, placed them "above" me. Formal interviews made by appointment were my main access to busy musicians, music producers, and media workers.[35] The Tehrangeles popular culture industry is small and densely interrelated, and its members share decades of memories, good times, business dealings, broken promises, and contentious legal battles, some of which were hinted at but not related to me in detail. There were many aspects of interpersonal relationships and business dealings that I knew would never be shared with me and, even when they were, that I would never commit to paper.

Firsthand experience in postrevolutionary Iran was another distinction between me and my interlocutors. I had traveled to Iran only three times since my family and I relocated to the United States, but even this minimal time spent in Iran meant that, ironically, I had more recent exposure to "our [postrevolutionary] homeland" than some of my Tehrangeles interlocutors, most of whom had left in the 1970s or 1980s and never returned. The Iranian side of my family is diverse in terms of education, religiosity, and socioeconomic status. Short visits to family and friends in Tehran, Karaj, Kashan, Sari, Khazarshahr, Shiraz, Mashhad, Isfahan, and Kish Island, and time spent with elite Tehranis, my so-called "traditional" relatives in Karaj and Kashan, and other people who fit neither of these descriptions afforded me extremely limited, but still illuminating, exposure to a variety of perspectives and lifestyles.[36] These short trips provided a useful counter to the common Tehrangeles trope of postrevolutionary Iran as a wasteland and/or prison, while also showing me that expatriate popular culture had a palpable presence in the country.

In Tehrangeles I was usually speaking with media professionals who were skilled at telling their own stories and managing their public personae. I therefore considered our face-to-face conversations as part of a continuum of their careers of publicly representing themselves, their work, and their position in Iranian culture and history—and not necessarily as "less mediated" or "more authentic" exchanges.[37] I complemented interviews with celebrities and professionals with conversations and casual time spent with multiple generations of Iranians in Southern California at concerts, in music stores and bookstores, in restaurants, and in other informal situations. I went to parties with Iranian American youth who had never been to Iran

but identified as Iranian or Persian; I also hung out with groups of Iranian doctoral students close to my own age who had recently arrived in the United States. Across these groups, I learned I could count on almost everyone's awareness of Tehrangeles popular culture: it infiltrated many Iranians' lives in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, regardless of where they grew up or what their stated musical preferences were.

I also attended performances by Tehrangeles musicians in Southern California and in Toronto (where I now live), and consumed lots and lots of media produced in Tehrangeles and media about Tehrangeles produced by Iranians living elsewhere. In the book, I have placed Tehrangeles media producers' statements that appeared in Persian-language media alongside quotations from interviews I conducted, checking my interpretations, translations, and assumptions with individuals outside of the immediate circle of Tehrangeles. Retrospectively, I came to recognize this approach as what anthropologist Louisa Schein (2012, 205–206) has called "ethnotextual" research. My continuous engagement with Iranian diasporic music producers and consumers as both a researcher and a fellow diasporic Iranian made "situated interpretation" the obvious (and only) way to apprehend these texts and experiences. The interpretations in the chapters are "from a site of [personal and] ethnographic entanglement with those whose subject positions allow a more seamless identification" with the media in question and "locat[e texts and their interpretation] within a wider play of cultural [and political] signification that exceeds" any single text in isolation (Schein 2012, 206).

Following my most intensive period of sustained fieldwork in Los Angeles in 2007, I have returned to Southern California almost every summer for the past decade, visiting and revisiting people and sites, attending concerts, tracking changes in the Iranian neighborhoods in Westwood and the strip malls of the San Fernando Valley, and contacting new people as well. More recent trips have included graveyards and barely functioning businesses in the cultural industry network. Members of the prerevolutionary to Tehrangeles generation are beginning to pass on; the famous singer Mahasti died in Los Angeles in 2007 when I was doing my fieldwork; the singers Hayedeh, Sousan, and Vigen and the lyricist Touraj Negahban also died in Southern California some years earlier. Some companies are slowing down or changing hands; their business strategies must shift to compete with products from Iran and elsewhere in the diaspora. All in all, Tehrangeles no longer has the international significance it once did. As such, this account is—as all ethnographies are—a history, told in a moment about

a particular group of people and the conditions in which they have operated. I suppose the book is an argument against the critics of Tehrangeles and even some Tehrangeles cultural producers' own view that their music and contributions are not lasting (*mundegār nistand*), that this cultural formation has offered nothing besides a bit of distraction from the seriousness of revolution, war, economic hardship, and displacement. What I hope to show instead are the multiple levels on which Tehrangeles popular culture intersects with and preserves history, mobilizes affect and intimacy, and engenders conversation and sociality across transnational Iranian space.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 Sepideh, vocalist, "Kish," by Sepideh and Ramin Zamani, on *Girl in the Mirror* (*Dokhtar tu-ye āyeneh*), Caltex Records, 2004.

2 "Sepideh—Kish | Sepideh—Kish," YouTube video, posted by Persian Music Video, August 15, 2005, https://youtu.be/sfWXloPGs40.

3 Shahram Shabpareh, "Deyar (Folk Version)" ("Homeland"), by Shahram Shabpareh, on *Deyar* (*Country*), OF-OZ Record, 1980. Two versions of "Deyar" appear on this album: a "Disco Version" and a "Folk Version." I have most often heard the Folk Version at Iranian events; it is also the version Shabpareh used for the "Deyar" music video. When I discuss "Deyar" in the text, I am referring to the Folk Version. The Disco Version, created by established disco DJ and producer Farokh "Elton" Ahi, preceded the Folk Version and was played at mainstream European and American (non-Iranian) dance clubs in the 1980s and 1990s. According to Ahi, Shabpareh did not like the Disco Version; the Folk Version was made to suit his preferences. For more on Ahi's career, see Parham Nik-Eteghad, "Hit-Machine: Interview with Elton Farokh Ahi [*sic*]," Iranian.com, July 31, 2007, https://iranian.com/2007/07/31/hit-machine/.

4 Dariush, "Vatan" ("Homeland"), on *Sāl-e do hezār* (*Year 2000*), Caltex Records, 1991. "Vatan" fits new words by expatriate Iranian lyricist Iraj Jannatie Ataie to the melody and arrangement of José Feliciano's 1974 song "Gypsy" (on *For My Love . . . Mother Music*, RCA Victor). On all the recordings of "Vatan" I have seen, Feliciano is listed as the song's composer.

5 Reza Gholami (2015, 109) discusses the use of "pure Persian" on expatriate television in the context of anti-Arab Iranian nationalism. See Naficy (1993, 125–165) on the "fetishization" of nation in Los Angeles Iranian television in the 1980s.

6 Sepideh Music, accessed March 18, 2019, https://www.sepidehmusic.com.

7 Pre-Islamic Iran has a long life in Iranian political imaginaries, most prominently in the last Pahlavi monarch's self-coronation as heir to the throne of Cyrus the Great, and in the postrevolutionary search for a non-Islamic Iranian identity.

8 See Gahan (2017, 106–119) for an extensive discussion of the history of public morality laws in Iran. Early twentieth-century laws were explicitly protective of women's honor (*nāmus*), but they did not require veiling. In 1936 Reza Khan issued his famous unveiling decree that forced women to appear in public without hijab.

9 The postrevolutionary Iranian Islamic Penal Code is a novel combination of Islamic law (*shar'ia*), modern law, local custom, and long-standing and newly developed Shiite jurisprudential notions of justice, property, propriety, and other issues. Public morality crimes and their punishments are detailed in Iranian Islamic Penal Code, bk. 5, ch. 18, articles 638–640. Available in translation from "Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran—Book Five," Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, June 15, 2013, https://iranhrdc.org/islamic-penal-code-of-the-islamic-republic-of-iran-book-five/.

10 Iranian Islamic Penal Code, bk. 1, ch. 1, art. 7. For an English translation, see "English Translation of Books I & II of the New Islamic Penal Code," Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, April 4, 2014, https://iranhrdc.org/english-translation-of-books-i-ii-of-the-new-islamic-penal-code/.

11 Khomeini's proclamation appeared in "Ezhārāt-e emām dar mored-e barnāmeh-hā-ye musiqi-ye radio-television" [The Imam's statements on music programming on radio and television], *E'telā'āt* (Information), Mordad 1, 1358/July 23, 1979. On this pronouncement, see also Youssefzadeh (2000, 38).

12 Thanks to Jairan Gahan for insights regarding the language of this fatwa.

13 On expediency in relation to women's rights, see Ghamari-Tabrizi (2013); on drug policy, see Ghiabi (2015); and on food, see Chehabi (2007).

14 See Frishkopf (2010, 33) on a similar dynamic in commercial Arab satellite television.

15 On Cubans in Miami, see Johnson (2010); Laguna (2014); and Mirabal (2003). On Vietnamese in Orange County, see Aguilar-San Juan (2009); Cunningham and Nguyen (2003); and Adelaida Reyes (1999). On Taiwan, see Guy (2005); and Shiau (2009).

16 For more on prerevolutionary popular music, see Breyley (2010); Hemmasi (2013); Shay (2000); and especially Breyley and Fatemi (2016).

17 Kurzman compares this 10 percent participation in the Iranian Revolution with the French Revolution (estimated 2 percent of the populace) and the movement to overthrow Soviet rule (approximately 1 percent).

18 "Pishnehād-e hākem-e shar'-e Tehran barāyeh eshteqāl-e honarpisheh-hā" [A Tehran religious scholar's recommendations regarding the occupation of actors], *Kayhān*, Farvardin, 14, 1359/April 3, 1980. At the time of this interview, Gilani was a judge in the revolutionary courts. On the revolutionary courts' agenda, Gilani continues, "Our motive for summoning [popular vocalists] was public decency (*'effat-e 'omumi*) in a Muslim society. This means that in an Islamic government, state institutions prevent that which contradicts Islamic morality."

19 Songwriter Babak Bayat is an exception in that he left Iran for Los Angeles in the 1980s but then returned to Iran and became active in officially approved music productions.

20 I did not focus on second-generation Iranian Americans and therefore cannot be sure what accounts for their lower levels of participation. My guess is a combination of more opportunity and less skill: 1.5- and second-generation individuals had more non-Iranian avenues open to them than their parents' generation, while they also lacked the language and cultural knowledge needed to successfully perform or operate in the predominantly Persian-language music business. Iranian Swedish lyricist and media personality Raha Etemadi is a notable exception, as is the internet radio company Radio Javan (based in the Washington, DC, area), both of which I describe in the conclusion. Iranian Americans do make popular culture, but it tends to be more oriented toward their experience as minorities in the United States, while the first generation is more oriented toward Iran. For more on Iranian American diasporic media and cultural production, see, among others, Alinejad (2017), Maghbouleh (2017), and Malek (2015).

21 Decades of tense relationships between Iran and many other states have radically curtailed Iranian citizens' mobility. The process of acquiring a visa to enter western Europe or North America is typically expensive, lengthy, and uncertain. Those who wish to visit the United States or Canada, which do not have embassies in Iran, must take the additional step of traveling to a consulate in a third country. Since Donald J. Trump took office as the president of the United States, it has been virtually impossible for Iranians to enter the United States. Under the June 26, 2018, Supreme Court decision on Presidential Proclamation 9645, better known as the Trump travel ban, Iranians are prohibited from receiving all immigrant and almost all nonimmigrant visas. The proclamation also affects citizens of Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen. To my knowledge, most Tehrangeles artists have dual Iranian and American citizenship and are therefore not directly affected by the ban.

22 For more about BBC Persian and its mission, see Sreberny and Torfeh (2014); and Voss and Asgari-Targhi (2015). On the popular US-sponsored Radio Farda program *Parazit* (Static), see Semati (2012).

23 Soft war is an update of the 1990s rhetorical formulation of "cultural attack" (*tahajom-e farhangi*), which some commentators suggest was a cynical move to galvanize the population's nationalist impulses once the Iran-Iraq War was finished. See Kian (1995).

24 The same court gave a lesser sentence to Saeed Karimian, the founder of Dubai-based GEM TV, a satellite television company that dubs Western programming into Persian for Iranian audiences. The announcements of sentencing in absentia were reproduced on many websites in and outside of Iran, often titled with exclamation points and breathless commentary. See, for instance, the report "Googoosh be shānzdah sāl mahkum shod!" [Googoosh sentenced to 16 years in prison!], *Bahar News*, Esfand 16, 1395/March 5, 2017, http://www.baharnews.ir/news/126665/گوگوش-16-سال-زندان-محکوم.

25 A report on Googoosh's 2010 concert in Dubai appearing on the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty website identifies Radio Farda, a US government–supported media outlet directed at Iran-based audiences, as the concert's sponsor. "Googoosh Draws Thousands of Iranians in Dubai," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 25, 2010, https://www.rferl.org/a/Googoosh_Draws_Thousands_Of_Iranians_In_Dubai/1993808.html.

26 Ardeshir Ahmadi's comic internet series *Az Vancouver tā Los Ānġeles* (From Vancouver to Los Angeles) documents his adventures in Tehrangeles. Ardeshir Ahmadi, "Az Vancouver tā Los Ānġeles ghesmat-e avval (From Vancouver to Los Angeles part one)," YouTube video, 8:51 mins., January 30, 2013, https://youtu.be/zHBK_68elDg. Arash Tebbi and Nima M.'s rap song "Kind of Persian" makes fun of "Persians" in Los Angeles; it features the video's director, Ahmad Kiarostami, asking Iranians in Southern California how they identify themselves. Most say "Persian." Much of the video is filmed at the annual Sizdah Be Dar festival at Balboa Park in the San Fernando Valley. "Kind of Persian," YouTube video, posted by Ahmad Kiarostami, October 12, 2009, https://youtu.be/OxBfJffCoAs.

27 Zed Bazi, "Iroonie LA," YouTube video, posted by Wig3n, December 1, 2009, https://youtu.be/510omQRIlj6w.

28 *Shahs of Sunset* participant, A$A Soltan released a single in 2012 called "Tehrangeles." However, neither the song nor the singer's other works are produced within the Tehrangeles music industry structure. See Maghbouleh (2017) on Los Angelenos' racist discrimination against Iranians.

29 "Un Cut with Mehrdad Asemani Part 5," YouTube video, posted by Tapesh TV Network, January 22, 2017, https://youtu.be/JjzPJoBaDoI.

30 Ida Meftahi's (2016b) prerevolutionary genealogy of artistic "degeneration" (*ebtezāl*) is critical to my understanding of the stigma surrounding Tehrangeles. I discuss the concept further in chapter 1.

31 Tehrangeles cultural producers' fears are grounded in uncertainty as well as the observed experience of their colleagues. As I discuss in chapter 3, in 2002 the Tehrangeles media personality, dancer, and aerobics instructor Mohammad Khordadian was imprisoned in the notorious Evin Prison for "spreading corruption" via his Los Angeles–produced aerobic dance instruction videotapes. See Papan-Matin (2009). In 2005 guitarist and composer Babak Amini was arrested and had his passport confiscated for collaborating with Googoosh. See Hemmasi (2011). Lyricists and musicians inside Iran who collaborate with Tehrangeles figures have also faced persecution at home: in 2013 well-known lyricist Roozbeh Bemani was arrested for writing lyrics for both Dariush and Googoosh. In chapter 3 I discuss the exceptional case of prerevolutionary-turned-Tehrangeles musician Habib Mohebbian (1947–2016), who made news as one of the only well-known members of the expatriate music industry to resettle in Iran.

32 The quintessential politically paranoid Iranian is Uncle Napoleon, the main character in Iraj Pezeshkzad's 1973 novel *Dāyi jān Nāpolon* (*Dear Uncle Napoleon*), whose belief in British-led plots against Iran is a humorous theme throughout the book. This novel was widely read and became a very popular television series in the 1970s; Iranians continue to reference Uncle Napoleon when poking fun at each other's paranoid tendencies. Dick Davis's 1996 English translation is titled *My Uncle Napoleon*.

33 For related scholarly takes on mass-mediated popular culture's potential blurring of postrevolutionary Iranian public and private spheres, see, among others, Amir-Ebrahimi (2008); Mozafari (2013); Nooshin (2018); and Siamdoust (2015).

34 The controversy raging around Azar Nafisi and her best-selling 2003 memoir *Reading Lolita in Tehran* is but one example of how diaspora portrayals of Iran become enmeshed in international and intradiasporic political contestation. See Hamid Dabashi, "Native Informers and the Making of the American Empire," *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, June 1–7, 2006. On the question of what ethnographers make public about Muslims in America after 9/11, see Andrew Shryock's insightful 2004 essay.

35 See Ortner (2010) on the challenges of conducting fieldwork within the Hollywood movie industry, and the dynamics of "studying up" and "horizontally."

36 When used to describe people, *sonnati* (traditional) can mean religiously observant, employing *ta'ārof* (Iranian etiquette), maintaining close extended-family relations, engaging in "traditional" professions (working as bazaar merchants, weaving carpets), and/or identifying with local, and specifically non-Western, aesthetics and ways of being. The conceptual opposite is *modern*, which typically refers to people who identify as secular and embrace technology, secular higher education, and "Western" ideals. This obviously reductive binary is part of common discourse.

37 My focus is less on revealing celebrities' "real selves" than attending to the labor

and strategy involved in constructing and managing celebrity personae. This approach is informed by P. David Marshall, Christopher Moore, and Kim Barbour's notes on "persona as method": "While the application of cultural studies to the media has led to a theorization of the collective agency of the audience, persona studies shifts to the study of the agency of the individual. . . . The focus of persona studies is thus on how the individual 'publicizes,' 'presents' and strategically 'enacts' their persona. Likewise, the study of the celebrity 'persona' is therefore trying to work out what are the strategies of foregrounding versions of public and private presentations and how these relate to the individual celebrity negotiating his/her persona within institutions and the broader culture" (Marshall, Moore, and Barbour 2015, 290).

1. THE CAPITAL OF 6/8

1 To my knowledge, there are no publicly circulating documents or decrees formalizing the ban. This is not unusual with regard to restrictions on cultural production. Rarely do strict policies come to light—the parameters are often divined via interpretation, some of which is inherent in the religious texts on which the policies build. See Siamdoust (2017, 28–30).

2 "Goftegu bā Shahyar Ghanbari, shā'er va tarāneh sarāi" [A conversation with poet and songwriter Shahyar Ghanbari], Tehran Review, October 23, 2012, http://tehranreview.net/articles/11696#.UIcUw1F_kR-.

3 Along with my own experiences dancing to shesh-o-hasht pop music with my family, Anthony Shay's (2000) "The 6/8 Beat Goes On: Persian Popular Music from Bazm-e Qajariyyeh to Beverly Hills Garden Parties" also inspired my documentation of this rhythmic figure's impressive historical continuity.

4 As Louise Meintjes puts it, "Musical style derives its meaning and affective power primarily through its association with the sociopolitical positioning and social values of music participants . . . and through the sensuous experience of those who encounter it" (2003, 9).

5 Compare the higher-status Qajar court musicians, who were Muslim. In a presentation at Columbia University in 2007, Houman Sarshar, who is carrying out an oral history of Jewish motreb in the United States, noted that low-status and negative associations with motreb are such that some former professional entertainers deny ever having served in the role, despite documentary evidence to the contrary.

6 The colloquial, folksy sung and chanted lyrics across these genres do not tend to follow the quantitative *'aruz* metrical system of classical Arabic and Persian poetry but instead incline to trochees and iambs, which work well in the compound duple meter. See Breyley and Fatemi (2016, 33–62) on the motrebi repertoires, including a brief description of the rhythms of chanted rhyming poetry