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THE SENSUOUS HOST: PRACTICES OF ENSURING GUESTS FEEL 'AT HOME' IN TRADITIONAL IRANIAN HOUSES

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A B S T R A C T

This article explores the ways in which home is understood, felt and experienced through our sensual experiences, more specifically the ways in which a guest is made to feel at home through the cultural and social practices of a traditional Iranian household. Our particular focus is the traditional residential architecture of Iranian homes built prior to the Pahlavi era (i.e. 1925-1979). These traditional houses were designed, maintained and inhabited in a way that sought to maintain a pleasurable relationship between the home and its inhabitants, that is, a relationship that fed and nourished all five senses. We draw on a phenomenological approach as a means to recreate this historic period so as to explore the significance of the body and its sensual encounters with place, providing a detailed examination of home- making and notions of hospitality and how architecture, culture, senses and hospitality are brought together.

Keywords: Culture, Domestic interiors, Experiential, Home-making, Hospitality, Iranian architecture, Senses, Traditional houses.

INTRODUCTION

How can a tone be a place? How can a pattern in air be a home we can leave and return to? (Mathieu, 1994).

There is a rich body of work that explores the ways in which *home* is understood, created and experienced (Benjamin et al, 1995; Silverstone, 1997; Marcus, 1999; Miller, 2001; Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Central too much of this work is the unpacking of how we feel connected to the places we inhabit. Hence belonging – and the various ways this is expressed and challenged – has been a central concern in this field of study, and asks us to consider the ways in which home is more than simply a shelter (Bachelard, 1958). While we often think of home and its association with the nuclear family in terms of 'a haven in a turbulent world' (Duyvendak, 2011), the concept of home operates at various scales – family, neighbourhood, nation and beyond. Questions of feeling at home or feeling alienated from our place of residence tell us much about who we are as individuals and as communities. Geographers Andrew Gorman-Murray and Robyn Dowling (2007) argue that this is because;

'[h]ome is powerful, emotive and multi-faceted. As a basic desire for many, home is saturated with the meanings, memories, emotions, experiences and relationships of everyday life. The idea and place of home is perhaps typically configured through a positive sense of attachment, as a place of belonging, intimacy, security, relationship and selfhood (2007 online)'.

Yet, what is typically understood as our private spaces are complexly interconnected with our public selves. In addition, the cultural underpinnings of home-making – the material and philosophical practices we draw on to create our home spaces – are significant in constituting these public/private boundaries (Gorman-Murray 2006a; Shabani et al., 2011; Sobh & Belk 2011). This public/private framework also means that the socio-cultural milieu in which we are embedded is integral to the shaping of our places of dwelling in material and philosophical terms (Rahmeier, 2012). We hold culturally specific images of the ideal home that nonetheless nurture us and offer us some sense of security and comfort.

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Our particular focus in this paper is the traditional residential architecture of Iranian homes built prior to the Pahlavi era (1925-1979). This period of architecture can be categorised by some important demographic, physical and functional characteristics. These traditional houses were designed, maintained and inhabited in a way that sought to maintain a pleasurable relationship between the home and its inhabitants, that is, a relationship that fed and nourished all five senses. Moreover, the design of these homes was a means to respond and reproduce the physical, cultural, social and artistic needs of their residents, a material form that facilitated a means to *feel* this as a living space at a deep level of being, offering opportunities to engage with one's home place through the body's senses. This focus on the sensual in the design and lived experience of the traditional Iranian home offers a different insight into how notions of the home are constituted.

As Sarah Pink (2004) has suggested, by turning to the senses we can expand our understanding of home beyond the conventional parameters of analysis, including the social and material (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Gorman-Murray, 2008), that of memories and nostalgia (Watson & Wells, 2005) as well as the performative, corporeal and discursive (Gorman-Murray, 2006b). Invariably emotional, yet it is the bodily and affective responses – those experiences beyond words, or perhaps the tacit, embodied and personal knowledge we hold about place – that have the potential to open up recognition of the body's process in understanding place as home. Moreover, we need to think about home beyond physical boundaries, for, as Isle Crawford proposes, 'the truth is that we only ever really understand or make sense of the world around us and the world each of us creates, principally in our homes, through our five sense.'(2007: 17). In exploring the traditional Iranian home, we hope to contribute to the developing literature on the material culture of home spaces, and introduce to this broader discussion the role that cultural and historical traditions bring to the material practice of home-making (Miller, 2001).

Iranian houses have changed dramatically in recent decades (Mirmoghtadaee, 2009). While Iranians still have, to some extent, the same physical, cultural and lifestyle needs, there is less emphasis on their artistic and traditionally-based skills of home-making and as a result valuable national and ancient traditions and cultures are gradually being forgotten. A new aesthetic that draws on Western consumerism has taken hold, one which focuses on notions of modernity and appearance, yet while not deriding this desire for what is now available to us, what is lost is that sense of *feeling* at home, that phenomenological engagement that allow us to dwell (Heidegger, 1954).

In 1979, Jean-François Augoyard argued that to better appreciate the relationship between urban space and its inhabitants, we need to pay close attention to the daily relationships individuals have with such spaces – that we researchers, step by step, follow the "many detours and [enter] into the flurry of the particular details of *ordinary life*" (2007: 3, italics in original). Augoyard suggested such an approach as a means to understand the impact of the intense urbanisation programs occurring in France at this time. Moreover, he noted that the tempo of rambling gave us a sense of the "almost nothing at all" – those "trifling everyday details" (2007: 23) – that constitute everyday life. In *Pas à pas* he demonstrates through a detailed ethnographic study how that it is "only through the body that space becomes a world" (2007: ix). In considering the emotive and affective processes involved in place-making, and specifically how traditional Iranian home places are created, we wish to take up Augoyard's suggestion and follow the everyday lives of a traditional Iranian household. More specifically, we wish to explore the ways in which traditional Iranian homes respond to cultural ideas and practices around the five senses and the ways in which these sensual practices induce certain emotional ties to a place called home. We draw here on such a phenomenological approach as a means to explore the significance of the body and its sensual encounters with place; and in our approach we continue the project initiated by Longhurst et al, that is, to use our bodies as "instruments of research" (Longhurst et al., 2008; Rahmeier, 2012). Therefore, we invite the reader along with us into the traditional Iranian home, to explore how its feel and form arises out of particular sensuous forms of home-making. Along with others who have experimented with ways of representing the experiential (Boyd & Duffy 2012; Lorimer 2006; and Thrift 2008), we take up this ethnographic and embodied challenge, and invite the reader to inhabit briefly the role of guest as offered in the poet Hafez Shirazi's request, 'To him I said, "Pass a while with me." He replied: "hold me excused. A home (delicately) – nurtured one – what care beareth for such grief of the

poor stranger' (Wilberforce Clarke, 1997).[i] We invite the reader to take a stroll with us back in time and into this home's 'public' spaces, or more correctly those spaces of hospitality, in which you may pass a while and enjoy the sensual creation of the Iranian home.

ENTRANCE, ورودی

It is approaching late afternoon; we wander through a series of narrow alleys, wondering with each alley curve when we will finally arrive at our host's home. On either side, clay walls give little hint of the buildings – and the lives – they enclose. We cannot see or hear what is going on inside, yet we are drawn on by our host as we move further away from the main street. In contrast to today's home owners who seek to live close to the main street with its shops and places of leisure, the more valued place for the traditional Iranian home is located at the end of such narrow alleys. These homes, better protected from attack, are therefore more secure and so can afford to be elaborate in design, albeit hidden gems behind a bland exterior.[ii] This protection works in both directions. With their outer walls and ramparts (*Baroo,* بارو) made of clay (*Chineh,*چینه), they are thick enough to prevent the everyday noises of street life entering the house, but this also prevents the sounds of family life seeping out into the street (Omranipour, 2005). The absence of windows to the alley reinforces the seclusion of home life from prying eyes. Yet, this façade is not completely inhospitable; for those passing through these alleys, the *Baroo* are tall enough to create shade and shelter from the sun as well as protection from the almost daily hot sand winds (refer to Figure 1).

Figure 1. Entrance, photograph by Ms. Nasrin Fatahi, used with permission.

We finally reach the entrance to our host's home, the front door (*Darsar,* درسر) (refer to Figure 2), connecting the private space of the home to the public space of the city. Most often located on the southern, shadowed and so the less valued side of the home, it is here that residents can give some hint to the wealth housed behind this often simple entrance. For example, some *Darsars* are decorated with tiles containing verses from the Quran, such as the sentence with which the Quran starts, 'In the name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful' (بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم) or 'what Allah wishes' (ما شاء الله) used to acknowledge a sense of gratitude. Such verses might be placed as a means to support and protect those who dwell here as well as their guests from evil. Some Darsars' vaults are decorated with stalactite-like elements called *Moqarnas* (مقرنس). The entrance is also important as it indicates the differing gender relations within the Islamic home, a significant and fundamental set of principles that 'rule how a Muslim should live his/her life and determine his relationship with the social and physical environments' (Shabani et al, 2011). Gender segregation, based upon Islamic religious belief, plays an important role in Iranian social life, and this difference is announced here at the *Darsar* through sound. The *Darsar* has two metal door knockers – one designated male and the other female – the male door-knocker, (*Koobeh*, کوبه), having a lower tone, while that of the female door-knocker, (*Halgheh*,حلقه), a higher tone. Each makes this distinctly different sound when knocked so as to alert those inside as to the gender of the person at the door, and hence allows the host to appropriately prepare for the guest.

Figure 2. Darsar and its two metal door knockers, photograph by Ms. Nasrin Fatahi, used with permission.

If we must wait a while before being admitted, there are two seating areas, (*Takhtgahe Pirneshin*, تختگاه پیرنشین) located on either side of the front door. Here passersby can rest in the shade, protected from the glare of the sun. It is also a space where we can be refreshed, as well as a place for neighbours to sit and catch up on the latest news of the city. Here, before we enter our host's home, we are welcomed and cleansed of evil[iii] through the circling of smoke around our heads, created through burning a type of herb seed called *Espand*[iv] (اسپند).[v] Once cleansed, we enter a transient space, (*Hashti* or *Keryas*, هشتی ، کریاس), which is located in such a way that you must pause before entering the home. This architectural design creates a sense of anticipation, as a wall in the *Hashti* blocks our direct view through to the interior, preventing us from looking directly on to the courtyard and the family residing there. This *Hashti* and its convoluted narrow hallways (*Dalan*, دالان) are the only sections of the house that connect the outside world to that of the home's inner gardens. Even so, this passage is never direct. *Hashtis* usually have some seating for guests, again a space of waiting until the householder comes for you. These spaces often contain more than one door, particularly when more than one family lives in the building. From here we can also see a door that leads to a stable, as well as a door to a guest room[vi] located above the *Hashti*. The doors in the *Hashti* are known as *Mian dar (*میان در) and the stairway door to the roof *Rachineh (* راچینه) (Pirnia 2003; Omranipour, 2005). We do not linger here though, as our host waves us through, and we excitedly move into the courtyard garden. As it is summer, we are welcomed and entertained in the courtyard garden.

THE INNER COURTYARD GARDEN, حیاط، میان سرا

As we enter, the words of the poet 'Attār[vii] spring to mind;

My love is for the rose; I bow to her
From her dear presence I could never stir
If she should disappear the nightingale
would lose his reason and his song would fail…'

(Quoted in Scollay, 2012).

In the Iranian language the word for garden is *Pardis* (پردیس), which has come down into English as *paradise*, and the stunning formal arrangement of water features, roses and trees through which sunlight and butterflies dart and birds sing resonates with this meaning – and takes our breath away. This strong connection of poetry and the home, and the poetic tradition of celebrating nature continue well into the modern world, as exemplified in this poem by Sohrab Sepehri (1928-1980) and his depiction of the garden as an expression of heavenly arrangement:

our garden was in the shade of knowledge
our garden was a place where feelings and plants were tied together in a firm knot
our garden was a point of contact
between sight and cage and mirror
our garden was, perhaps, an arc
of the green circle of happiness
prospering, flourishing (quoted in Martin, 1988).[viii]

As with most Iranian homes, the garden (refer to figure 3) is hidden and enclosed by the rooms of the house, and this inner courtyard pays little heed to the harsh climate of Iran's semi-arid zones. Here, we quickly forget the sand whipped up by hot winds when we walked through the city's streets, and the lack of water that permits only the low scrubland of thorn cushions and sagebrush to grow (Heshmati, 2007). This garden layout is quite unlike that of European gardens with their emphasis on pathways, access and free movement; rather the Iranian garden is designed with water as its central axis, with the intention that we rest a while and enjoy the surrounds. Water is considered holy and precious because of its scarcity, especially in the hot arid climate zones and cities such as Kashan (Omranipour, 2005). Our host teases us as we dip our hands in the fountain's cool waters, quoting Sohrab Sephri's poem *Water*

Let's not muddy the water!
Down below, perhaps
There a pigeon drinking water
Or in a distant thicket perhaps
A goldfinch is cleaning its feathers
Or in some village, perhaps a jug
Is being filled --
How wholesome this water is!/ How limpid this river is!--
What a village should be!
May its garden lane be full of music!
The people at the source
Of the river
Understand the water
They didn't muddy it
We, too
Let's not muddy the water! (Quoted in Martin, 1988).

He explains to us that the *Howz*, or central shallow pool, is not just a decorative element, but that this reservoir of water, shaded by trees, assists in keeping the air of the

home moist and air circulating throughout the living and sleeping quarters – humidity and air important needs in this arid climate (Haeri, 1997). Apart from the kitchen, each room of the house opens on to this central garden, allowing us to escape the dust of the streets. These central courtyards also allow those residing here to take advantage of the sun's light and warmth as the seasons change. For example, winter rooms, *Zemestan-neshin*, are located in the northern part of the courtyard and face a southerly direction in order to capture the mild winter sun. In contrast the summer rooms, *Tabsetan-neshin*, are located in the southern part of the courtyard; lying in greater shadow their coolness helps residents avoid the harsh summer sun (Pirnia, 2003; Ghobadian, 2005).

So it is here, in the courtyard, in the hot and dry summer months, that family members spend time sitting, sewing, talking and eating together, seated on and around the wooden seat placed in the garden for such purpose (Ghobadian, 2005). The garden's design reflects the order and symmetry of Iranian aesthetics; there is always the central pool flanked on either side by garden beds of flowers – particularly the rose, Iran's national flower.

Figure 3. Central Courtyard, photograph by Ms. Nasrin Fatahi, used with permission.

The rose's pairing with the nightingale is an important theme in Iranian poetry, particularly in the imagery of the lover (the nightingale) and the beloved (the rose). Later that evening, we listen to the sound of nightingale singing against the soothing splash and spray of the stone fountain's water, inhale the perfume of the garden's roses, and ponder the imagery of a Persian paradise, as our host's grandfather recites a poem by Hafiz;

At dawn, to the garden, to inhale the perfume of the rose
Like the nightingale loudly exhale the cure of my head and nose.

I was watching the beautiful unfolding of the rose
Like a light, the secrets of the night disclose.
Proudly its own youth and beauty would transpose
Its songs, the nightingale to the peaceful rose owes.[ix]'

As we sit and eat one of the traditional, healthy, and simple summer-time foods called *nun, panir, hendoone, gerdoo* – a sandwich that consists of bread, cheese, chilled watermelon and walnut – we reflect on the imagery of nature used by Iranian poets. As Professor Hossein Elahi Ghomshei, specialist in Persian mystical poetry and aesthetics, suggests, poetry in Iranian culture "is not simply an art; rather it's the very image of life: terrestrial and celestial … a detailed agenda for daily life" (Ghomshei, 2008). Later that evening, this comment returns to us as we listen to the sound of nightingale singing against the soothing splash and spray of the stone fountain's water, inhale the perfume of the garden's roses, and we again ponder on the icons of nature that depict a Persian paradise; 'When the Nightingale sees the Rose/ It starts singing his joy/ But I am dazed and dumb in the presence of thy vision' as stated by Sadi (Ghomshei, 2008).

Often such an evening feast takes place in the *Iwan* (ایوان), one of the most important features of an Iranian traditional house garden. The Iwan (refer to Figure 4 and 5) is a semi-open space usually located in the

northern part of the courtyard. It is a three-sided structure often delicately and artistically designed and ornamented, that opens onto the central garden (Mirmoghtadaee, 2009), designed to make the best use of sunlight in both winter and summer. In summer, the height of the walls prevents sunlight entering into the internal rooms, while during winter the sun's milder and more angled light is directed deeper inside the rooms (Ghobadian 2005). As we do now at the encouragement of our host, the summer months bring family and friends together here in the Iwan, to listen to poetry recitations while enjoying the evening breezes, and feast on the household's delightful offerings. During hot summer days if we are sitting inside of the house, ventilation is provided with *Badgirs* (wind-catchers). Badgirs are a traditional architectural element in Persia, their basic structure designed so that fresh air is brought into rooms while stale air is forced out. Different shapes and designs have slightly different functions; some Badgirs cool down the space simply via a convention system while others also rely on an evaporation system whereby air is cooled down before entering a room (Ghobadian, 2005). A sudden cool wind brings us out of our reverie, and we scurry inside for the remainder of the meal.

Figure 4. Iwan, photograph by Ms. Nasrin Fatahi, used with permission.

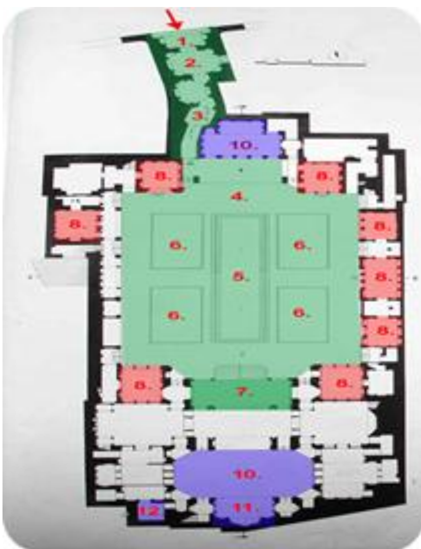

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Figure 5. Brojerdi-ha house first floor plan. Diagram drawing by author and original plan from Mansions of Kshan 1998: 36.

Hospitality and social gatherings are the most important aspects of social life in Iran (Shabani, 2011). Iranians believe that when a person enters someone's house at meal time, they are made welcome and invited to join

the household meal, explaining that the 'guest is the god's friend and beloved' (Shabani et al., 2011). Food is a creative and hospitable way to please guests, enticing us to enjoy our visit through our senses of smell and taste. We are invited to step into one of the main rooms, the Talar or Panj-Dari rooms,[x] far from the dust and smoke of kitchens where these delicious foods are made. As is tradition, we seat ourselves cross-legged on the floor around the edges of the tablecloth, the *Sofreh* (سفره), spread out over the vibrant colours of the Persian rug, and gaze hungrily on what is laid before us. The carpets on which we sit are not only a delight for the eye but also for the feet, the weave and knots of the design adding a tactile element to our feast. Moreover, each carpet has a different style that narrates a different story, and the mostly female designers, artists and carpet weavers who made these were inspired by nature, architecture, poetry and their knowledge of traditional stories to create these wonderful pieces. The room is decorated with a range of colourful carpets, *Poshti*,پشتی , *Lachaki*, لچکی, *Toranj*, ترنج, and other hand-crafted textiles. Yet it is not only the floor that gives pleasure to the eye; the surfaces of the walls are ornamented with stuccos and mirrors, paintings and tiles that dazzle us and enhance the jewel-like scene. Nor is the garden fully abandoned, its features framed by the Orosis (اُرُسی), or window-doors, that are themselves decorated with intricate lattice wood-work (*Grehsazi*,گره سازی) and inset with coloured glass. At different times of the day, when light passes through the glass, the room is filled with different colourful mixes. After our exclamations and sighs, we settle down to the remainder of our meal.

Iranian cuisine includes a wide variety of foods, reflecting the diverse cuisine of its thirty-one provinces. Shiraz is renowned for its *Kalam polo* (کلم پلو, cabbage rice, vegetables, turmeric, saffron and beef) (refer to Figure 6) while *Baghali ghatogh* (باقالی قاتوق, broad bean, dill, garlic, turmeric and egg) and *Mirzaghasemi* (میرزا قاسمی, eggplant, garlic, turmeric, saffron, egg, tomato and onion) are foods well-known Gilan dishes. Their preparation is kept hidden from us, yet we are know that the art of Iranian cooking is a sensual skill, relying on creativity and patience, as these sumptuous meals often take four or five hours to complete. All the senses play an important part in this, from relying on the taste buds when mixing different herbs and spices to pleasing the eye in arranging the accompaniments (*mokhalafat*) of fresh herbs, flat breads, white cheese (*Panir*), and walnut, cucumbers, tomatoes, onions, yogurt, vinegar and lemon juice. Balance is crucial to Iranian thought, the balance of hot and cold foods; of combining yogurt and mint, pomegranate with walnut. Even the sounds we hear are important in the routine of food preparation; following the habit of our parents, we too can recognize the best watermelon by hitting it with our fingers and listening to the sound it produces – once we hear a low, deep and drum-like sound we know we have found a will-ripened watermelon. Our feast tonight takes our thoughts back to *Yalda night* (شب یلدا) the ancient Persian celebration of the Winter Solstice, that marks out the longest night of the year and the first night of winter in the northern hemisphere. Yalda means birth and this night is believed to be the birth night of Mithra, Persian angle of sun, light, truth and love. Reciting poetry, feasting, telling stories, we had remained awake throughout the night, and welcomed the return of longer days. As the poet Saadi beautifully describes it, 'the true morning will not come until the Yalda Night is gone.'[xi] At last year's Yalda night we had similarly sat on cushions on the floor placed around a low table or *Korsi* (کرسی), close to the warmth of a heater along with a thick handcrafted blanket. Then we had been welcomed with hot tea, sugar cubes and Persian delights. To ensure we were well-supplied during the night, a samovar or heated metal container was placed beside the Korsi, and on the Koris was a copper tray filled with bowls of nuts, dried fruits (including fig, sultana, mulberry), fresh fruit (watermelon, pomegranate) and sweets.

Figure 6: Kalam Polo, photograph.

We had sat enthralled, listening to the great epic stories of Shahnameh (شاهنامه) by Ferdowsi (فردوسی), and the love stories of Khamseh (خمسه یا پنج گنج) by Nizami (نظامی گنجوی) often accompanied by musicians playing on the Tar, Setar or Santur. Yet even unaccompanied, the delicate musicality of the poems touched us deeply. Our host's home also contained paintings and mosaics depicting some of these poems such as the famous battle of Rostam and Sohrab from Shahnameh or the layla and Majnun love story,[xii] so we could look on images of these well-known tales. This evening was also an important time for the older members of the family to share their memories, stories and experiences with the younger family members. And we excitedly awaited our turn to have our future read through consulting the poems of Hafiz, a long-held custom of the Yalda celebration. People approach the host's grandfather with a silent question asking for guidance, and, randomly opening Hafiz's text, he answers their question through the poet's words.

Ah, the memories of that wonderful night! We turn back to tonight's meal and the conversation of those around us.

HOSPITALITY AND HOME PLACES

Architects and interior designers understand well that 'architectural forms produce specific emotional effects' (Fitzsimons, 2012), yet 'lived space' (Lefebvre, 1991; Bollnow, 2011) is more than the materiality of space; it is also how individuals experience these spaces. In presenting this (re)imagined visit to a traditional Iranian home we seek to invite the reader into understanding how home spaces are constituted through sociality. Our detailed ethnographic encounter points to the ways the spaces within the home foreground differing social relations. Moreover, these spatial differences also serve to construct public/private boundaries that are significant to the construction of our social identities. How these public and private spheres are defined and demarcated are interdependent (feminist scholars have pointed to the ways these boundaries are particularly important in terms of gender (Bowlby et al., 1987; Rose, 1993; Hayden, 2002; Blunt & Dowling, 2006).

When we are invited to an Iranian house we feel the hosts' care and attention long before we arrive in the main rooms of the house. Even at the start of our journey as we travelled through the city's streets and alleyways, traditional Iranian design and its construction serves to embrace, shelter and protect us from the often harsh environment (Pirnia, 2003). No matter whom we are or where we come from when we, *as guests*, whether that is invited or uninvited, known or unknown, step into an Iranian house we feel we were *expected*. As Ala Amjadi (2012) observes, Iranians have a long history in the practice of hospitality, one that reaches back over 3000 years. Positioned in terms of 'god's friend', guests are always welcome. We are offered numerous ways in which to see, hear, touch, taste and smell home in a planned and pleasurable way. Upon entry to the home, you are met with statements such as "you are always welcome", "treat this as your own house, please feel comfortable", and "you have brought love, light, bliss and prosperity to our home." Care for a guest's welfare includes warding off the evil eye through burning perfumed sticks. The garden is watered, the fountain working and birds singing. The best space in the garden and house is allocated to the guests. They are seated on comfortable cushions and carpets and positioned in sight of the main views to the garden. In summer the room is cooled down with wind-catchers and during winter Korsis keep guests warm. The smell of Persian spices, such as saffron, cinnamon and cardamom, fills the space. Colourful Persian food is served generously, first to the guests as a sign of love and respect, and the hosts ensure the guest's dish is always replenished. It is here, amongst this sensual plenitude that the hosts and guests share their stories, experiences and listen to music and poetry.

Recent scholarship in human geography has turned to the *immateriality* of space – the sensations, meanings and values that we attach to the material world – so as to interrogate how these experiences of place locates each of us within our social sphere. Our focus on the emotional and visceral aspects of home-making contributes to these discussions (Anderson, 2004; González, 2005; Rahmeier, 2012). Yet, in exploring these ideas of home we have used the example of a domestic social event, in this case a dinner, as a means to consider the ways in which architectural design, culture and the senses are brought together within the notion of hospitality. Jacques Derrida's (1993) examination of hospitality asks us to consider its contradictory impulse; the unconditional welcome of the other without first knowing who this other is, and the need to offer welcome in a way that recognizes the particularity of that person. Derrida defines these requirements of hospitality as 'an art and a poetics' such that 'an entire

politics depends on it and an entire ethics is determined in it' as quoted by Derrida (Naas, 2005). We suggest that the art and poetics of such hospitality is present within the sensual design of the traditional Iranian home.

In this paper we have sought to contribute to the scholarly work of home through an exploration of the everyday sensuality of place within the context of hospitality. In a traditional Iranian house all public, private and semi private spaces are creatively designed in ways that correspond to the central concerns of Iranian culture and lifestyle, to create the home so as to make its inhabitants and their guests as comfortable and enjoyable as possible (Haeri, 2010). Our recreation of a traditional shared meal in such an Iranian home is a means to suggest that the constitution of home and belonging are not simply *represented* through the ways in which the material world is constructed. Rather, home-making is a connection made to the *experiential* ways of being in place. As Edensor (2010) argues, in our everyday lives we share habits that constitute our daily rhythm of activities, and these become the basis for a wider sense of connection and belonging. Diverging from standard geographical takes on belonging, this form of belonging is not about marking spaces or bodies with symbols representing various social groups (Leib, 2002; Cresswell, 2004). We suggest that this approach is significant to understanding the social relationships that comprise home, as it uncovers the emotional and affective dimensions of such place-making.

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[i] خانه پروردی چه تاب آرد غم چندین غریب گفتمش مگذر زمانی گفت معذورم بدار (Ghazal 14).

[ii] Dr. Hossein Soltanzadeh, Dean of Architecture and Civil Engineering Faculty of the Qazvin Azad University, talks in some detail about this in an interview published in the newspaper, Hamshahri; refer to www.hamshahritraining.ir/news.aspx?id=2820

[iii] باز خرم گشت مجلس دلفروز خیز دفع چشم بد **اسپند** سوز. Again, the assembly has become delightful and cheerful ....rise! repel the evil eye burning **Espand** (translated by the author). Rumi (Masnavi-Manavi, book 6, part 27)

[iv] Peganum harmala

[v] This custom is derived from an earlier Zoroastrian tradition.

[vi] In some houses when the householder was not rich, they used to build a guestroom called Farvar (فروار) on top of the Darsar and Hashti with a separate staircase from Hashti (Pirnia 2003: 163).

[vii] Pen-name of the Persian Muslim poet, Abū Hamīd bin Abū Bakr Ibrāhīm (1145-1146 - c. 1221), meaning 'the perfumer.'

[viii] باغ ما در طرف سایه دانايي بود.
باغ ما جاي گره خوردن احساس و گیاه،
باغ ما نقطه برخورد نگاه و قفس و آینه بود.
باغ ما شاید ، قوسي از دایره سبز سعادت بود.

[ix] سحر به بوی گلستان دمی شدم در باغ   که تا چو بلبل بی‌دل کنم علاج دماغ
به جلوه گل سوری نگاه می‌کردم   که بود در شب تیره به روشنی چو چراغ
چنان به حسن و جوانی خویشتن مغرور   که داشت از دل بلبل هزار گونه فراغ
http://www.hafizonlove.com/divan/06/295.htm

[x] Rooms were called with the number of doors. Panj-dari is usually used for meeting and entertaining guests. Panj-Dari means a room with 5 doors (refer to figure 5). Talar is also another ornamented guest room and there is a place in Talars with a view to the garden for elderly and most respected people and it is called Balakhaneh (refer to figure 5).

[xi] صبح صادق ندمد تا شب یلدا نرود (Ghazal 264)

[xii] For a detailed study of these stories and miniatures, refer to Susan Scollay (ed) *Love and Devotion from Persia and Beyond* (2012).