

THE STRUCTURE OF AUTHORIZING IN NIMA YUSHIJ'S POETRY

THE STRUCTURE OF AUTHORIZING IN NIMA YUSHIJ'S POETRY:
A BAKHTINIAN READING

By MAHMOOD KHOSHCHEREH, B.A, M.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

© Copyright by Mahmood Khoshchereh, September 2011

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2011)
(English and Cultural Studies)

McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The Structure of Authoring in Nima Yushij's Poetry: a
 Bakhtinian Reading

AUTHOR: Mahmood Khoshchereh, B.A., M.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Joseph Adamson

NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 265

Abstract

This thesis employs Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of architectonics to examine the poetry of Nima Yushij, the father of "New Persian Poetry." The architectonic structure of Nima's poems presupposes an authorial position situated outside the whole of the work. Outsideness provides the author with the distance that is necessary for consummating the hero and all other elements inside the work's environment in determinate spatial and temporal boundaries. As Bakhtin puts it, only in this way can the author acquire a surplus of seeing that is required for adopting a valuational stance in relation the hero and the work as a whole. To Bakhtin, the author's valuational stance toward the hero is the essence of the aesthetic product. This valuational position vis-à-vis the other, which generates what Michael Holquist calls the "structure of authoring," is enacted on multiple levels in Nima's poems as the hero, and sometimes the narrator, also perform the authorial function vis-à-vis other characters inside the poem, i.e., fixing them in determinate spatial and temporal boundaries. Of course, from the author's perspective, the hero and the narrator are also situated inside the poem and occupy specific horizons in its environment. In this sense, their authoring activity is not a precisely aesthetic activity. Nevertheless, Nima utilizes the hero and the narrator' activity to foreground the structure of authoring inside the poem, to make its dynamics "viewable." This is a point that I will try to elucidate fully in the course of this study.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisory committee, an exceptional team that guided my writing patiently throughout an arduous and yet illuminating process. It has been a great honour learning from this extraordinary committee. Without their valuable support, I would not have experienced the many uplifting moments and fulfilling visions that occurred while writing my thesis. Their incisive recommendations and constructive comments were the beacons that lighted my path.

I would particularly like to express my gratitude to Dr. Joseph Adamson who generously supported and encouraged me in every step of writing this thesis. His magnanimous guidance and constant vigilance gave me a sense of purpose and direction without which I could not complete my thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Narsin Rahimieh and Dr. Jeffery Donaldson who played crucial roles in the completion of my work. Not only did they provide me with key advices throughout my writing, they also helped me to overcome all the obstacles that could hinder or prolong this process.

Contents

Introduction	3
Waiting in the Dark: “I Gaze Waiting for You”	14
Imprisoned in Rhythm: “The Amen Bird”	35
The Man on the Threshold: “The Moonlight”	60
Exile and Return: “Close the Door”	78
Once Upon a Time There Was a Neighbor: “In the Cold Wintry Night”	92
Silence and Cry: “The Raven”	113
The Illusion of Light: “The Moth of the Near Shore”	135
The Sorcerer and the Maiden: “Moonlight Rose”	152
The Trapper of Visions: “Rira”	170
The Third Circle of Consciousness: “Maneli”	180
A Stable View of Unstable Things: “Makhula”	207
Conclusion	221
Appendix	234

Introduction

Nima Yushij (1896-1960) is considered the father of what has come to be known as Sher-e Now (the New Poetry), a major poetic movement that, by undermining the conventions of classical Persian poetry, contributed to the emergence of modernism in Persian literature. Many critics, including Reza Baraheni, Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak and Kamran Talattof, have discussed different aspects of Nima's modernism while others, such as Taghi Pournamdarian and Majid Nafici, have examined Nima's poetry in its historical, social and political context. Taken together, the works of these critics produce a comprehensive account of the historical conditions and technical innovations that led to the formation of Nima's modernism. Although Nima's critics have provided valuable insights into his system of poetry and his response to historical circumstances, not all venues of critical approach to Nima's work are totally exhausted. My own method of approaching Nima will open the field for finding new ways of understanding and framing his poetry.

I borrow my methodology from Mikhail's Bakhtin's early work as it appears in *Art and Answerability*, a collection of articles edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov. For the reasons that I will explain fully in the successive chapters of this dissertation, Bakhtin's conceptions of "architectonics" and "structure of authoring" provide us with an exceptionally productive model to grasp the manner by which Nima constructs his poems. From the perspective of

Bakhtinian architectonics, what matters most is the author's relationship to his hero and the way the work is structured in perspectival terms. Critics, such as Mehdi Akhavan Sales, Paul Losensky and Shapour Jorkesh, offer penetrating observations regarding Nima's aesthetic theory, his use of point of view, and his objective method, and I am indebted to them for helping me formulate my own views. However, there is still a pressing need for a systematic and large-scale theoretical approach to Nima's poetry in aesthetic terms. On the grounds that will be explained throughout this dissertation, an architectonic approach can offer one of the most effective ways of examining the relations that shape the environment of Nima's poems and make valuational relations between the author and his work possible.

As Holquist in his introduction to *Art and Answerability* suggests, architectonics refers to the "*situated* awareness that individual human beings experience in the unique sites they occupy in the world at a particular time and in a particular place" (xxii). Constrained by our particular spatial and temporal situatedness, our perception of the world is essentially perspectival. This means that the perception of one person always differs from the perception of another person. Two consciousnesses can never coincide because they can never occupy the same unique horizon (the same position in space and time) in the world. Of course, the spatial and temporal boundaries which delimit a person in a distinct horizon within an environment may collapse if he enters the horizon of

another person and experiences pure co-consciousness with him. Pure co-consciousness hinders aesthetic productivity by destroying the outsideness that one consciousness must maintain vis-à-vis another consciousness.

To Bakhtin, an “absolute consciousness, a consciousness that has nothing transgredient to itself, nothing situated outside itself and capable of delimiting it from outside,” cannot be aestheticized (*Art* 22). An aesthetic event occurs “when there are two participants present; it presupposes two noncoinciding consciousnesses” (23). For a work to be aestheticized, the author must always maintain an outside position in relation to the hero and the work as a whole. If the author coincides with the hero or finds himself standing next to the hero as antagonist, “the aesthetic event ends and *ethical* event begins” (23). Thus, at any given moment of aesthetic activity, the author “must not lose his valuational point of support *outside* the hero” (17). But how does the author establish this outside or extralocal position?

According to Bakhtin, an individual can combine with the world in two possible ways: either from within as his “*horizon*” or from outside him as his “*environment*” (97). From within, objects stand over against him as the objects of his own “cognitive-ethical and practical” directedness in the “open event of being” (97). In this situation, he views the world as the object of his acts: “acts of thinking, acts of feeling, acts of speaking, [and] acts of doing” (98). Since from within he relates to everything as the object of his acts, his consciousness does

not recognize the spatial and temporal boundaries that set these objects apart from him in their “presently given makeup.” As Bakhtin puts it, “my relationship to each object within my horizon is never a consummated relationship” (98). Rather, it is “a task-to-be-accomplished” in “an open event” that never comes to rest and in which “my situation must change at every moment” (98). That is why “the center of gravity in this world is located in the future, in what is desired, in what ought to be, and *not* in the self-sufficient givenness of an object” (98). From within, my horizon is incapable of being finalized positively in determinate boundaries. And since the unfinalizability of my horizon will destroy any stable sense of *my self*, it is impossible for me to relate to myself from within my horizon axiologically or in terms of value.

What, however, can consummate my horizon in a particular space and time is its inclusion in an environment. In terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, two distinct unities or structures co-exist in an aesthetic work: the unity of the work’s “object-world” and the unity of “the hero’s lived *horizon*.” The unity of a work’s object-world is the principle that constitutes its environment. Bakhtin conceives of a work’s environment as “an outward formal combination of plastic and pictorial features” in which characters exist in determinate horizons and negotiate their differences into specific relations (99). A work’s environment gives recognizable features to the outer and inner boundaries of each character by placing him in a unique site in a particular background. I can relate to someone in terms of value

only when he is situated in stable boundaries. The environment in an aesthetic work bestows stable boundaries on characters and, therefore, makes valuational relationship to them possible. Architectonics is the term Bakhtin uses to describe the author's axiological relationship to the characters and objects that exist in the work. According to Bakhtin, a work's environment enables me to see "*all*" of the other in his "exhaustive completeness as a thing among other things *in* the world" (36). It constructs a setting in which specific relations of value can be formed both between the participants that occupy unique sites inside the work and between the author and the work as a whole. It should also be added that, as a purely aesthetic principle, a work's environment is "independent of meaning" (99).

The concepts of horizon and environment, as they are defined by Bakhtin, play a major role in shaping Nima's poetry. Nima's work intends to depict an activity which, on the one hand, makes relations between different horizons inside the poem's environment possible and, on the other hand, enables the author to take an evaluative stance toward the poem as a whole. Basically, the author's major function is to consummate the hero and other pictorial and plastic features in the poem by the transgredient moments that he introduces from outside, i.e., a background, an exterior, etc. In Bakhtin's words, "all constituents of aesthetic consummation are axiologically transgredient to the hero himself " (23). They are not "organic in the hero's self-consciousness" but are produced by

the author's surplus of seeing that, at each given moment, will see and know something that the hero cannot see and know (23).

To clarify this point, Bakhtin explains that parts of a person's body are "inaccessible to his gaze (his head, his face and its expression)"; he is unable to see "the world behind his back," as well as "a whole series of objects and relations" that exist around him (23). This means that he has no clear idea of how his "outward expressedness" appears in the background that is formed behind and around him. According to Bakhtin, only another consciousness, which maintains a position of outsideness vis-à-vis this person, can invest him with outward expressedness, a condition by which he is perceived as occupying a unique site that separates him from other objects in a particular background. By seeing the sun that is setting behind this person's back or the muscles that twitch on his face, this other consciousness acquires "the excess of seeing" by which it can enframe him in particular spatial and temporal boundaries within an environment. This excess of seeing, which is essential to the aesthetic activity, "is founded in the uniqueness and irreplaceability of [the] place" of the author in the world and his outsideness vis-à-vis the hero (23).

The author's excess of seeing vis-à-vis the hero enables him to consummate the latter. As Holquist tells us, consummation in Bakhtin's terminology means "shaping" or "finishing-off" (xxiv). The author needs to finish-

off the hero in determinate boundaries in a specific background in order to perceive the distinct relations that the hero forms with his environment.

The author must stand as the other vis-à-vis the hero and the work as a whole. As Bakhtin suggests, from within the hero objects do not “*surround*” him “in their presently given makeup” and “presently given value”; instead, they are the objects of [his] own cognitive-ethical directedness in living [his] life within an open, still risk-fraught event of being, whose unity, meaning, and value are not *given* but imposed as a task still to be accomplished. (*Art* 98)

That is why it is only the author who can bestow a given form on the hero from outside; only then can the hero take on “an intuitively palpable artistic individuality (character, type, personal situation, etc.)” (98). As Bakhtin puts it, both “the spatial form of a human being’s outward existence” and his “aesthetically valid *temporal* form” develop from the “excess of seeing” that another soul possesses (104). By fixing the flux of the hero’s inner life through the introduction of transgradient moments (a background, an exterior), the author’s surplus of seeing gives the hero a “full outwardness” and a stable and recognizable form in space and time. The enactment of this structure of authoring is a recurrent activity in Nima’s poems, but it is not performed only by the author.

Outsideness often exists on multiple levels in Nima’s poems. The hero, and at times the narrator, is sometimes placed in an outside position vis-à-vis

other characters in the poem. This outsideness enables the hero to consummate other horizons in the poem as a precondition for entering into axiological relationship with them. Only through such consummation can he stop the chaotic, random and eventful life that defines the existence of other participants within their horizons. In this sense, consummation, or placing in determinate boundaries, is an authorial strategy that Nima's heroes also perform in order to fix the flux of disparate elements that they encounter in the poem's event into a meaningful whole.

Within an architectonic structure, "everything must be approached from the point of view," and point of view is always "situated" (Holquist xxix). The outsideness that the hero acquires inside Nima's poems enables him to perceive other horizons in the work from a markedly situated point of view. What is implicit in this perspectival activity is the particular valuational standpoint that emanates from a particular position in space and time. Of course, on a higher level of aesthetic activity, and from the author's outside position, the hero is also a participant in the event that takes place inside the poem and, in this sense, cannot step outside it. Thus, we must view the outsideness of the hero or the narrator vis-à-vis other participants in the poem as a device which Nima utilizes to foreground the structure of authoring that shapes the poem on all levels.

What consummates the work as a whole and determines its ultimate aesthetic solidity and value is the author's outside position. As Bakhtin points out,

“the author’s consciousness is a consciousness of a consciousness” (*Art* 12).

The author “*encompasses*” and “*consummates* the consciousness and the world of a hero by supplying those moments which are in principle transgredient to the hero’s consciousness” (12). According to Bakhtin, not only does the author see and know “everything seen and known by each hero individually,” “he also sees and knows *more* than they do” and what is “in principle inaccessible to them” (12). Nima’s authorial surplus of seeing enables him to enframe his heroes in determinate spatial and temporal boundaries in order to make axiological relationship to them possible.

As was mentioned above, this structure of authoring,” which appears as a “struggle to effect a whole out of the potential chaos of parts,” takes place on multiple levels in Nima’s work. Both in terms of the author’s relationship to the poem and the relationships that are formed between diverse horizons inside the poem, there is an activity to consummate and give finished form to what is perceived. The hero’s consciousness, his object-world, and his cognitive and ethical activity are enclosed within a band by the author’s “*consummating* consciousness” of him. But on another level inside the poem, the hero’s consciousness in turn encloses the consciousnesses of other participants in the poem. Of course, the form that this activity assumes and its dynamics vary from poem to poem, but its ultimate consequence is the creation of an architectonic structure.

Inside Nima's poems, the surplus of seeing that the hero acquires in relation to other participants provides the basis for a particular sphere of his self-activity. He contemplates a character, enters his horizon, co-experiences his life form within with him, and then returns to his own horizon. Having co-experienced the inner life of another character, the hero, after returning to his own horizon, can also perceive that character's outward aspect by enframing him in an environment. In this sense, the hero partakes of a double perspective vis-à-vis other characters because he can conjoin the other's inner life with his exterior in a well-defined background, something that the other from within his horizon is incapable of accomplishing. This surplus of vision enables the hero to complete the other precisely in those respects in which the other cannot complete himself.¹

As Bakhtin might have said about the role of the hero in Nima's poems, the hero, after returning to his own horizon, "fills in" the horizon of the character that he has contemplated and renders that horizon "complete, without at the same time forfeiting [its] distinctiveness" (25). The hero empathizes with another character in the poem and, by projecting himself into him, sees his world from within him and through his eyes. He then returns to his own place outside that character to "fill in" the latter's horizon "through the excess of seeing which opens out from his place outside him" (25). In this way, the typical Niamic hero

¹ This function is also sometimes enacted by the narrator as, for example, we can see in "Moonlight Rose."

enframes other participants in the poem by creating “a consummating environment for [them] out of this excess of [his] own seeing, knowing, desiring, feeling” (25).

Although my work relies heavily on Bakhtin’s theory of architectonics and the way the act of authoring structures Nima’s poems, I have begun each chapter by explicating the views of at least one critic about Nima’s poetry. This methodology has many advantages. The works of these critics provide a comprehensive background for entering Nima’s poems. At the same time, everywhere possible, I have tried to find a starting point for my own discussions in the works of these critics. The inclusion of their views injects a sense of balance in the present study by reflecting their particular concerns and perspectives on a range of topics that Nima’s poetry offers. Taken together, these works display a major effort to build an invaluable body of scholarship on Nima.

I should point out that all citations from Nima’s poems in this study are my own translations. These translations are not in any sense definitive, but I have used them throughout to maintain stylistic consistency. All other translations from Persian texts by various scholars are also my own translations. I should also add that I have focused on particular poems in this dissertation because these poems yield themselves better than many other poems by Nima to a Bakhtinian

analysis. They consist of different levels of consciousness and, therefore, can be grasped productively in architectonic terms.

Waiting in the Dark: “I Gaze Waiting for You”

Reza Baraheni in *Tala dar Mes* (Gold in Copper) specifies four different categories of which the poet must be acutely aware. These categories generate four different “missions” or responsibilities that the poet must resolutely perform: 1) the historical mission which demands of the poet to “know in what era or historical moment he is located”; 2) the geographical mission which makes it “necessary for the poet to know in which land or country he lives”; 3) the social mission that emphasizes the poet’s commitment to his social class and social environment and compels him to preserve a “free-thinking spirit” by opposing prejudice, constraining ideologies, “despotism, falsehood and tyranny”; 4) the literary mission that entrusts the poet with the task of knowing both “the literary history” and his own particular literary era, even as he struggles “bravely to introduce necessary formal innovations” and “include the content which he considers vital in his poems” (636-37). Within these parameters, which are the criteria of a poet’s achievements, Baraheni evaluates Nima’s poetic career.

What all these responsibilities emphasize is that the poet should be “contemporaneous” with all aspects of his own time. Only then can he elevate poetry to new heights and fulfill his missions before his people (369). According to Baraheni, Nima’s profound awareness of these four responsibilities made his poetry “the mirror of our era” (645). Firmly rooted in his native land and intensely conscious of the way nature and its elements can embody man’s predicaments

and echo his sufferings, Nima sees a direct correspondence between all facets of nature and social situations. This is, for instance, the case with “Daru’ag” (The Tree-Frog 1952) in which the natural environment (the dry fields that belong to the narrator and his neighbor) reflects an oppressive social condition. In contrast, the tree-frog and its song come to symbolize a lingering sense of hope for deliverance. As Baraheni tells us, we must understand nature in Nima’s poems in a double sense because on one level it exists for its own sake and on another level it evokes the poet’s social ethos. As an example, Baraheni cites “Hengam Keh Ger-yeh Midahad Saz” (When Crying Begins 1948), where an angry sea, striking blows on its own face, exists primarily as a natural element. At the same time, it symbolizes man’s grievous circumstances by “echoing [his] mourning in society” (645).

Baraheni argues that classical Persian poetry was constrained by a very limited repertoire which reduced everything to the way “the relationship between the mentor and the disciple,” or the lover and the beloved, was played out in the poem; this relationship could assume either earthly or a mystical forms (637). What classical poetry had cast aside was nature in its concrete sense and the life of man in society (638). The true poet, however, is a “guide to his people and a reformer of the soul” who, exposing oppression, celebrates the struggle of his people against tyrants and gives voice to their ideals in his poetry (643). This is

because the fate of the poet, who lives in society, is “one and the same” with “the fate of the people who live around him” (638).

To illustrate this point, Baraheni refers to “Hast Shab” (Night Is 1955) as an example of how Nima performs his geographical and social responsibility by linking his natural environment to bleak and stifling social circumstances (645). In this poem, Nima delineates night as a “bloating body” which stagnates in the air and generates a dampening effect on the speaker’s life and his surrounding environment. On the most immediate level, this night manifests the humid and damp quality that is specific to the nights in the province of Mazandaran, Nima’s birthplace in northern Iran. On the symbolic level, it conjures up the atmosphere of terror and repression that had dominated social and political life in Iran in Nima’s times.

This night creates an extremely gloomy and muggy condition in which “no lost soul can find his way.” Baraheni suggests that Nima compresses social and natural dimensions in the symbol of night and, in this way, reveals his own “historical responsibility,” chiefly because this is the condition that “has prevailed in all eras” (646). As a guide and awakener of souls, the poet, in a night in which “no one can see anything,” “judges his natural environment and social conditions” and offers insights into their despotic structures (646). This is because he holds the pulse of contemporary history in his hand and his heart beats with the spirit of the era (654). Nima shares the suffering of his people and links his dilemmas to

theirs; he knows the social history of his people and the afflictions that have burdened his generation. At the same time, as Baraheni puts it, Nima firmly believes that tyranny will collapse one day (647). To Baraheni of *Gold in Copper*, the poet's foremost duty is "to expose social conditions and show the fear, ugliness, and insanity that dominate in his environment" (656). By revealing the frightening and macabre aspects of the night, the poet makes it recognizable and prepares the way for its destruction (656). This is how the poet carries out his interconnected missions.

In a very interesting discussion, Baraheni speaks in some length about Nima's social symbolism and sheds light on its peculiarities by a penetrating comparison with Mallarme's symbolism. Nima's symbolism differs from that of Mallarme, chiefly because he adds a "spirit of descriptive realism" to "the symbolism of his own era" (662). Baraheni asserts that language in Mallarme's poetry progresses according to the logic of poetic imagination and becomes resonant through a chain of connected metaphors (667). In other words, Mallarme's poems do not present us with a core or central symbol whose movement and relationship with other features in the poem establish the intended meaning. In fact, the central symbol is always absent in his poetry. Instead, the poem's significance is engendered by relationships between multiple symbols, none having an actual centrality. To illustrate Mallarme's method, Baraheni uses the example of a spider's web "from which we must infer and

understand the spider itself”; the spider, which logically must be the poem’s central symbol, is concealed in such a subtle fashion “behind its web that it is impossible to distinguish and separate it from the web” (667).

Citing Andre Breton, Baraheni contends that Mallarme is “the poet of the vacuum” and “absence of things,” a poet whose all-out subjectivity disconnects him from the external world (668). In Mallarme’s poems, words are not “signs for meanings and things”; rather, they exist for their own sake and yet, when they combine, they generate a powerful impact (668). In this sense, Mallarme moves toward a kind of “hermiticism” from which Nima always distances himself by a characteristic shift of focus to nature and society. And while Mallarme weaves a private and hermetic body of symbols and metaphors that take on significance through the poem’s inner movements and relationships, Nima transfers his poetry from a private realm to the “public sphere”; we can see this clearly in “Morph-e Amin” (The Amen Bird 1951) (673). Unlike Mallarme, Nima introduces his symbols at the outset of his poems and then gradually charges them with objectivity and social significance.² At the same time, Nima never loses sight of

²Leonard Paul Alishan in “Trends in Modernist Persian Poetry” agrees with Baraheni that, unlike Mallarme, “Nima is very socially oriented and conscious.” Alishan explains that while Mallarme “creates the symbol in the reader’s mind after giving the sense-impressions which [a particular] object has created in his mind,” Nima “begins with the symbol, i.e., the object [itself].” According to Alishan, Nima believes that “a literature that has not had a tie with politics has not existed in

the individual integrity of his symbols and their value on their own terms (673).

Nevertheless, Baraheni seems to suggest that Nima's symbols realize their full potential and supreme rigor only when they begin to point to social and historical conditions (673).

Baraheni holds that Nima's symbols originate from collective rituals and sensibilities. He likens the symbol in Nima's works to "the center of a solar system around which other planets of images shine with force or weakness to participate in the beauty and perfection of the whole system" (677). Consider the tree-frog and the amen bird, two symbols that epitomize the hopes and aspirations of a people. Despite their centrality, these symbols exert their truly transformative impact only when they are seen as the crystallization of collective ideals. They are answers to the prayers and supplications of a collective and, as a consequence, take on their particular meaning in relation to that collective. It is

any period and is a lie." Alishan also cites Nima on the nature of symbols: "The more natural [...] your symbols are, the more natural [...] the depth of your poem will be." Alishan argues that this statement brings Ezra Pound to mind who believed "that the natural object is always the adequate symbol."

Citing Baraheni, Alishan points out that "unlike Mallarme, [Nima] always introduces his symbol in the beginning of a Symbolist poem." Alishan offers "The Amen Bird" as an example of this approach to symbol. He continues that when "Nima introduced his symbols, he never forgets them. And it is because he has his symbols constantly in mind that his poems have, in Baraheni's words, "the necessary unity"." See Alishan, pages 14 and 15.

in this sense that we must understand Baraheni's point about collective rituals as the origin of Nima's symbols.

"The Tree-frog" offers a perfect example of how Nima's symbols can derive their force and energy from collective rituals. According to local farmers in Mazandaran, the tree-frog is the harbinger of impending rain. When the tree-frog begins to sing, it announces the good tidings that the approaching rain will revive the dry fields. In the eyes of the collective, the amen bird is also a "sign of the awakening day of victory" over oppression and injustice. Besides, the fact that the Nimaic symbol has "the structure of a story" convinces Baraheni that Nima's symbols yield themselves to "interpretation in a mythical ethos" (678). This mythical ethos infuses Nima's symbols with a "tribal/ethnic" spirit which points to the crucial role of the collective in his poems:

Nima exhibits the magical clarity of poetry so profoundly that parts of his poetry are transformed into rituals and slogans that express his ethnic roots, as if tribal wishes had been refined and crystallized in his poems and words. (674)

Baraheni considers the creation and perpetuation of myths as part of the poet's historical mission. He envisions the poet as being situated in a "particular imaginary situation" that provides him with a vantage point from which he can compress "all historical parallels in the form of a single myth he has created" (801). In this context, the first myth participates in the formation of the second

myth and the first and second myths are incorporated by a third myth (802). This process can continue endlessly as each myth absorbs and expands the myths that have preceded it. According to Baraheni, as this “formation and transformation” ensures “the continuity of a mythical identity,” it keeps the poet deeply aware of the history of his people and the continual oppression they have endured throughout centuries; it gives the poet a profound insight into the sufferings, despairs, and hopes of his people in all eras (803).

From here to the pedestal on which Nima can wear the mantle of a “social poet” is a short distance. According to Baraheni, Nima in poems such as “Ay Adamha” (Hey Humans 1941) and “Morgh-e Gham” (The Bird of Sorrow 1938) expresses a crippling sense of despair that, in a collapsing environment, has subjugated the body and soul of his people: “[Nima] is the nightingale that sits on ruins and mourns for the misery and anguish of his tribe through metaphors” (675). Nima taps the unconscious of the masses and allows their deepest wishes, which are repressed by “intimidation and tyranny,” to surface. That is why “Nima’s ‘I’ is the ‘I’ of all of us” (676). If Nima in a poem such as “Vay Bar Man” (Woe and Wellaway 1939) does not know “where to hang his tattered coat [in this dark night],” he only expresses the general condition of his society in which everyone else is as oppressed as the poet (677). Thus, Nima’s poetry gives reflection to what Baraheni calls “social individuality through words in the world” (724).

Baraheni believes that three elements shape a poem: 1) “external form” which includes rhyme, music and meter, whether it is modeled on *aruz*³ meters or not; 2) inner or subjective form which includes the way metaphors, symbols, examples, figurative language, indirections and myths are combined to create a harmonious whole; 3) and finally, meaning or content (819). Of these three

³ One of the best discussions of *owzan-e aruzi* (aruz meters) in classical Farsi poetry is carried out in Houman Sarshar’s “The Anxiety of Remembrance: The Shift from Allegory to Symbol in the Poetry of Coleridge, Baudelaire, and Nima Yushij.” Sarshar points out that classical Persian meters include 19 main meters which then branch out to around 170 variations. The basic metric foot in these 19 meters is called “*rokn* or *afa’il*,” each of which is constituted by “a particular pattern of long and short syllables or quantities.” As an example, Sarshar discusses the *moteghareb* meter, a basic meter in aruz system. “Each hemistich in the *moteghareb* meter is made up of four consecutive repetition of the foot *fā’ūlōn*: one short syllable, followed by two long ones. Thus, a hemistich in the *moteghareb* meter reads *fā’ūlōn fā’ūlōn fā’ūlōn fā’ūlōn*.”

Sarshar then discusses the *moteghareb-e mosamman-mahfuz* meter, one of the possible variations of the *moteghareb* meter which reads “*fā’ūlōn fā’ūlōn fā’ūlōn fā’ūl*.” As we can see here, “the last foot of the basic meter in the hemistich (*fā’ūlōn*) is replaced with a different yet homogeneous foot (*fā’ūl*), thus removing the last long syllable to create a qualitatively shorter variation.” Sarshar also points out that all “the 189 meters of classical Persian poetry are similarly formulated through rotation, elimination, or addition of long or short syllables in given feet of one of the 19 basic meters.” For a more detailed discussion of *aruz*, see Sarshar’s “The Anxiety of Remembrance,” page 178.

constituting aspects, subjective form performs the most vital function in structuring the poem:

Subjective form is the environment in which the poem moves and advances and takes things and feelings along with it. At one point, images grow and blossom, move side by side, or diverge from one another. At another point, they rise to a climax, connect with each other and create their own subjective peculiarities. In examining subjective form, a poem's reader deals with the poet's feeling, thought and imagination and he wants to understand what attitude the poet has taken toward things... This subjective form is not the poem's content but the movement of that content and shows the relationship that things build between themselves in the poem. The subjective form is what gives coherence to a poem or destroys its solidity and unity. (719-20)

One point is crucial here; while prompting the movement of the images in the poem, subjective form also organizes these movements as parts of a single poetic experience. Baraheni describes subjective form as "the poem's image-oriented form" which enables us to see more lucidly the poet's "image-filled worldview" (720). To see these images with clarity and recognizing their organic relations with one another in the poem is one way of stating the unifying function of subjective form. Seen this way, subjective form performs a kind of

architectonic function in Nima's poetry that Baraheni, following Nima, calls "harmony," an ordered relationship between content and formal structures (819).⁴

Baraheni's definition of harmony resembles what Bakhtin describes as the architectonics of an aesthetic work. Evidently, the creation of this architectonics requires the author's organizing activity which can be achieved only if he

⁴ Mohamamd Shafi'ee Kadkani in *Advar-e Sher-e Farsi: Az Enghelab-e Mashruteh ta Soghut-e Saltanat* (The Eras of Farsi Poetry: From the Constitutional Period to the Downfall of Monarchy) also discusses "inner" or "subjective form" in Nima's poetry. According to Shafi'ee Kadkani, Persian poems before Nima, including ghazals and qasidehs, except in rare cases, consisted of "a group of scattered experiences which were unified only by the poem's surface form." By surface form, Shafi'ee Kadkani refers to rhymes, metric pattern and other similar formal features that are externally visible. He points to certain poems by classical Persian poets in which the poet may speak of "twenty different experiences" or "emotional states" in "twenty different couplets." The classical poet did not care much about "inner coherence" or organic connection of these emotional states with one another. What mattered to him was adherence to lines of equal length, a specific meter and consistent use of rhymes (125).

In contrast, Nima shifted the focus to "organic unity" between the poem's external form and the "the meaning and experience" that it conveyed. According to Shafi'ee Kadkani, harmony between the parts, which was generated by Nima's use of subjective form and inner structure, freed the poem from "unrelated moments." In Shafi'ee Kadkani's words, in old poems one could see "lyricism and love, admonishment and advice, mysticism and praise side by side," but in a Nima's poem, "from beginning to end, a single experience or different facets of a single emotional state are depicted by means of the image." See Shafi'ee Kadkani, pages 125 and 126.

maintains an outside position vis-à-vis the whole work and its events. As Baraheni tells us, traditional Persian poetry tended to favor images that had an autonomous existence and did not depend on other images in the same poem for the clarification or articulation of their meaning. There was no organic connection between images in a poem and each image was perfectly self-sufficient. Nima counters this tendency by tying the meaning and resonance of one image to other images to create a unified impact. The cohering of various parts in a unified whole to generate a singular impact was basically the function that harmony performed in Nima's poetry. At the same time, harmony, as an ordered relationship between various features and horizons in the poem, implies that each feature or horizon should be finalized in determinate boundaries in the poem's environment. Otherwise, the very notion of harmony between distinct parts becomes meaningless. Harmony then presupposes the finalization of boundaries and the way these boundaries stand in definite relation to one another in the work.

According To Bakhtin, aesthetic culture is "a culture of boundaries" that is "enveloped by a warm atmosphere of deepest trust" (*Art* 203). One can easily equate this state of "deepest trust" between boundaries, of positing relationships that are stable and definite in the text, with what Nima and Baraheni describe as harmony. As Bakhtin asserts, the establishment of "the *boundaries* of man and his world (outer as well as *inner* boundaries)" depends on "the existence of a

firm and secure position outside of him” (203). Without the transgredient moments that an outside consciousness (the consciousness of the author) introduces in a work, all boundaries in that work will be diffused and indistinct. As Holquist puts it, since “I” is “co-terminus with consciousness,” it cannot delimit itself in a temporal and spatial specificity (xxix). It lives an eventful life in a kind of “perpetual present” that has no beginning and no end (xxix). That is why it is not possible for me to enframe myself, to perceive myself, in a background.

In Bakhtinain architectonics, the enframing activity is always performed by the other. While I see the world from a “horizon,” the other perceives me in an “environment.” From within my horizon, my “self” is a “project” that requires work (xliv); it is a task that is yet to be accomplished, a kind of in-progress consciousness that is oriented toward the future. In this situation, my temporal and spatial boundaries are dispersed and undeterminable. For example, I cannot see what is behind me or the particular way in which surrounding objects frame me. It is only the other that can perceive me in clear spatial and temporal boundaries that are separated from the boundaries of other objects in the same environment. In this sense, my uniqueness in the world is a gift that the other bestows on me as he makes me “viewable” by enframing me in an environment. My viewability depends on acquiring stable features which materialize when the other finalizes me in distinct boundaries. To become viewable is to be placed in definite spatial and temporal boundaries (*Art* 206). Only then can the other

consummate and give a finished form to me as a meaningful whole; and only then can he take an evaluative stance toward me. Thus, as Holquist puts it, Bakhtin “treats the activity of perception as the structure of authoring” (xxx).

One of the poems that Baraheni discusses in *Gold in Copper* is “To Ra Man Chashm Dar Raham” (I gaze Waiting for You 1957). Baraheni offers a number of valuable insights into this poem:

We must pay attention to the movement of images, to those shadows that are plunged in blackness and the night and nightly waiting and the valleys which are like dead snakes and the nuphar whose hand circles around and entraps the mountain cypress. If we do not notice these images, we do not feel the spirit of waiting that prevails over the poem; the meaning is hidden in the all-encompassing organization of these images. (723)

Every image in the poem (darkness, death-like sleep, entrapment) elucidates the nature of the narrator’s waiting. And the poem achieves its total effect and the fullness of its harmony through the cumulative effect of the distinct, and yet related, impressions that these images communicate.

From the author’s outside position, each image is depicted in viewable terms by being constrained in determinate spatial and temporal boundaries. While all actions in “I gaze Waiting for You” take place at the time of night, each incident transpires in a different horizon within the poem’s environment:

At night, when I gaze waiting for you,
When the shadows on *talajan* branches absorb darkness,
And that fills your spurned admirers with plenty of sorrow,
I Gaze waiting for you.

At night, in that moment when the valleys sleep like dead snakes,
In that turn when the nuphar's hand entraps the foot of mountain
cypress,
If you remember me or not, I never forget you,
I gaze waiting for you.

The shadows fall and twist over the *talajan* branches, the valley stretches like long dead snakes over the landscape and the nuphar entraps the mountain cypress with its hand. Each of these events occurs as a separate incident in a determinate horizon. And each horizon is occupied by the participants that engage in a particular self-activity. At the same time, the speaker is situated in a unique place in this environment as he both observes and is affected by the events that unfold in distinct horizons. In the role of the observer, he functions as a unifying consciousness that establishes architectonic relationships between various horizons in the poem's environment. To him, they all become aspects of a single event, the related facets of a terrifying night.

If this environment communicates an unmistakable sense of oppression, entrapment and death-like stasis, it is because the speaker consummates its images in fixed boundaries. At the same time, the combination and ordering of these images by the speaker, or establishing harmony between them, brings into existence a unique atmosphere with decided and conspicuous features. The unity of the poem's atmosphere and the sense of oppression that it evokes derive its force from the aggregate effect of these images. To be effective in this way, images must be embodied or, in Bakhtin's words, receive a form (*Art* 200). In Bakhtin's view, form is something that can be bestowed on a person or object only from outside; it is the result of consummation in determinate boundaries.

The artistic event as a form-giving activity involves two participants: "one is passively real, the other is active" (200). As Bakhtin's suggests, in an aesthetic work the one who bestows form is the author and the one who receives it is the hero. But on another level, the author can foreground this form-giving activity by making it the thematic center of his work; he can make it viewable by re-enacting its operation as the central event of his work. This is one way for the author to introduce transgradient moments in the work, by showing how form is imposed from outside through the very events that take place in the poem. Within this framework, the speaker imposes form on various activities that transpire in disparate horizons in "I Gaze Waiting for You." He consummates each of the poem's horizons as a fixed image and then builds the poem's atmosphere

through their combined effect. In this sense, the speaker reenacts the structure of authoring inside the poem by creating its environment and giving it a fixed and recognizable identity.

To the speaker, the nuphar, the cypress, the sleeping valley that resembles dead snakes, the shadows that descend on the *talajan* branches, all become aspects of a unitary landscape that is perilously treacherous. It is only by standing outside the different horizons of this landscape, all taken together, that the speaker can enframe them in the form of a single experience. This finalizing view makes it possible for him to take an evaluative stance toward all images in the poem as the related aspects of a single human or historical condition. The speaker's anxious tone, which both reflects his sense of waiting and transmits the reverberations of this sinister landscape, signals his axiological stance toward this environment.

On another level, and from the author's angle of vision, the speaker does not really stand outside the poem. He is just as integrated in the poem's environment as other objects. That means that he also occupies a distinct horizon in the poem's environment that allows the author, from outside, to consummate him as a character with recognizable features. If the nuphar, for example, is finalized in terms of its entrapping movement, what consummates the speaker is his act of waiting. The attribute of waiting places him in a definite relationship with other participants in the poem's architectonics and imbues his

tone with a particular coloration that could not otherwise exist. From the author's outside position, the poem's objects and images become the features that constitute the speaker's background, and the author utilizes these features to enframe the speaker's sense of waiting. In other words, the actions, which give a determinate form to other horizons in the poem, create a context for the speaker's act of waiting; they give it specificity in space and time. Thus, we come to see the speaker as a person who, surrounded by darkness, death, and entrapment, waits in anticipation for someone to arrive.

All participants in "I Gaze Waiting for You" are defined in terms of the role they perform in the dark and ill-boding atmosphere that constitutes the poem as a single whole. At the same time, characterized by determinate features, each participant is situated in a unique site in existence which partakes of a specific "worldview" that organizes and unifies its action: the narrator waits, the nuphar entraps, the valley sleeps like a dead snake, and the branches are darkened by shadows. The worldview, as Bakhtin formulates it, "imparts unity to a life's act-performing directedness to meaning—the unity of a life's answerability, the unity of its going beyond itself, of surmounting itself" (205). The worldview is the product of an intently meaning-directed life as it is lived from within one's horizon; it transpires on the cognitive and ethical plane where life is eventful and unfinalized and is seen as a project to be-yet-completed.

On the cognitive and ethical plane, my consciousness lacks the outsideness that prevents it from coinciding with another consciousness. As Bakhtin puts it, an aesthetic event can occur “only when there are two participants present; it presupposes two noncoinciding consciousnesses” (22). If the consciousness of the contemplator coincides with the consciousness of the contemplated, “the aesthetic event ends and *ethical* event begins” (23). We then end up with something akin to a “polemical tract, manifesto, speech of accusation or of praise and gratitude, invective, confession as self-accounting, etc” (23). If I do not coincide with the other, I can utilize transgredient details to enframe him in a background and, therefore, place him in determinate boundaries. In this way, the other takes on a “bodied” and recognizable form to which I can relate axiologically or in terms of value. I can never take an evaluative stance toward my own worldview because I experience it as an aspect of my own “act-performing consciousness”; I can never enframe it from an objectifying distance as something outside me.

Worldview lacks the consummating function of aesthetic activity because it in principle negates the givenness of the other. It obliterates “the present of the object for the sake of its future,” or to put it more simply, “it dissolves within itself or subordinates to itself everything that is externally expressed” (45). Oriented toward an internally anticipated future, it “breaks up the presently given makeup of the external world of objects” and dismantles the determinateness in time and

space that is required for the creation of the aesthetic moment (45). In terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, the act of fixing the other in definite spatial and temporal boundaries is the very foundation on which we establish an evaluative position toward him; and this is essentially an inherent aspect of aesthetic activity.

Worldview stands in sharp contrast to “style” which “imparts unity to the world’s transgradient exterior, its reflection to the outside, its advertedness to the outside, its boundaries [the shaping and combining of boundaries]” (205). Style is produced by the author’s outside position. The author utilizes style to unify and bring into meaningful relationship the work’s various horizons and plastic and pictorial features, including its images, symbols, metaphors, etc. While “worldview organizes and unifies man’s *horizon*; style organizes and unifies his environment” (205). In this sense, the style in “I Gaze Waiting for You” performs the very operation that Nima and Baraheni call “harmony.”

From this perspective, each character and object in “I Gaze Waiting for You” lives an act-performing life from within its own horizon. His/its life is oriented toward the future and is understood as a project. But collectively, they all are participants in a unified event which is finalized by the author’s style as a single whole: the poem is about waiting in a dark and menacing night. On the cognitive and ethical plane, there may be tensions and conflicts in the poem; the narrator may feel threatened by the insidious activities of other objects. But on the

aesthetic plane, all the poem's features combine to generate a total and unified effect.

Imprisoned in Rhythm: “The Amen Bird”

Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak in *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran* argues that, unlike the generally held notion, Nima’s introduction of poetic modernity did not result from the efforts of a lonely man who single-handedly challenged and transformed a millennial tradition of poetry. In fact, the new poetic system, which matured and culminated in Nima’s work, “constituted the last chapter in a literary-cultural process which had originated in the subversive discourse of a group of nineteenth-century social reformers” (233). One of the reasons that Karimi-Hakkak offers for glorifying Nima as the sole originator of the new poetic discourse was rooted in the fact that Nima produced “a far greater and more substantial poetic and critical output than any previous poet or critic advocating modernism” (234).

One could also add that Nima approached the issue of poetic modernity with much more fervor, consistency and single-mindedness than any other poet who had emerged during and after the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911. But as Karimi-Hakkak points out, along with “elemental innovations” and “important systemic realignments,” collective efforts of poets such as Eshqi (1893-1924) and Raf’at (1887-1920), even before Nima, had already thrown the traditional poetry into a “profound crisis” (236). One of the most important consequences of this crisis was the raging debates that shook the literary scene and prepared the condition for the ultimate de-crowning of traditional poetry

(236). Nima arrived at this scene to strike the final blow on a weakened body that was already stretched on its deathbed.

One of the major attributes of Nima's poetry is its tendency to express social and political realities through a symbolic structure. According to Karimi-Hakkak, the desire to take Nima's poetry as an "esthetic sign for an existing socio-political climate governing Iranian society" was not really an intrinsic aspect of his poems or fundamental to their understanding; it was only one of the possible ways to read his poetry (236). If Nima's poetry assumed the form of a political discourse, it was largely due to the efforts of a group of poets and literary critics whose manner of engaging with poetry was motivated primarily by their "more or less overtly political agendas" (235). These poets and critics, who came of age during the last years of Nima's life and dominated the literary scene immediately after his death, succeeded in turning "Nima's vision of a new poetry and poetics into a literary discourse in support of their own socio-political struggle" (235). With the commentaries they wrote on Nima's poems, they gave birth to "a whole new interpretive culture" which showed interest in his work only as reflective of social and political conditions.

There is no doubt that Nima's poetry contains a socio-political dimension, but it is also constituted by other layers of signification and displays a unique aesthetic structure. As Karimi-Hakkak tells us, to perceive literature as a mirror that reflects social conditions and then use it as a tool to transform society were

also the preoccupations of the poets who produced their works during the Constitutional and post-Constitutional periods. But poets, such as Bahar (1884-1951)⁵ and Raf'at (1887-1920), saw literature and society as two “separate” spheres that were capable of influencing each other (237). Nima's struggle to

⁵ V.B. Klyashtorina in “The Structure of Imagery in 20-th Century Persian Poetry: M. Bahar and Nima Yushij” suggests that the events of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911 were a chief influence on Bahar's “creative formation.” As Klyashtorina points out, Bahar actively participated in the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911. In fact, he was the passionate “troubadour” of the ideals of this social upheaval and took “its eventual fate [and defeat] to heart.” Klyashtorina holds that Bahar, who used “a somewhat archaic vocabulary” and “lofty style,” was “nurtured on classical Persian poetry with its ideals of “beauty,” “poeticalness,” “conformity,” and “harmony of verse.” Nevertheless, Bahar was also a poet of his time who responded to the historical circumstances that had besieged him.

According to Klyashtorina, Bahar's adherence to the decorum of traditional poetry did not prevent him from possessing “a high civic sensitivity and a new grasp of the problems of poetry in relation to the life of the country and its people.” Klyashtorina adds that Bahar both developed classical rules of poetry to their “limits” and charted “the direction of its further development.” It is in this sense that Bahar epitomizes “the dialectic of Persia's passage into the new age.” For more details, see Klyashtorina's article in *Critical Perspectives on Modern Persian Literature*, edited by Thomas M. Ricks, pages 381 to 387.

overcome this duality, in Karimi-Hakkak's mind, was one of his most decisive contributions to "the emergence of poetic modernity" in Iran (237).

Nima could rise above this duality because he "conceptualized poetry itself as an aspect of the social structure mediated through language" (237). Possessing a collective nature, language is a social medium that connects people to each other. And since the primary material of poetry is language, sociality is inherent in its structure. Poetry does not reflect society; rather, the social is already encoded in the fabric of poetry. In this sense, poetry is not a passive mirror; it is an active social force that can affect society in radical ways and change its political configurations.

Karimi-Hakkak in some length unpacks Nima's theoretical views about poetry as they are expressed in *Arezesh-e Ehsasat dar Zendegi-ye Honarpishegan* (The Value of Feelings in the Life of Artists), a short pamphlet that Nima wrote in 1938. As Karimi-Hakkak puts it, one of the aims of this work is to show that changes in social structures prompt changes in the feelings and emotions that shape artistic works (245). In the same vein, the sensibilities of the poets and "their sense of the self" emanate from the specific relations they establish with "the social whole" (245). In Karimi-Hakkak's words, one of the mainstays of the view that Nima advocates in this pamphlet is "the inseparability of the two spheres of individual and social existence" (245).

Of course, with every shift in social conditions, the poet must also find new forms to construct his poetry. At the same time, although social conditions affect the poet's perceptions and forge his sensibility, "in each generation, the poet must renew the quest for the kind of *san'at* or poetic craft that is appropriate to that generation" (245). When Karimi-Hakkak stresses the "identity of social and textual structures," he does not mean that they are one and the same. In such a case, no space will exist for the poet to display his individual creativity. It is true that the sensibilities of a particular era give birth to innovations in the poetic craft, but it is the poet who must give these innovations magnitude and discover their relevance. In fact, this is pretty much the case with the Nimaic meter.⁶ Nima regarded his new approach to *aruz* meters as a fundamental step

⁶ One of the best descriptions of Nimaic meter is offered by Mohammad Reza Shafi'ee Kadkani. He points out that Nima writes his poetry by adhering to the metric patterns of traditional *aruz* system (see the footnote on page 19 about *aruz* meters). Like traditional poets, Nima utilizes only one metric pattern in each single poem and avoids combining it with other meters. Nima, however, differs from traditional Persian poets because he refuses to repeat the same number of *arkan* (metric feet) in all the lines in the same poem. Instead, he varies the number of the metric feet in each different line of the same poem.

As Shafi'ee Kadkani puts it, traditional poets were concerned with "quantity" and its symmetric presentation throughout the poem. Nima rejects this attitude by focusing on "quality." Disregarding "quantity," Nima takes advantage of a "complete freedom to shorten or lengthen every line according to what [the poem's] feeling or emotional pulse demands." Thus, as Shafi'ee

in the direction of a poetry which could capture the spirit of his era. Although some poets, who were contemporaneous with Nima, had already responded to the changing social ethos by experimenting with new poetic forms, their “innovations and novelties” still had a crude and undeveloped form. Nima gave solidity and effective expression to these innovations by systematizing them in a coherent aesthetic structure. In this sense, Nima’s inventions were partly the consequence of selecting, synthesizing and reworking the techniques that were already embedded in the sensibilities of his age. At the same time, in the act of articulating the condition of the era, poetic innovations must transform them. This

Kadkani suggests, Nimaic *aruz* reveals “both a common characteristic with classical poetry and differs from it” in decisive ways. Nima is similar to classical Persian poets in terms of adhering to a single metric pattern in a specific poem, but he differs from them in terms of arranging, shortening, and lengthening the number of the metric feet in various lines. To use an example, Nima may write a poem in *mafa’ilan* meter. In that case, he may use one *mafa’ilan* in first line, two in the second, and three in the third “according to the requirements of what he intends to say. The length of lines will then appear in the following manner :

mafa’ilan

mafa’ilan mafa’ilan

mafa’ilan mafa’ilan mafa’ilan.

For a more detailed discussion of Nimaic meter, see Shafi’ee Kadkani’s book, pages 119 and 120.

dialectical relation between social conditions and the poet's individuality is at the heart of the notion of *san'at* as Karimi-Hakkak defines it.

Karimi-Hakkak also discusses Nima's major formal innovations in Persian poetry, including the metric system that he perfected and the use of more "fluid" images by which he replaced the ossified images of classical poetry. To Karimi-Hakkak, what however truly distinguishes Nima as the father of poetic modernity is "his insistence on the essential unity of the poetic text and its social context and the changing nature of that context" (249). On this basis, and with Nima as one of its leading figures, the modernist movement in Persian poetry emphasized the presence of a "social structure in and through the literary text," a state of affairs that places poetry "within the spectrum of political ideologies present in contemporary Iranian society or psyche" (249).

Analyzing closely some of Nima's poems, Karimi-Hakkak also examines the works of three early critics who have written about these poems. Two of these critics, in particular, interpret Nima's poems in purely socio-political terms. Siavosh Kasra'i in "Parvazi dar Hava-ye Morgh-e Amin" (A Flight in the Sphere of The Amen Bird) views "The Amen Bird" as "the last image of the communistic [mardom-gra] Nima" and explains it as a "call for the victory of the right [neda-ye piruzi-ye haqq]" (as cited in Karimi-Hakkak 266). There is ample justification for Kasra'i's claim. At least, this is one possible way to read the poem. In fact, in an

image that harks back to “The Phoenix,” Nima depicts the amen bird as a kind of collector that gathers the stories of the oppressed people:

Like the sign that reveals the trace of fire in the smoke of ashes
He moves his head as a secret sign to show that
He understands the coded tongue that expresses the people’s
suffering
He listens to their laments
And asks about their grief, to know
What has happened and not happened to them
Everyone tells the story of his life to that alert confidant.

Basing his interpretation on lines such as this, Kasra’i maintains that while the fate of the amen bird is tied to the destiny of the people with “a thousand cords,” he “tends to the people’s sorrows” and tries to forge solidarity among them (267).

Nima likens the stories that the people recount to the strands whose “lost end” is picked up by the amen bird:

The story of his people
Has blocked his throat.
Entwining strand with strand (indifferent to the accusations leveled
against him)
He has picked up in his beak the lost end of these strands.

The amen bird clusters together the stories that the people tell, organizes them into a coherent worldview, and then derives from them a plan of action:

Under the rain of voices that cry:

-“May there be an end to the people’s undeserved suffering”

(while every passing moment adds to their suffering),

The amen bird speaks with the people’s tongue of anguish.

He cries:

“Amen!

May there be an end to the sufferings that corrode the people’s
lives

May the foundations be shattered that, in the name of salvation,

Deceive the people and

Dupe the world with the false promise of enchanting words.”

The people say:

“Amen!

In such a night, when injustice prevails,

Redeem us, you the nocturnal bird!

Show us a path to deliverance.

You, friendly bird, grant everyone their wishes.”

“Deliverance will arrive

And the dark night will turn into a bright morning”, the bird says.

The amen bird distills the people’s grievances to their most compact form and then offers solution to them. He listens to many stories which revolve around a shared axis. But the people themselves are not aware of this common bond or, at least, do not act on it. They need an external agency to unify them as a people with a shared destiny.

Let us here go back to Kasrai’s interpretation of “The Amen Bird” as Karimi-Hakkak sums it up. Kasra’i points out that the amen bird appears in the scene in response to the masses’ “supplication, the deepest need of the toiling humanity,” and he is the symbol of “the certitude of the great day of victory and the enemy’s vulnerability” (268). Karimi-Hakkak observes that Kasrai’s description of the bird’s “communion” with the people is couched in terms that can equally “be applied to religious gatherings as well as political rallies or demonstrations” (269). Kasra’i suggests that the oppressed masses feel the throttling clutch of “the world-eater” with their flesh and blood, but they lack the necessary solidarity, discipline and sense of direction to fight back. On the other hand, the amen bird knows “all the enemy’s machinations” and can communicate his wisdom to the people (269).

The amen bird is at first separated from the masses, but the chanting of successive “amens” and “*bada*”s (shall it be thus) forges a powerful alliance

between them (269). As Karimi-Hakkak explains, the words of *amen* and *bada* are born out of social necessities, out of the condition of oppression in which the people find themselves. At the same time, these words are the tools that dismantle the very conditions that have given rise to them.

Karimi-Hakkak continues his discussion by describing Kasrai's approach as symptomatic of a generation of poets and critics who evaluated the relevance of Nima's poetry only in social and political terms. To this generation, Nima expressed the plights of his age by exposing the injustice and the oppression that had enchained his people. Using a term by Bakhtin, Karimi-Hakkak calls this tendency "enclosure within the epoch" (271). Such enclosure imposes a "determinate and purposeful meaning on the texts" and obliterates their potential for "alternative" meanings (271).

Houman Sarshar in "The Anxiety of Remembrance: the Shift from Allegory to Symbol in the Poetry of Coleridge, Baudelaire, and Nima Yushij," points out that throughout the lengthy dialogue that structures "The Amen Bird," the eponymous hero "verbalizes the people's wish and they respond with "Amen" ("So shall it be"), thereby echoing the bird's name and making their wishes come true" (128). In other words, the amen bird, by virtue of his name, is at once the agency that prompts the people to emancipate themselves and the source that grants that emancipation. Thus, on one level, this poem is about the power of language and the way it evokes and consummates the image all at once.

Sarshar argues that one effect of this reflexive structure, which is sustained tenaciously throughout the central dialogue, is to drive the poem toward the elimination of all “dialogic directions” as the bird and the people achieve “gradual harmonization and integration” in one another (128). Their unity consolidates the dividing boundaries that separate the poem into two opposing camps of the people and the world-eater. In terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, the stabilization of boundaries in the work enables us to consummate the hero and his environment in positive terms. It is only by means of such consummation that we can approach the poem axiologically and understand it from a valuational standpoint.

Sarshar divides “The Amen Bird” into several stages that succeed one another until the bird fulfills his mission and leaves the scene. The poem begins by articulating the role that the amen bird must take on as a “protective and empathetic figure” in relation to the people (131). It then shifts its focus to the people’s “pessimism” as they express their grievances, but then the bird responds by asserting his own optimistic vision and promising emancipation (131). The next stage defines the source of the people’s oppression, which marks the beginning of their identification with the bird as they repeat his pronouncements “verbatim” (131). As Sarshar puts it in precise terms, at this point in the poem, the bird’s words are echoed by a number of unspecified

speakers whose utterances are “distinguished by a separate dash and set in quotation marks” (132).

This syntactic shift, at the same time that emphasizes “the boundaries between different individuals,” propels a process of “full identification and assimilation” (132). This, according to Sarshar, is “the first stage of individuation in the poem” which gives birth to the “nascent egos” that are now on the verge of gaining “autonomy” (133). One could also add that the inception of these nascent egos or individualities is the necessary condition for the creation of a collective identity. After all, only by unity and collective action can the people overcome the world-eater and realize their true selves. But this unity will not materialize unless every participant comes to his/her own as a person. Indeed, this is the paradox at the heart of “The Amen Bird.”

Implicit in the process that Sarshar describes is the architectonic relationship that the bird establishes with the people. If as Sarshar suggests, the use of separate dashes and quotation marks signals the individuation of the voices that express their misfortune, the amen bird faces the kind of situation that Bakhtin explains in relation to *The Last Supper*, Leonardo da Vinci’s famous painting. To grasp this painting as “the *whole* of a work of art,” I must understand the central figure of Christ and each one of the apostles. And since each apostle reveals a different attitude toward Christ and perceives the event of the work in a

peculiar way, I must enter into the horizon of each apostle separately and see the work's event through his eyes.

In terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, I “must empathize myself into each one of the participants” and “co-experience the inner state of each one of them” separately (*Art* 65). What I see in this painting “is not an elementally unified mass movement that could be understood as constituting a single *subiectum*” (65). All the participants exist in the same unitary event, and yet they are all “intensely individual” (65). Thus, *The Last Supper* depicts a unitary and yet very complex event. To experience “the aesthetic *whole* of the work,” it is not enough to co-experience the horizon of each apostle separately; I should also step outside these horizons and understand all of them as parts of a single event. In other words, from an outside position and by the excess of seeing that I have gathered through co-experiencing the life of each apostle with him in his horizon, I must establish a meaningful relationship between all of them taken together and the way they ultimately converge or diverge from one another in relation to a shared axis of value.

Bakhtin's explanation of the architectonics that characterizes da Vinci's painting basically sums up the dynamics of the relationship that exists between the amen bird and the individual voices with which he engages in dialogue. Although the source of all these voices is designated as “the people” in the poem, Nima makes clear that each voice must be grasped in individual terms:

The people say:

-“May [the oppressors’] garden be even more ruined,

Torn asunder from their families, may they squat on the stairs
before their doors,

And from the song of their death,

May more silent icicles settle on the walls of their porches.”

-“Shall it be thus!” a voice says from afar

And a voice nearby

Among the mass of voices that are in turmoil:

-“After their joyful years,

After their debauching days,

May it be their deserved punishment.”

Thus, although Nima imputes the utterances, which begin with a dash and are placed in quotation marks, to “the people,” he really regards them as the expressions of specific individuals.⁷ The use of “the people” as the subject of

⁷ At one point in “The Amen Bird,” Nima makes clear the individuation of the voices in the poem by stressing that the bird moves into the horizon of each voice separately and listens to its story:

He listens to their laments

And asks about their grief, to know

What has happened and not happened to them

Everyone tells the story of his life to that alert confidant.

action is really a poetic necessity that helps Nima sustain the poem's incantatory rhythm. At the same time, it underscores the fact that all these individuals belong to the same collective and common body and share the same fate and concerns.

In any case, the bird in a series of separate dialogues, empathizes into every voice, co-experiences its oppressed condition, and then affirms it from outside by his response:

The people say:

-“But that world-eater

(the man's ancient enemy) will gulp down the whole world.”

The bird says:

-“He would take his wish to the grave.”

The people say:

“But, pursuing an aim, their war-mongering hatred

Is beating the drum every second.”

The bird says:

“May they be destroyed!

Death is the ultimate cure

For the illness

Of man-eating.

And after their days of joy and glory,

May their last days be burdened with shame and disgrace!”

The people say:

-“But only if villains leave us alone!

All we demand is a safe life

Without answering for it to anyone.

A life in which enslavement will end

And their crumbling and crooked walls

Will not imprison us again.

A life in which the despairing people will feel happiness.”

The bird says:

-“May villainy be dismantled.”

The bird’s activity, however, is not confined to co-experiencing the dilemmas of these voices from within their particular horizons. His real function is to bring them into a meaningful relationship with one another and harmonize their energies into a single whole. To achieve this, he must stand outside all these horizons taken together and view them at a single glance as aspects of the same environment. In other words, the amen bird enacts the author’s enframing activity by the surplus of seeing that he has gained through a combination of co-experiencing each horizon and standing outside to grasp all of them in a single

instant as parts of a single event. Returning to his own horizon, the amen bird knows both the inner life of each individual and the way that individual appears outwardly in a background alongside the “outward expressedness” of other individuals. This is the key to the harmonizing power of the amen bird:

That penetrating gaze (the concealed ear of our suffering world)
looks at
The oppressed people.
With every amen that the friendly bird utters,
He brings the people together,
Lessening their crushing pain.

In terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, the amen bird’s surplus of vision, which he gains by his ultimate act of standing outside all the participants in the poem to finalize their wishes as a single collective vision, is what gives birth to the aesthetic moment. In this sense, he performs an aesthetic activity inside the poem. But the bird is itself subject to the author’s aesthetic activity that, through a higher form of surplus of seeing, finalizes him in a determinate horizon in the poem’s environment. By standing outside the work as a whole, the author consummates the amen bird in stable boundaries and, therefore, defines his relationship with the other axes of values in the poem, i.e., the people and the world-eater. In this sense, the amen bird is itself a part of the aesthetic whole that constitutes the poem’s environment.

When the poem begins, Nima immediately attributes a string of fixed traits to the bird that cling to him throughout the poem. The bird is consummated upon its appearance by what Bakhtin calls “the last words” about him. Indeed, it is this act of consummation that turns the bird into an axis of value in the poem and, thereby, makes him aesthetically productive in relation to all other participants. Fixed characteristics, such as the bird’s insight into the depths of “our suffering world” and a solidarity-forging presence that stems from his amen-saying power, give force and incisiveness to the bird as the hero. These finalized attributes provide the bird with a unique worldview; or, to use Bakhtin’s term, they invest him with an unmistakable “viewability.”

The first four stanzas give the amen bird a characterological specificity by defining him as “pained,” “wandering” and “a sign of the day of victory.” Right from the beginning, we know that the bird is actively sympathetic to the suffering people and searches for ways to overcome their oppressed condition. Most importantly, the bird appears as a catalyst that unites the people under a single banner. All these consummating features invest the bird with a determinate axiological posture and responsibility in the poem. They finalize his precise stance in the poem’s world in relation to both the people and the world-eater.

The author bestows on the amen bird the features that cannot take on a given form from within the bird’s own horizon. In terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, from within, life is seen as a yet-to-be-achieved task; it has an

eventful character which makes all boundaries fluid and shifting at every instant. That is why the finalization of the bird's features depends on the presence of another consciousness outside him. This other consciousness belongs to the author who, from his outside position, can introduce transgredient moments into the bird's life by placing him in a background and defining his relationship to that background. The fact that the bird coincides with himself from the outset by revealing definite features is the evidence that he is "justified" from outside. As Bakhtin would say, to the author the *amen* bird exists in "the category of the *other* and not in the category of the *I*" (129). From within, the bird is incapable of forms of justification for himself because his life in his own horizon always confronts him as unfinalized and full of event-potential.

The dialogue between the bird and the people takes place within definite spatial and temporal boundaries as the night sets in and the rain envelops the whole action. As a consummating feature, the merging of the raindrops in one powerful flood at the end of the poem re-enacts the gathering of chaotic voices into a harmonized whole; that is to say, it reflects the author's vision of the poem as an aesthetic whole. Karimi-Hakkak elucidates this point eloquently:

Metaphorically, the sprinkling raindrops come to parallel the disparate voices which express individual desires for an end to pain and suffering, but fail to amount to collective action (263).

But to reach this stage, the voices must be consummated by assuming a finalized orientation. From this perspective, the amen bird enacts the structure of authoring inside the poem by joining together the people's voices to construct a sense of wholeness.

If the Bakhtin of *Art and Answerability* had read the "Amen Bird," he would have concluded that the whole poem tries to create "forms of justification" for the bird's life, which in principle he is incapable of achieving from within his own horizon. In terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, the amen bird is "produced and positively shaped in the category of the *other*" by the "loving" activity of the author (*Art* 129). In the totality of the poem, the bird coincides with himself. He cannot be anything else but what he is; the harbinger of deliverance and the catalyst for the people's emancipation. To cite Bakhtin's words in another context, at every given moment of an aesthetic approach, we see "*all*" of the amen bird, "even if only potentially" (131). At every moment, his name, his amen-saying chants, and his acts come to coincide with him perfectly. The coincidence of the bird with himself allows the author to "enrich" him from outside and make him "aesthetically significant," simply because the bird's stable boundaries make an evaluative stance toward him possible (130). In Bakhtin's words, an evaluative or axiological position in relation to the other is possible only when he is placed in determinate boundaries.

As Bakhtin is fond of saying, the hero dies in the very instant that he appears in the aesthetic work (131). That is why he enters the scene as a memory and the process of giving form to him is a “process of commemoration” (131). Within this framework, the amen bird is “hopeless with respect to meaning” from the outset (131). Nima’s artistic vision presents him as a “*whole* hero, measured in full and added up in every detail” (131). In Bakhtin’s words, there should be “no secrets in the hero with respect to meaning” and “in respect of meaning, he must be dead for us” from the very outset (131). That is what Nima achieves in the first four stanzas of the poem; he renders the amen bird “dead” in terms of meaning. There is no mystery about him as his worldview and mission are expressed in transparent terms. As the death of the hero settles the accounts in relation to “meaning set as a task,” it “provides the methods for an *aesthetic* justification” independent of meaning (131).

Another consummating feature that renders the amen bird aesthetically finished is the poem’s rhythm. As Sirous Shamisa tells us, the rhythmic movement of “The Amen Bird” is shaped by the repetition of *fa’elaton*, which is a metric foot in the system of *aruz* meter in Farsi poetry (185). Karimi-Hakkak also describes the poem’s structure as marked by a “symphonic quality” that is generated by “the accumulation of sound effects,” words that function as leitmotifs and echoing devices (266). The poem’s images are also organized within this symphonic structure and are treated as organic aspects of the poem’s

musical movement; they mirror the sounds and are in turn mirrored by them. As Karimi-Hakkak suggests, we see this correlation clearly first between “the people’s individual voices” and “a scattered spattering of rain” and then later between the massive chant of amens and “the flood that breaks down the wall of the dawn” (266).

In Bakhtinian architectonics, aesthetic effect depends on its detachment from meaning. Aesthetic structure and meaning-directed discourse function on two different planes. Of course, even a meaning-directed discourse can become the object of aesthetics if the author introduces transgredient moments in it. To achieve this, the experience of the hero must recede into the past or what Bakhtin calls “the *past of meaning*,” along with the entire context of meaning in which he was born (*Art* 116). This is basically the part that rhythm performs in an aesthetic work. Rhythm manifests a consolidating function as it situates the hero in determinate boundaries; it is always produced by “the self-activity of another soul,” which is another name for the author as he engages with the hero from an outside position (117).

The chant-like and incantatory effect that the repetition of “amen” generates orchestrates the whole movement of the poem within the framework of a spell-binding rhythm:

The bird says:

-“May this destruction be a due reward

For those who thrived on injustice.”

-“Shall it be thus!” (cry, the distressed people)

-“Shall it be thus, amen!

And may the tongue of the one who understands the people’s pain
be thundering!”

-“Shall it be thus, amen!

And may every thought that teaches death be destroyed!”

-“Amen! Amen!”

According to Bakhtin, rhythm, like plot, possesses an “organic and internally predetermined” structure that should “be encompassed at a single inner glance in its entirety, from beginning to end, in all its constituents” (118). From this perspective, the amen bird is imprisoned in the very rhythm that its name helps to spawn. Rhythm constrains both the language of the bird and the movement of the poem in a fixed pattern. And yet, paradoxically, the imprisonment in this fixed structure is the absolute condition for the people’s emancipation. It is the reiteration of the bird’s name that forges unity between the people and opens the prospect of liberation before their eyes.

The repetition of the amen bird’s name propels the poem’s rhythm; he is born and dies in rhythm. From within his horizon, the bird can be “extra-rhythmic” or “non-adequate to rhythm” (118); he can view his event of being as a task to be accomplished and not as something given. But on the aesthetic plane, his words

and movements are subordinated to rhythm; rhythm constrains his free will. From within his horizon, the hero sees himself in the category of the “I,” which is characterized by moral freedom. That is why his life cannot be rhythmicized from within. But the situation radically changes when he is viewed from outside by the author. He will then be “unfree and passive” (120). As Bakhtin suggests, this unfreedom is the requirement of rhythm. Rather than being a “cruel necessity,” it is “a necessity bestowed as a gift, bestowed by love: it is a beautiful necessity” (120).

The Man on the Threshold: “The Moonlight”

“Mahtab” (The Moonlight 1948), one of Nima’s most famous poems, has received a great deal of critical attention. Taqi Pournamdarian, for example, provides us with some interesting details by which we can reconstruct the socio-political background of “The Moonlight.” One of Pournamdarian’s own sources is the observation of Anvar Khame’i who sketches a comprehensive historical context for Nima’s “poems of despair” in the period that stretches from 1948 to 1951. Khame’i links Nima’s growing “pessimism” in this period to the fierce and almost paranoiac eradication of all social and political freedoms in Iran (as cited in Pournamdarian 335). During these years, as the elections of the fifteenth Parliament were held under “the bayonet of the court, the army and the government of Qavam [the then Prime Minister],” reactionary forces, helped by the British and the newly arrived American imperialisms, succeeded in consolidating their hegemony (335). More importantly, the failed assassination of Mohammad Reza Shah in 1947 paved the way for unleashing a wave of oppression which intended to silence all opposing voices (335).

This asphyxiating political condition, except for a brief spell, lasted until the rise of Dr. Mossadeq’s national government in 1951 which opened up a tangible space for the exercise of civil rights and democratic freedoms in Iranian society. That is why the poems that Nima wrote in the span of two years from 1951 to 1953 throb with a celebratory and joyful optimism. The return of reaction in 1953,

after two uproarious years of struggle for independence and democracy, put an end to this surging sense of hope. With the uninhibited crackdown on civil freedoms in full swing, Nima's jubilant utopianism, which surfaced in poems such as "Khorus Mikhanad" (The Rooster Crows 1946), came crashing down, a turn of events which forced him to revert to an uncertain, ambiguous and despair-laden vision of existence.

Such background information is quite valuable for a political reading of "The Moonlight." At the same time, as Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak explains, this particular attitude toward Nima's poems was the product of "an interpretive culture" which approached poetry "primarily with the purpose of deciphering the poet's political views" (as cited in Vahabzadeh 217). According to Peyman Vahabzadeh, this tendency, while "bringing the poetic community to a closure in order to safeguard a narrow vision of Nima's contributions," marginalized the aesthetic peculiarities of his works (219). To a certain extent, Nima's poetry may pluck its rigor from its sensitivity to social and political circumstances, but this feature does not exhaust the value of his poetry. What is more important is Nima's aesthetic vision which gives his poetry a unique place in contemporary Persian literature.

Said Hamidian is another critic who discusses "The Moonlight." He proceeds by both explaining the poem's content and digging into intricacies of its language. According to Hamidian, what is at stake in "The Moonlight" on the

political level is “the mission of consciousness-raising and fostering hope and expectation,” a messianic undertaking which resembles “the breathing of life into the dead” (250). A staggering mood of grief and despondency hovers over the poem, chiefly because no one seems up to the task of “awakening the sleepers” from their “smothering conditions” (254). Hamidian reads the poem as an attempt “to open the doors of connection with others” (254), which is, of course, the precondition of transmitting consciousness to them.

One of the most sophisticated analyses of “The Moonlight” is conducted by Peyman Vahabzadeh in “The Space between Voices: Nima Yushij and the Receding Signified.” He explores the nature of the image in “The Moonlight” and contends that “the fixity of elements on a discursive level” generates the image in Nima’s poem (196). This fixity, however, is never total, but always “partial” (196). Contrary to the Saussure’s view, Vahabzadeh argues that the image is not a signifier, but “belongs to the realm of the signified”; at the same time, every signified is also a signifier (196). To elucidate this point, Vahabzadeh first explains that “The Moonlight” contains three different voices which by turns take up the role of the narrator. Although each of these voices replaces the preceding voice, they all essentially recount “the *same* story by using the same signifiers to construct a poetic image” (200).

The repetition of signifiers throughout “The Moonlight” creates a condition in which “a specific voice” (the lonely man), “a mediating” voice (the narrator)”

and “a general voice (the omniscient narrator)” both replace and mimic one another in succession (200). While performing its activity within a loop-like structure, each voice exhibits both how the image is constructed and how it is brought to fixity. But since the fixity of the image in “The Moonlight” is partial, “the poetic image as a whole moves back into uncertainty” at the end of each loop (200). In other words, although the partial fixity of the image gives it a fairly determinate identity, the image ultimately reveals a transitional character and dissolves at the end of each loop to open the way for the appearance of other images. Vahabzadeh points out that the *contingent* and *precarious* quality of the image, which prevents the closure of the poem, also underscores “the signified’s own failure” (200). As the signified in “The Moonlight” constantly recedes into a background, it perpetually turns into the signifier (200). This “*receding signified*” both produces an open-ended text and ensures “the ultimate impossibility of fixity of the image” (201).

The receding signified in “The Moonlight” comes into being “through the recognition of the voice(s) of the *other(s)*”; it is generated in the space between these voices (201). At the same time, the receding signified is the element that *constructs* this space (201). In each narrative segment of the poem, the signified asserts itself at the highest point of an arc only to fade into background when the arc reaches its lowest point. Here, before another narrative arc begins, a space is created in which a nascent voice supplants the fading voice. As a corollary to the

displacement of one voice by another, a new image takes shape while the old one dissipates. Within this dynamics, all sense of origin and privilege vanishes as every emerging image, after a spell of partial fixity, in turn “fails and fades” (201). In this sense, “no one voice or signified can definitely rule” in “The Moonlight” (201).

In a certain sense, Vahabzadeh’s approach to “The Moonlight” comes close to Bakhtin’s architectonic view of the aesthetic work. Vahabzadeh recognizes the existence of different voices in the poem which create and disperse the image. However, these voices, or horizons as Bakhtin might have called them, exist on a single plane inside the poem; they are aspects of a single experience which transpires in the poem’s environment. In terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, there should be another plane outside the poem which could add the aesthetic dimension to it. On this extralocal plane, the author stands and relates to the poem and its horizons as the manifestations of single whole. According to Bakhtin, “not only being *inside* the hero but also being axiologically beside him and against him distorts seeing and lacks features that can render [the hero] complete and consummate him” (*Art* 15). And consummation of the hero, which is possible only from an outside position by the author, is what enables the author to experience “the hero’s life in value-categories that are completely different from those in which he experiences his own life” (15). To Bakhtin, this is at the root of the genesis of aesthetic work.

Without outward expressedness (a determinate situatedness in time and space), a character cannot secure his unique site in the work's environment. Instead, he will manifest mere "emptiness" or "ghostliness," a quality which we cannot "vivify," apprehend or react to axiologically (29). Only when a character is fixed in determinate spatial and temporal boundaries in the plastic and pictorial world of aesthetic product, can we take an evaluative stance and express "admiration, love, tenderness, compassion, hostility, hatred, and the like" for him (29).

Vahabzadeh's point about the transformation of an omniscient or "general" narrator into a "specific" one (the lonely man) at the end of "The Moonlight" points to the shift from an un-embodied point of view to an embodied perspective that is delimited in determinate spatial and temporal boundaries. Vahabzadeh argues that the lonely man in the poem's closing lines both replaces and reiterates the omniscient voice with which the poem begins. The central concern of the omniscient voice is the dismaying condition of a group of sleepers:

The moonlight is flowing
The glow-worm is shining
But not even for a moment, sleep breaks in anyone's eye.
And yet, the sorrow of these sleepers
Breaks sleep in my wet eye.

There is no doubt that the lonely man is also troubled by the same concern, namely, the stupor of the sleeping bunch, but there are also differences that set the two voices apart.

Unlike the omniscient narrator, the lonely man is a direct participant in the poem's action. That is why he takes on an outward expressedness with determinate features: carrying a bundle on his shoulder and arriving from a long journey with blistered feet, he stands alone at the village's gate under the moonlight and then places his hand on a door:

The moonlight is flowing

The glow-worm is shining

A lonely man, with blistered feet from a long journey,

Lingers at the village's gate.

A bundle on his shoulder,

His hand on the door, he tells himself:

The sorrow of these sleepers

Breaks sleep in my wet eye.

Thus, the lonely man is distinguished from the omniscient narrator by being enframed in a particular background by his proximity to the village's gate and the door. According to Bakhtin, when the hero is enframed by the author from outside in a particular background, he becomes "viewable."

As Bakhtin says, “my own exterior is not part of the concrete, actual horizon of my seeing” (*Art* 28). I can only experience “the expressive features of my body” from “*within* myself” in the form of “scattered fragments” and “scraps dangling on the string of my inner sensation of myself” (28). I cannot create a unitary and coherent self from within because I do not have a clear grasp of how my exterior stands in relation to the environment that encloses it. To be a whole human being (a person that others can relate to valuationally), I need to be consummated by the transgredient features that the other introduces in my life (a background, an exterior); I always need the other to fix me in stable spatial and temporal boundaries; I lack the vantage point to accomplish this task by myself. It is only the other’s surplus of seeing that can produce a background for me. As Bakhtin puts it, the other will always see and know something that will remain inaccessible to me. My head, my face and its expression, the objects behind me and the relations I form with them, they are all features that are transgredient to me. And yet they are part of the other’s surplus of seeing as he perceives and consummates me from outside.

As Bakhtin puts it,

even if the hero’s consciousness were conscious of the entire world and rendered the entire world immanent to itself, the *aesthetic* standpoint would still have to provide his consciousness with a background transgredient to it. Or, in other words, the author would

have to find a point of support outside that consciousness, in order that it should become an aesthetically consummated phenomenon—a hero. (17)

What gives rise to the aesthetic work is “the author’s valuational point of support *outside* the hero” (17). For this reason, Bakhtin maintains that the aesthetic event takes place only when there are two participants or “noncoinciding consciousnesses” present (23). If they coincide, the aesthetic event will founder and “the ethical event” will begin (23).

The outward expressedness of the lonely man and his defined relationship to space and time (his posture at the village’s gate and under the moonlight) makes an evaluative stance toward him possible as a man on the threshold. The enframing of the lonely man in this way places him in a unique site with determinate features in the poem’s environment and transforms him into a tangible axis of value. To rephrase this point, we may say that the words, the thoughts and the possible actions of the lonely man are the direct consequence of his placement in a particular space and at a particular time: the flowing of the moonlight, the glowing of the worm, the lonely man’s existence on the village’s threshold, his hand on the door, the bundle on his shoulder, all constitute a background for his exterior and situate him in a position to alter the course of the poem. His proximity to the sleepers and his separation from them is implied by image of the door which he is in a position to either open or not to open.

Seen from within his horizon, the lonely man's suspension on the village's threshold makes his life eventful; to him, life is a task to-be-yet-accomplished. In this context, he resembles the character of Dmitri in *The Brothers Karamazov* who, as Bakhtin describes him in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, "stands, in essence throughout his entire life, on the threshold of great internal decisions and crises," a quality which constitutes "the unfinalized and undecided core of [his] personality" (62). Poised behind a door that he may or may not open, the lonely man, from within his own horizon, refuses to bring the poem to a closure. On this plane, which has an essentially ethical and cognitive character, the ending of "The Moonlight" unfolds as a space of pure potential that cannot be reduced to a single meaning. The idea that nothing is decided in advance, as Bakhtin puts it, weakens "perspectival relationship" and gives rise to a situation that is not "objectified" or "plotted" (187). Just as rhythm, a plot can only be imposed from outside by the author. From within, the lonely man's unpredeterminable existence on the threshold creates the experience of an open-ended present in each single moment. It is a world in which the author has renounced his "essential surplus of meaning" (73), and in which the lonely man lives a life full of "event potential" (81).

The young Bakhtin of *Art and Answerability*, however, shifts the emphasis to the very surplus of meaning that the older Bakhtin rejects as a barrier to the inception of dialogue as the creative force behind the novel. To the young

Bakhtin, if the hero's life is not enframed by the author's surplus of seeing from outside, it unfolds only in the cognitive and ethical spheres. Aesthetic value is not "immanent to a single consciousness" that "refuses to admit the contraposition of the *I* and the *other*" (*Art* 63); instead, it requires the participation of two consciousnesses that do not coincide. From this perspective, the author in the aesthetic event always stands as a noncoinciding consciousness vis-à-vis the hero by maintaining a position outside him.

The spatial and temporal details, which give the lonely man his particular meaning in the poem, situate him in a unique site that is strikingly individual and differs from the horizons that other participants in the poem occupy. In Bakhtinian terms, from within, the lonely man's life is diffused and lacks any clear sense of boundaries. He participates in life as an unfinalized event and perceives everything that confronts him as the object of his acts and consciousness. There is no surplus of seeing belonging to the other which can enframe him in a background and define his relationship to that background. His very posture on the threshold intimates this fact; he is the only one who can change the fate of the sleepers if he crosses the village's threshold and opens the door.

Vahabzadeh sketches three distinct stages in "The Moonlight." Each stage is characterized by the dominance of a single voice. In order of succession, these voices are "a general voice (the omniscient narrator)"; "a mediating one (the narrator)"; and "a specific voice (the lonely man)" (200). Thus, "The Moonlight" is

divided into three distinct horizons from which each narrator reacts differently to the poem's central situation: the impassivity of a sleeping bunch. While the opening scene exhibits a "ghostly" expression of emotions which do not find any concrete embodiment, the three following stanzas, as the mediating voice takes over, reveal an overwhelming sense of despair and impotence:

The morning bids me
To bring the news of its welcome breath to this lost tribe,
But a thorn in my heart
Crushes my resolution for this journey.

The delicate adorned body of a flower's stem,
Which I planted with my life
And watered with my love,
Ah pity, breaks over my body.

I rub my hands
To open a door
I watch in vain
For someone to come to the door
But all their crumbling walls and ceilings
Collapse over my head.

In contrast to the preceding voices, the specific voice in the closing stanza is charged with an air of buoyancy and anticipation. The segmentation of the poem's voices into three different zones of activity will prevent us from experiencing "the whole of the aesthetic work" unless the author unifies the poem's diverse horizons as the aspects of a single whole by means of his surplus of seeing.

In his analysis of *The Last Supper*, Leonardo da Vinci's painting, Bakhtin suggests that if we wish to understand this work in its entirety, we must "empathize" ourselves "into each one of the participants" and "co-experience their inner state" (*Art* 65). That means that I should enter the horizon of each apostle and absorb his features separately. This approach, however, does not provide me with the experience of the work in its wholeness. I only experience its fragments and "the work cannot simply be equivalent to the sum of my co-experiences of the various participants" (65). What I have before me in da Vinci's work is not a "unified mass" that can be comprehended as "constituting a single *subiectum*" (65). Instead, all figures in the work are "in a state of active contraposition to one another" as each one "occupies its own unique position within the whole of [the work]" (65). In this sense, it is impossible to understand da Vinci's painting as a single aesthetic whole through mere "co-experiencing with its participants" (65). What, however, enables me to acquire a sense of the

whole of the work is “a position outside each one of them as well as outside all of them taken together” (65).

Let us begin by supposing that “The Moonlight,” too, lacks a single *subiectum* or focal point that can bring all its horizons (participants) together as a “unified mass.” Each narrator is defined in terms of the attitude that he adopts toward the sleepers: while the general narrator describes the condition of the sleepers in broad terms and announces his sorrow over their apathy, the mediating narrator is overwhelmed by a paralyzing sense of disillusionment and defeat. However, the specific narrator revives a sense of hope and expectation in the poem. Each horizon then reveals a different emotional register and we recognize the differences between them by the way they react to a shared axis of value, i.e., the sleepers. Within this framework, the impotence and despondency of the mediating narrator, for instance, gives scope and resonance to the potential and intensity that the posture of the lonely man conjures up, chiefly because they respond to a shared axis of interest within the same environment.

The author in “The Moonlight” enters the horizon of each narrator, co-experiences his life from within him, and then returns to his outside position. If it was otherwise, we could not have any clear sense of the poem’s architectonics or how its disparate horizons stood in axiological relationship to one another. As the author maintains his position outside each narrator as well as outside all of them taken together, he perceives them as participants in the same event within

a single environment. In this environment, in addition to the sleeping bunch that functions as a shared axis of value for all three narrators, the motif of moonlight and the temporal specificity that it evokes, along with a circular movement that links the poem's opening to its end, strengthens the sense that all the voices in the poem participate in the same event. From within their horizons, each narrator lives an eventful existence, but the author, from an outside position, consummates all of them in their distinct horizons within the architectonic structure of a single whole.

Outsideness in "The Moonlight" functions on multiple levels. The enframing of the lonely man in definite spatial and temporal boundaries (on the village's threshold and under the moonlight) requires an objectifying distance which is secured by the author's outside position in relation to the poem's event. While the exterior form that the lonely man assumes does not "issue" from his own volition but "descends *upon*" him by the author from outside (68), in one sense he, too, stands outside the sleeping crowd (he is not one of them by his very situatedness outside the village's gate). In this sense, the lonely man lives a double life. But there is a distinct difference between the author's outsideness and that of the lonely man.

In terms of Bakhtinain architectonics, "the hero lives his life cognitively and ethically" as "he orients his actions within the open ethical event of his lived life or within the projected world of cognition" (12). On the other hand, the author

“orients the hero and the hero’s own cognitive-ethical orientation within a world of being that is in principle consummated” (12). Thus, “the consciousness of the hero and his world is enclosed on all sides” by the author’s consciousness, but the author’s interest in the hero is purely aesthetic and the hero derives his value “independently of the yet-to-be meaning of the event of life” (12). In this sense, the author’s “artistic interestedness in the hero and his life” encloses the hero’s “vital (cognitive-ethical) interestedness in the event of his own life” within a larger band of consciousness (12). Within this paradigm, the lonely man’s outsideness vis-à-vis the sleeping villagers is an expression of his cognitive and ethical distance from them. After all, in contrast to the comatose sleepers, he appears as a potential vanguard of change and a transmitter of consciousness in the poem.

Another point which draws a dividing line between the author and the hero is the distinction that Bakhtin makes between “horizon” and “environment.” A human being can combine with the world in two ways: from within, he can *combine* with the world as his *horizon*; from outside himself, he can *combine* with the world as his *environment* (97). From within my horizon, all objects “*stand over against*” me and I react to them in terms of my own “cognitive-ethical and practical directedness” in life (97). Two things happen when I combine with the world from within: first, the world becomes “the object of my acts: acts of thinking, acts of feeling, acts of speaking, acts of doing”; second, “the center of gravity in this world is located in the future” and “*not* in the self-sufficient givenness of an

object” (97). Thus, from within my horizon, everything for me assumes the form of an uncompleted project that is oriented toward the future.

The lonely man is consummated from outside by the author within a particular background that gives him a defined relationship to his environment. From within his horizon, he lives in “an open, still risk-fraught event of being, whose unity, meaning, and value are not *given* but imposed as a task still to be accomplished” (98). But from the author’s outside position, every object in the poem’s environment contributes to enframing the lonely man in specific boundaries. The door (on which he rests his hand) and the village’s gate (at which he stands) are the details in the poem’s environment by which the author invests the lonely man with a situated awareness in the world. They transform him into an outsider who, by crossing a threshold, may exert a cataclysmic impact on the sleepers. The author uses these details as consummating plastic and pictorial features to determine the boundaries of the lonely man and his relations to all other horizons and voices in the poem.

By placing the lonely man in a particular site in the poem’s environment, the author enters into an aesthetically productive relationship with him. Bakhtin suggests that, by fixing the hero in determinate spatial and temporal boundaries, the author maintains a “position *outside* the hero with respect to every constituent feature of the hero—a position *outside* the hero with respect to space, time, value and meaning” (14). By conjoining the hero with a background whose details

evoke a unique sense of situated awareness in the world, the author is able “to collect and concentrate *all* of the hero, who from within himself, is diffused and dispersed in the projected world of cognition and in the open event of ethical action” (14). By supplying all those transgredient moments that are inaccessible to the lonely man from within (an exterior, a full outward image, a background), the author collects the life of his hero and completes him to the point where he becomes a *whole* human being. While giving the lonely man his determinate features, these transgredient moments set him apart from the crippling impotence that has characterized the preceding narrators and “justify” his position in life as the potential awakener of the sleepers. As a man on the threshold, he just has to cross a line to inject consciousness into the sleepers in his own forward-directed life. But by the same token, his position in life is finalized by being situated in a determinate sense of space and time that the image of the threshold summons; he cannot go beyond this function in the poem’s environment. That is all he is: a man on the threshold.

Exile and Return: “Close the Door”

Mehdi Akhavan Sales in *Bed'atha va Badaye-eh Nima Yushij* (The Innovations and Novelties of NimaYushij) discusses some of the most important aspects of Nima's poetry. Apart from his lengthy discussion about the attributes of Nimaic meter, Akhavan Sales elucidates vividly what we may call Nima's objective method. He begins by pointing out that Nima does not regard the description of subjective states as “adequate” for creating poetic texts. Instead, Nima employs concrete “objective images” to give flesh and blood to subjective states in his poems (247). Akhavan Sales explains that if a poet says, “I am happy and ecstatic,” he has only made a “general” and abstract statement without describing the peculiarities that make his happy and ecstatic state unique. What the poet must do is to produce “a series of concrete examples” in order to invest this particular state with magnitude and objectivity (247).

According to Akhavan Sales, Nima does not simply refer to an emotion, but illuminates the process that shapes that emotion. The development of every thought and feeling in Nima's poems transpires in a strikingly detailed and specified environment. As Akhavan Sales puts it, “Nima wants to say: let's not just say *suffering*, but, like Chekhov, show this suffering and find a form for its expression” (249). Nima's view of objective images resembles T. S. Eliot's notion of objective correlative in which every internal state must have an external

equivalent in “a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events.”⁸ For this reason, Nima views the poet “not as a transmitter of information,” but as a “depicter of meaning” (250).

Akhavan Sales examines some of Nima’s poems to show how he achieves objectivity in practice. One of these poems is “Kar-e Shab Pa” (The Night Watchman’s Work 1946). The poem opens in a foggy night where a sense of “terror” prevails over everything. In Akhavan Sales’s words, just to say “terror reigns over the night” is an extremely subjective statement, but Nima

⁸ As Leonard Paul Alishan suggests, Nima shared many views that Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot were also expounding at the time. Alishan points out that Nima believed in the pound’s dictum that the poet should “compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of metronome.” It was this belief that enabled Nima to end the hegemony of rhyming couplets in Persian poetry and restore “to the single line [mesra] its long lost dignity.” Arguing that “Nima’s poetics were now moving toward the objectivism of Pound and T.S. Eliot,” the poets that “he had probably never read,” Alishan cites some of Nima’s theoretical views that “astonish the reader in their similarities to the statements of Pound and Eliot.” The following is one of Nima’s statements that Alishan cites: “I believe in an “absolute rhythm,” a rhythm, that is, in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed.”

At one point, Alishan compares two separate statements by Nima and Eliot: “Nima said, “In disorder too, I believe in a form of order.” Eliot wrote, “The liberties that [the poet] may take are for the sake of order.” Alishan further suggests that while Pound and Eliot lived in a “literary society” which helped them formulate their views, “Nima had reached that level single-handedly.” See “Trends in Modernist Persian Poetry,” pages 10 and 11.

“supplements [this subjective statement] by adding objective details to it, especially through brief and concise sketches that delineate other movements” in the poem (274). All of a sudden, a boar leaps out of one corner and vanishes into another; other animals also make crackling noises, disappearing as swiftly as they appear. The sudden and startling sounds of fleeting animals create a sense of fright and mystery. The watchman, too, beats his drum and blows his horn to keep animals out of rice fields (274). The combination of all these sounds and activities and their contrast with the enveloping silence, little by little, gives “form” to the “meaning” that the poem tries to convey (263).

At the same time, these activities heighten the specific sense of space and time that enframes the poem. With every stroke, we come to know something new about the night watchman and his environment. He is a poor man who, for a meager wage, guards the paddy fields. Forced to leave the bedside of his sick and starving children, he spends lonely and terrifying nights in these fields. Nima establishes the essential qualities that make up his protagonist by placing him in a heavy and dampening atmosphere that characterizes the humid nights of northern Iran. The noises that he hears and the sensations that the poem’s particular space and time evoke trigger a chain of thoughts in the night watchman that expose his character. Akhavan Sales suggests that “it is impossible to mistake [the night watchman] for another person from a different region or social

class”; “It is him, the night watchman from Mazandaran who wears particular clothes and lives a life full of suffering” (276).

Through a combination of “metaphors, similes, storytelling, interesting disruptions and linkages, a slow and sobbing meter, simplicity of expression, and a language that is sprinkled with local dialect,” Nima gives objective dimensions to the sense of terror that dominates the poem (287). In this structure, nothing exists for itself and all elements participate in the life a single whole (the poem) to convey particular feelings more vividly (220). To Nima, a poem is a “harmonious whole” whose constituent parts are organically “connected” with one another (228). It is by means of this harmony that Nima generates meanings and emotions in his poems (220).

To explain the notion of harmony In Nima’s poetry, Akhavan Sales cites parts of Nima’s own theoretical remarks. Nima, for instance, refers to different parts of the poem as “the materials for constructing a grand edifice” (227). He likens his poems to an architectural structure in which, “if a brick is set in a wrong place,” the whole structure will collapse (228). At the same time, the solidity of this structure, along with the creation of an objective condition, depends on a specific sense of “time and space which is inseparable from the core of a writer’s thoughts” (270). To invest his thoughts and feelings with “clarity and impact,” the poet must give them material embodiment; he must anchor them in a distinct sense of “time and place” (270).

Nima's notions of objectivity and harmony, as Akhavan Sales defines them, come quite close to the way Bakhtin explains the architectonics of an aesthetic work. An architectonic structure also presupposes a determinate sense of space and time which fixes characters in distinct boundaries in the work's environment. We can clearly see how determinate temporal and spatial boundaries shape the meaning and trajectory of "Dar Foru Band" (Close the Door 1948). Of course, we must understand the time and place which envelop the speaker in "Close the Door" in apocalyptic terms and as the product of an end of the world vision. His retreat into an enclosed space, which separates him from the world by a door, gives specificity to his horizon in the poem:

Close the door because

I have no desire to see anyone.

The speaker in "Close the Door" is defined by a "*situated* awareness" that, as Holquist points out, results from occupying a "unique site [...] in the world at a particular time and in a particular place" (xxii). This situated awareness enables us to see everything perspectively. At the same time, seeing things perspectively requires outsideness or distance vis-à-vis what is seen. Although in Bakhtin's view, outsideness is the privilege of the author, it is enacted on multiple levels in "Close the Door." Of course, in the final instance, it is the author's consciousness that encompasses all other consciousnesses in the poem. Nevertheless, we may

use the idea of multiple levels of outsideness as a point of entry into “Close the Door.”

Perhaps, the best way to make sense of the difference between the author and the speaker in “Close the Door” is to say that, while the author stands outside the poem as a single whole and takes an evaluative stance toward its diverse horizons, the speaker’s outsideness is partial and reflects only the self-activity of one particular horizon in the poem. From within the speaker’s horizon, the world is in pieces and death and destruction reign over everything. But this perspective constitutes only a part, an aspect of the architectonics that shapes the poem.

According to Bakhtin, the author is “the bearer and sustainer of the intently active unity of a consummated whole (the whole of a hero and the whole of a work)” (*Art* 12). To accomplish this role, the author must maintain a position outside the work as a whole, a position that is “transgredient to each and every one of its particular moments or constituent features” (12). A whole of the work cannot be given to us from within the hero, “insofar as we “identify” ourselves with the hero and experience his life from within him” (12). The same principle applies to the speaker in “Close the Door.” He is inside the event of the poem and lacks the outside position by which he can consummate the whole of the work. For all we know, the interlocutor, who lives in a different space and time vis-à-vis the speaker in the poem’s environment, may offer a view of the world

that is radically contradictory to the speaker's vision. The poem requires a point of support outside, transgredient to both of these horizons, in order to be consummated as a whole. As Bakhtin suggests, this is the function that the author performs in an aesthetic work.

In Bakhtin's words, the whole "descends upon" the hero, it is "bestowed upon him as a gift—from another active consciousness: from the creative consciousness of an author" (12). Within this framework, the speaker's consciousness is encompassed by the consciousness of the author who enframes the particular relationship that he forms with the interlocutor and the world which he perceives as nightmarishly catastrophic. The speaker and the interlocutor are located in two different horizons in the poem's environment which can potentially bring them into conflict. Each of these characters lives his life ethically and cognitively within the open event of life. And while the speaker renounces the outside world, the interlocutor stands in a position that can potentially mark a return to the world.

We cannot see the background that is formed behind us at a particular moment. We cannot see the trees, the objects and the sky that occupy the space behind us and place us in a specific relationship with the world. That is why we need the other to perceive and enframe us in this background or, as Bakhtin puts it, invests us with outward expressedness. While each of the participants in "Close the Door" can enframe the other in his particular background, they are

both enframed by the author from outside as aspects of a single environment. That is why their outsideness or surplus of seeing in relation to one another is only partial and, therefore, non-aesthetic. The aesthetic moment comes into being only when the work is finalized as a single whole by the author from outside.

In principle, the author can see what is “inaccessible” to both participants in the poem. He can see the whole of the work and the relationships that its disparate horizons establish with one another. According to Bakhtin, not only does the author see and know “everything seen and known by each hero individually, but he also sees and knows *more* than they do” (12). This excess of seeing enables the author to finalize the speaker and the interlocutor in their unique sites within the poem’s architectonics. The speaker is consummated as a character in an enclosed space that, in the wake of an apocalyptic destruction, intends to renounce the world. We can also presume that a certain distance separates the speaker from the door which is the poem’s pivotal image and functions as the dual symbol of either repudiating or entering into the world. Why else then does he ask the interlocutor to close the door? Unlike him, the interlocutor is situated on the threshold to the outside world and in a position that enables him to either close or not to close the door.

Obviously, the closing of the door will have moral and practical consequences for the poem’s characters because it signifies a total break with

the world and ensures immersion in solitude. But in terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, the meaning-directed life of characters unfolds on ethical and cognitive plane and is, therefore, irrelevant to the work's aesthetic value. What matters aesthetically is the way in which different horizons within a work combine to create an architectonic whole. This architectonic structure enables the author to relate to characters axiologically and evaluate them in relation to one another. By enframing characters within a specific set of relations through a stable surplus of seeing, the author introduces the transgredient moments that consummate the whole of each character and the whole of the event in which they jointly participate.

The speaker in "Close the Door" rejects all forms of fellowship to shield himself from the cosmic chaos that is obliterating all signs of life in the outside world. To withdraw from this crumbling world, he needs valid reasons; he must take a valuational stance in relation to this world. But taking an evaluative position toward a person or situation depends on securing outsideness vis-à-vis that person or situation. By means of his outsideness vis-à-vis the world, even if it still appears in potential terms, the speaker can fix the flux of the world's disorder into a meaningful whole and see its ravaging assault on life in determinate and unambiguous terms. Only then can his act of recoiling from the world assume a meaningful dimension for him. This consummating activity enables the speaker to enframe the outside world in apocalyptic terms:

If a light shines on the horizon, it is the devil,
Holding a half-burned lamp in his hand.
He, on whom hope opens a door, will die,
The desert will only obliterate him.
The road is empty, the pear is rotten.
Everything withers from long suffering.
Every voice has died in this decay,
Just as no sound breaks the desert's silence.
With every flower that collapses into sleep, the narcissus
Hides its face in the map of thorns.

From the perspective of his self-inflicted exile, the speaker provides insights into a sphere of experience which he defines in purely apocalyptic terms. At the same time, his position functions as a point of reference in the poem to which the author can respond axiologically. The author orchestrates this response in the way he enframes the interlocutor in specific boundaries in the poem. Or to put it another way, the interlocutor is in essence a transgredient moment that the author introduces to foreground the dynamics of outsidiness in the poem's architectonic structure.

It is true that the interlocutor is also inside the poem and, therefore, cannot be transgredient to it. But the author utilizes the interlocutor's spatial and temporal specificity (his placement on the threshold to the outside world) vis-à-vis

the speaker to underscore the way outsideness shapes the poem's architectonics. Within this architectonic structure, the interlocutor co-experiences the speaker's life by entering into his horizon and listening to his disillusioned thoughts. But this co-experiencing does not lead to pure co-consciousness with the speaker. In fact, it assumes the form of what Bakhtin calls "sympathetic co-experiencing" (81). Sympathetic co-experiencing is not "pure co-experiencing, or an empathizing oneself into an object or into a hero" (81). It is not the duplication of the other's experience, but a "*new* emotional relationship" to that experience (81).

Bakhtin holds that this "lovelike sympathy" transforms "the entire emotional-volitional structure of the hero's inward experience" and imparts "an entirely different coloring or tonality to it" (81). Sympathetic co-experiencing "introduces values into the co-experienced life that are transgredient to this life"; it "transposes this life from the very outset into a new value-and-meaning context" (83). The interlocutor first co-experiences the inner life of the speaker, but then he returns to his own horizon and sees the speaker from the perspective of his own situated awareness in the world. In this sense, he both grasps the speaker's inner life and perceives his outward expressedness (the way the latter's exterior is enframed in an environment). This act of sympathetic co-experiencing conjoins the speaker's outward expressedness with his inner life in the interlocutor's eyes; the speaker is experienced both from inside and outside

in a single instant. Bakhtin believes a “whole integral human being”—a human being whose inner life is conjoined with his outward expressedness—is “the product of the aesthetic creative point of view” (83). It is by uniting the speaker’s inner life with his outward expressedness that the interlocutor reenacts the author’s own aesthetic activity inside the poem.

In Bakhtin’s words, art, or the aesthetic point of view, enables us to experience two lives simultaneously:

Art gives me the possibility of experiencing not just one but several lives, and this enables me to enrich the accumulated experience of my own actual life. It gives me the possibility of partaking, from within, in a different life for the sake of that life in itself, for the sake of its remarkable significance qua life. (80)

Having experienced the speaker’s inner life, the interlocutor’s return to his own horizon gives him a double perspective; or to put it more precisely, his consciousness undergoes a kind of widening as it encompasses another consciousness, that of the speaker. This widening of consciousness enriches the interlocutor’s life because it compels him to confront with two alternative visions of the world in the same instant. These alternative visions are embodied in the image of the threshold.

The interlocutor’s posture on the threshold imports a strain of “*crisis* and *break* in life” in the poem; it impregnates the existing situation with a potential for

surprising turns and unexpected twists. Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination* describes the threshold as “the breaking point of a life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life (or the indecisiveness that fails to change a life, the fear to step over the threshold)” (248). The position of the interlocutor at the end of “Close the Door” is marked by the possibility of a decision that can change the course of both his own life and that of the speaker; their lives can take any direction depending on whether the interlocutor chooses to close the door or not.

But this sense of unfinalizability exists on a purely cognitive and ethical plane in the work; we can imagine its outcome only in moral or cognitive terms. On the aesthetic plane, the interlocutor is situated in a distinctly finalized horizon that is clearly differentiated from the horizon of the speaker in the poem’s environment. It is the very finishedness of the interlocutor’s boundaries, the very determinateness of his place in the poem’s environment vis-à-vis that of the speaker, that enables him to function as a different axis of value in the poem. On the aesthetic plane, as Bakhtin may have put it, the interlocutor’s consciousness is concretely “localized and *embodied*”; it is “lovingly *consummated*” by the author from outside precisely because it is enclosed in a distinctly spatial form, the form of the threshold. The consummation of the interlocutor in stable boundaries enables us to take an evaluative stance toward him.

Even if the consciousnesses of characters in a work may diverge from one another, they are, in the final instance, parts of the same aesthetic event and

share a single experience. That is why it is only the author who can stand outside the work completely and engage in a value-positing activity that provides characters with their unique sites in the work's environment. It is through form that the author gives embodiment to the unique site that each character occupies in the work. As Bakhtin puts it, "in giving expression to the hero" through form, the author also expresses his own relationship to him (90). To Bakhtin, this relationship engenders "the specifically aesthetic moment":

Aesthetic form cannot be founded and validated from within the hero, out of his own directedness to objects and meaning, i.e., on the basis of that which has validity only for his own lived life.

Aesthetic form is founded and validated from within the *other*—the author, as the author's creative reaction to the hero and his life. As a reaction, that is, which produces values that are transgredient in principle to the hero and his life and yet are essentially related to the latter....This creative reaction is aesthetic love. (90)

Within this framework, the author's form-giving activity in "Close the Door" is carried out by investing characters with a situated awareness in the world, by placing them in a determinate space and time that makes valuational relation to them possible.

Once Upon a Time There Was a Neighbor:

“In the Cold Wintry Night”

Mohammad Mokhtari in *Ensan dar Sher-e Mo'aser: ba Tahlil-e Shere*

Nima, Shamlu, Akhavan, Forough Farokhzad (Man in New Poetry: an Analysis of the Works of Nima, Shamlu, Akhavan, Forough Farokhzad) argues that the major principle that shapes Nima's poetry is respect for the other and the acknowledgement of his existence in its authentic makeup. According to Mokhtari, Nima rejects the tendency for “generalization” as a sterile “old habit” that had crippled classical Persian poetry. It is for this reason that Nima's poems are populated with “little incidents and the lives of little human beings” (220-221). While reducing everything to a single meaning and a fixed and immutable situation, a generalizing outlook cannot perceive the subtleties, diversities and differences that constitute life. In contrast, the point of departure in Nima's poetry is always the recognition of the other's presence in all its actuality. From Nima's perspective, what shapes all human affairs is the relationship between “I,” “you,” and “he/she/it” (221). However, “the presence of the other” is the main point of reference in this triangle as “he/she/it turns frequently into the main center of attention” in Nima's poetry (221).

To Nima, man possesses a “regional” and “local” identity, but this specifically situated identity then finds “universal” expression through its class character (222). In other words, Nima begins with a particular person and a

particular situation and then links them to larger human, social and political realities. The night watchman in “The Night Watchman’s Work” clearly belongs to a class of starving villagers who are exploited by wealthy landowners. As Akhavan Sales puts it, the night watchman uses local words and expressions and shows acute awareness of the details of an environment that can only exist in the rural parts of Mazandaran in northern Iran. Nevertheless, any socially and economically suppressed individual can identify with his situation. Thus, Nima’s starting point is always a particular local condition in which a particular individual exists, but then he ties this particular condition to the general state of humanity. It is always emphasis on the individual’s particularity that makes us conscious of the suffering that he shares with other human beings:

The triangle of “I, you, he/she/it” is unbreakable and, in its balanced continuity, shapes the relationships of human beings with each other. “He/she” is the suffering human of our time. His/her pain and suffering flows in “me” and infects “you”. Thus, a poem that originates in “my” suffering travels toward “you.” Even if “I” and “you” are sometimes absent in the poem, “he/she/it” and their fates are always present. (227)

Shapour Jorkesh in *Butiqay-e Sher-e Nima Yushij* (The Poetics of Nima Yushij) makes certain observations that are similar to Mokhtari’s suggestions. Of course, he approaches Nima in a much more elaborate and systematic fashion.

Jorkesh believes that one of Nima's central concepts is the thought of "tolerance in a dogmatic and tyrannical society" (10). According to Jorkesh, the pronoun "I," as a powerful "omniscient" viewpoint," was the dominant voice in traditional Persian literature. However, Nima shattered the ascendancy of this hegemonic voice by "giving credence to the object," by replacing the "I" with "he/she/it" (10).

Discussing Mokhtari's diagnosis of the "the absence of the other" in classical Persian poetry, Jorkesh points out that Mokhtari examines the thoughts of poets, such as Nima and Shamlu, to show their response to a repressive system which had plunged Iranian society into a profound crisis. Mokhtari regards classical poetry as the representation of a pathology that reflects the power structure of a despotic society (36). Within this power structure, a "superior" or "chosen I" existed whose supremacy was eternal and indisputable. This tendency led to the creation of an elitism which obliterated the right to equality on all levels of society" (as cited in Jorkesh 37). According to Jorkesh, Mokhtari conceives of poetry as an essentially sociological construct in which the relations of domination and subordination are reproduced.

As Jorkesh aptly points out, a major concern of Mokhtari is the poet's tendency to mirror the relations of dominance and subordination in his work. Mokhtari asks on which side of this equation the poet stands: does he regard himself superior or inferior to others? Although Mokhtari recognizes a certain distance in Nima's poems that set the poet apart from the ordinary people, he

believes that the Nimaic poet, as a “vanguard” of change and “awakener” of consciousness, ultimately becomes one and the same with his people:

In Nima’s poetry, the vanguard is an awakener that has blended with all. His only difference is his higher degree of awareness, or his propensity to become conscious sooner than others. And this privilege does not create an un-traversable distance between him and his [contemporaries]. This privilege does not elevate the poet above others. Instead, it entrusts him with the commitment to [transmit consciousness to others]. (as cited in Jorkesh 38)

Mokhtari here stresses “the organic solidarity of human society” as one of Nima’s major preoccupations (39). In a poem such as “The Amen Bird,” even if the poet is the catalyst for cataclysmic social events, he lives and suffers like everyone else. But he differs from others because he feels the depth and magnitude of his own suffering and the suffering of others more acutely.

Nima in “Sher va Sha-eri” (On Poetry and Poeticizing) stresses suffering as a necessary condition for poetic creativity. He also maintains that understanding the suffering of others makes the poet intensely aware of the common bonds that unite him with his people:

The main point is to suffer and, in the most developed stage [of consciousness], to understand the suffering of others...Since others have made our life, our art owes something to them...The

true artist does not say I do not understand the suffering of others.

(as cited in Jorkesh 39)

Nima in *The Value of Feelings in the Life of Actors* expounds more fully his view of the fundamental solidarity that joins all human beings together. To him, man “has relations with a collective of other men like himself and is dependent on them” (as cited in Jorkesh 39). This collective, “according to a form of life which is born out of historical relations,” manifests “a particular taste and talent” and reveals a set of “thoughts and feelings” that reflect the sensibilities of a specific era (39). Jorkesh suggests that such views by Nima “lay the theoretical ground for the creation of a democratic poetry” in which the presence of the other assumes a pivotal significance (41).

In a manner similar to Mokhtari, Jorkesh argues that “no thing or person” in Nima’s poetry has meaning in itself; instead, the meaning of all things and persons is the product of “the presence of others” (88). Nima in *The Neighbor’s Words* mentions that “the logic of materialism” has taught him that “nothing is the result of itself and all things are the product of [interaction] with other things” (60). Jorkesh utilizes Mokhtari’s insight into the constituting value of the other in Nima’s poetry as a starting point for his own theoretical reflection on what he calls Nima’s “new field of vision” (49). To Jorkesh, the elements that comprise this new field of vision are: “1) submersion; 2) objectivity; 3) subjectivity; 4) description; 5) and narrative” (49).

The category of submersion, as Nima himself conceives of it, depends on a genuine understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the other and how he reacts to his environment. Nima explains this point in some length in the form of the advice that he offers to a younger poet for improving his work:

My dear, you must be able to enter into a stone to feel with your body the earth's past periods in which [the stone was] assailed by the storms of the earth. You must become a glass of wine and feel the shattering of its fragments with your whole body when it falls and breaks.

This impulse must take you to the past of man and you should dig into it. You must enter into the tombs of the dead, isolated ruins, and the remote deserts in which you can shout and sit silent for long hours. I am telling you that if these things are absent, there will be nothing.

To know a stone is not enough. It is like knowing a poem. You must sometimes place yourself inside it and look outside through its inner eye. At the same time, you must look at the stone from the perspective of what it looks at. This exchange must take place many times so that you could learn something according to your intelligence and feeling and that burning zeal that is in you.

(The Neighbor's 7-8)

Jorkesh maintains that Nima's method for approaching the "object" initially involves four different stages: *holul* (penetration); *esteqragh* (submersion); *takhmir* (fermentation); *zob* (melting) (49). In the stage of penetration, the poet enters into the object, but he still maintains a sense of detachment and distance from the object. Submersion is a profounder stage as the poet loses awareness of his own presence and grasps the object on its own terms. In the stage of fermentation, which is a higher stage of unity between the poet and the object, all the cells in the poet's body and spirit blend with the object; and finally, in the stage of melting, a complete unity between the poet and the object takes place (50).

The combined effect of these four stages reveals some resemblance to the stage in Bakhtinian architectonics in which a consciousness co-experiences the life of another consciousness by entering its horizon. In Bakhtin's view, co-experiencing is not pure co-consciousness and two consciousnesses never coincide in absolute terms. Jorkesh explains Nima's theory of submersion in similar terms by differentiating it from what Persian mystical poets called *fana* (annihilation). Unlike the mystical poet who annihilates himself in God or the vision of truth totally, the Nimaic poet supplements the stage of submersion in the object by "returning" to himself. According to Jorkesh, the return to oneself enables the poet to "experience other objects" by repeating the same architectonic activity in relation to them (85).

Nima emphasizes the poet's capacity "to be himself and everyone else" as a sign of poetic strength (*The Neighbor's* 13). To him, a true poet must be able to "separate from himself temporarily" and look "at the bodies of others from the aperture of their own eyes"; he must be able "to experience the same enjoyment that they extract from their work," and his "sadness and love must blend with their sadness and love" (as cited in Jorkesh 53). Nima continues that the true poet is able to grasp "the neighbor's religious feelings" as a prelude "to improving" them; he is able to become "an Egyptian" or "the Arab of the desert around the reed fields" and feel the same "pleasant freshness of the evening" in himself" (53). These remarks by Nima justify Mokhtari and Jorkesh's contention that the recognition of the other is the central shaping force in Nima's poetry.

In Jorkesh's words, the subjective tendency of classical Persian poetry made the subject and his omniscient voice the only value-giving source in the poem. Within this framework, all objects were nothing more than the manifestation of the poet's emotional states (57). In contrast, Nima recognizes the other's presence and its impact on his poems so profoundly that he ends up "placing the object in the center" of his work (58).

From Nima's perspective, "each personage must have an objective presence in the poem which is determined by a particular behavior, voice, and character"; and this condition cannot be achieved "unless the poet reinforces in himself the power of penetration into others" (58). To achieve this, the poet must

utilize “description” as an aspect of his overall narrative strategy. The descriptive model enables the poet to register “the inner and outer states of the poem’s personae” meticulously and capture the scene in its total objectivity (63). In Jorkesh’s words, the Nimaic description “focuses on details and avoids generalizations” to give a “material” shape to “the object outside the mind” (63). In this way, Nima’s descriptive model shifts the focus from “the observer’s subjective state” to “the concrete condition of the object which is observed” (63).

Nima in suggests that description is the inseparable part of a narrative layout that makes the development of the theme and characters possible through a series of connected stages (*The Neighbors*’ 56). Nima argues that a poet should not simply say a character was “compassionate or generous,” but must delineate the process through which this “compassion and generosity” is gestated and turned into the concrete qualities of a person or an object (113). Nima conceives of his descriptive model as a tool that gives outline, substance and concreteness to the object by placing it in a specific location and at a particular time. Describing the method of composing “The Rooster Crows,” Nima says that he first gave “definite features” to the rooster’s crow and then allowed these features to flesh out in a particular place and time (130). According to Nima, the descriptive model prevents the poet from using general or abstract statements such as “I am sad”; this statement “cannot be seen and, therefore,

fails to make any impact” (65). Instead, the poet must depict how this state of sadness comes into being, develops, and affects him in concrete circumstances.

All in all, Jorkesh believes that Nima’s shift toward the object and his subversion of the subject’s privileged status in traditional Persian poetry sums up his unique achievement. One of the consequences of the collapse of subjectivity is the creation of an architectonics in which the poet maintains a position of outsideness vis-à-vis his characters. In Bakhtin’s view, irrespective of the cognitive and ethical tendencies of characters, only the author’s outsideness in relation to them can generate the specifically aesthetic moment. Nima, too, considers all cognitive and ethical concerns as irrelevant to the formation of the aesthetic moment. He formulates this point lucidly in *The Neighbor’s Words*:

Like Satan, I enjoy evil and it does not matter if I don’t commit it. I
find vice good; the same goes for goodness, enjoyment, hatred,
beauty, ugliness...I am a crow that may be crushed by a snowball.
But what matters to me, what I look at, is the grandeur and beauty
of the snowball. (89)

To Nima, the value of a poem is not measured in terms of its ethical or cognitive concerns. Instead, as Bakhtin puts it in another context, its value is viewed “independently of the yet-to-be meaning of the event of life” (*Art* 12).

Mokhtari mentions “Dar Shab-e Sard-e Zemestani” (In the Cold Wintry Night 1950) as a poem in which we are intensely aware of the presence of the

other. Here the other appears in the form of a neighbour who, while handing down a “story” to the speaker, leaves a life-changing impact on the latter’s life. When the neighbour is about to leave the poem’s space for good, the three questions that he asks reveal the depth of his anxiety over the preservation of his story. As the speaker tries to explain the impact of these questions on himself, he reconstructs, through an act of remembrance, the moment in which the neighbor uttered them:

And I still remember this story
These words hang from my lips:
“Who is lighting the lamp? Who is burning?
Who will preserve this story in his heart?”

What generates significance and movement in “In the Cold Wintry Night” is the architectonic relationship that is formed between what Bakhtin calls “highly particularized character zones” (*The Dialogic* 316). The neighbor is literally enframed in a particularized character zone by the quotation marks that encase his three questions in a determinate space and time.

In-between the quotation marks is the only space that the neighbor is actually present in the poem. Besides confining him in this enclosed space, the quotation marks situate the neighbor and his words in the “absolute past” for the speaker. The placement of the neighbor in determinate spatial and temporal boundaries enables the speaker to finalize him in a unique site in existence.

Situated in a fixed horizon in the absolute past, the neighbor “coincides with himself” completely; he reveals all he is in the poem “at a single glance” through the three questions that he asks, and this integrating perception enables the speaker to consummate him positively. In Bakhtin’s view, fixing the other’s spatial and temporal boundaries is the first step toward taking an evaluative position toward him.

It is by finalizing the neighbor in determinate boundaries that the speaker gains an objectifying distance from him, a distance that makes axiological relationship to him possible. From this distance, the speaker can grasp in clear terms the impact of the neighbor’s demand for the preservation of his story on himself. More specifically, this distance or outside position is secured by bracketing the neighbor in the space between the quotation marks, in the absolute past, as something already consummated. The quotation marks situate the neighbor’s consciousness within the wider band of the speaker’s consciousness as an axis which he must subject to valuation. In this way, the speaker, as Bakhtin may have said, establishes a productive relationship to the neighbor.

In terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, the speaker’s position of outsideness vis-à-vis the neighbor enables him “to collect and concentrate” “*all of*” him as a “whole” (*Art* 14). This is basically an aesthetic activity that, according to Bakhtin, only the author can perform. The author in “In the Cold Wintry Night,”

however, foregrounds this aesthetic activity inside the poem by utilizing the speaker's position outside the neighbor. From this perspective, the speaker himself becomes a transgredient moment by which the author reenacts the dynamics of outsideness as the poem's structuring principle. In this sense, outsideness transpires on multiple levels in "In the Cold Wintry Night." If on one level the speaker maintains a position of outsideness in relation to the neighbor inside the poem, the author maintains his outsideness vis-à-vis the speaker and all relations in which he enters on a higher plane of aesthetic activity.

According to Bakhtin, if the author loses this outside position in relation to the work as a whole, he cannot situate characters in their distinctly differentiated horizons in the work's environment, a condition that is necessary for a valuational approach to them. Only by finalizing characters in stable horizons, in determinate spatial and temporal boundaries, can the author turn them into "whole human beings" and invest them with "viewability." And viewability is the precondition of relating to characters in terms of value. The speaker enacts this structure of authoring inside "In the Cold Wintry Night"; he gives the neighbor viewability by fixing him in a determinate space and time.

To Bakhtin, a character in himself and without the boundaries that are imposed on him from outside is "diffused and dispersed in the projected world of cognition and in the open event of ethical life" (14). Self-consummation in space and time is impossible for the character because he cannot have an objective

perception of his “full outward image,” his “exterior,” “the background behind his back,” and his “relation to the event of death” (14). Only the author from outside can supply these details and produce the character’s full outward image (13). As Bakhtin puts it, the author “knows and sees more not only in the direction in which the hero is looking and seeing, but also – in a different direction, in a direction which is in principle inaccessible to the hero himself” (13). The author in “In the Cold Wintry Night” knows and sees more than the speaker in the direction that the latter “is looking and seeing.” Not only does the author see the compression of the neighbor’s whole life for the speaker in the three questions that the former asks, he also perceives the impact of these questions on the speaker himself. i.e., the speaker’s “lamp” becomes even warmer than the sun’s stove (the lamp in all probability symbolizes a bursting surge of consciousness that the blasting energy of the neighbor’s story has released).

Although we can never know the content of the neighbor’s story, we are still able to fathom its impact on the speaker. The actual story may be absent, but it can be reconstructed in terms of the impact it leaves on the speaker’s mind. What matters is how the neighbor’s story influences the speaker and infuses him with hope and intensity. Clearly, this story heightens the speaker’s consciousness and gives it a powerfully sharpened awareness which finds its objective correlative in the warmth that his lamp emits:

In the cold wintry night

Even the sun's stove is not burning like the warm stove of my lamp,
Neither any other lamp
Nor a frost-clad moon which sheds light from above.

I lighted my lamp in-between the arrival and departure of my
neighbor

One dark night

And it was a cold wintry night,

When the poem opens, the neighbor is already consummated in the poem's absolute past. In contrast, the speaker, who still experiences life as an open event on the ethical and cognitive plane, turns into an *evaluative* consciousness vis-à-vis the neighbor by standing outside him in time and space. From this outside position, the speaker performs an act of authoring by consummating the neighbor in finalized boundaries. Clark and Holquist describe this activity as an "active giving of value" (75). At the same time, within the poem's architectonics, while the speaker's consciousness encompasses the neighbor's consciousness, it is in turn encompassed by the author's consciousness. Here one circle of consciousness, which encloses another circle of consciousness in its band, is itself enclosed by a third circle of consciousness.

From the perspective of the author, who lives an unconsummated life outside the aesthetic construct, the speaker and the neighbor are consummated

inside it. In that sense, only the author possesses an authentic sense of outsideness. The speaker and the neighbor, on the other hand, exist on a unified plane inside the work as participants in the same event. From the author's outside perspective, both of these participants are finalized in the way they define each other architectonically. If the neighbor is finalized in the absolute past, the speaker is also eternally fixed in the clod wintry night of the poem's present which, from the author's outside position, also recedes into the past. Of course, the speaker also reenacts the structure of authoring by imposing spatial and temporal boundaries on the neighbor, but he cannot perform this authorial function in relation to himself. This is the architectonic privilege of the author who utilizes his excess of seeing to enframe both the speaker and the neighbor in the single whole that constitutes the poem's environment.

The speaker in "In the Cold Wintry Night" implies that he has heard the neighbor's story and is entrusted with the task of preserving it in a past that has occurred before the poem begins. This means that he has already entered the neighbor's horizon and co-experienced his inner life with him somewhere outside the poem. When "In the Cold Wintry Night" opens, the speaker has already returned to his own horizon. From this angle of vision, the neighbor begins to recede into the past for the speaker who now sees the neighbor not only in the way the latter perceived himself, "not only from his eyes," but also from an surplus of seeing that he has gained by returning to his own horizon. This

position bestows on the speaker a particular situated awareness in the world by which he gains access to the combined knowledge of his own horizon and that of the neighbor.

Bakhtin explains that, from within, parts of a person's body remain "inaccessible to [his] gaze (his head, his face and its expression)"; he is unable to see "the world behind his back" as well as "a whole series of objects and relations" that exist around him (23). All these are the transgredient moments that only someone else from outside can introduce into the life of this person. These moments produce the excess of seeing by which the author gives a full outward image to the hero by placing him in a determinate position in space and time, a position which gives the hero his unique site in existence. In Bakhtin's view, this excess of seeing is an essential part of the structure of authoring. It "is founded in the uniqueness and irreplaceability of [the] place" of the author in the world and his outsideness vis-à-vis the hero (23). In the same vein, the speaker's act of consummating the neighbor in a particular space and time, which becomes possible by virtue of his excess of seeing vis-à-vis him, also foregrounds the dynamics of authoring inside the poem. This fundamentally perspectival relationship to the neighbor provides the speaker with a situated awareness in the world that enables him to "shape" or "finish-off" the neighbor.

The interaction that shapes the relationship between the speaker and the neighbor assumes a very complex form. The speaker moves into the neighbor's

horizon and co-experiences his words and thoughts, but he does not coincide with him completely. In the actual space of the poem, as it unfolds in the present, the speaker narrates his moment of co-experiencing with the neighbor by means of a surplus of seeing that he has gained after returning to his own horizon. This surplus of seeing, which enables him to experience two lives simultaneously (his own and that of the neighbor) also enables him to enrich the neighbor's life-story by an "influx of sense."

Enframed by the speaker in the absolute past, the neighbor makes a clear demand for the preservation of his story. The question is whether the speaker can respond to this demand and keep the neighbor's story intact. The fact is that the speaker's excess of seeing, which is the product of his outsidiness vis-à-vis the neighbor in the event of the poem, prevents him from carrying out the neighbor's demand to the letter. Even if he decides to retell that story in intact form, the act of repeating someone else's speech will always be marked by re-accentuation of that speech. Bakhtin explains the changes in intonation and purpose that always accompany the rendition of someone else's words:

Someone else's words introduced into our own speech inevitably assume a new (our own) interpretation and become subject to our evaluation of them; that is, they become double-voiced. All that can vary is the interrelationship between these two voices. (*The Dialogic* 195)

Bakhtin here comes quite close to Walter Benjamin's definition of storytelling as he explains it in "The Storyteller." Benjamin believes that storytelling is invariably "the art of repeating stories," but every time a story is repeated, it manifests a new evaluative angle that is rooted in each storyteller's own life-experience (149).

If Benjamin calls attention to the "germinative" power of the story and its saturation in the life and experience of every storyteller, Bakhtin restates the same thing by the concept of "active understanding." Garry Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson explain the complex process through which every "listener" engages in active understanding:

The listener must not only decode the utterance, but also grasp why it is being said, relate it to his own complex of interests and assumptions, imagine how the utterance responds to future utterances and what sort of response it invites, evaluate it, and intuit how potential third parties would understand it. Above all, the listener must go through a complex process of *preparing a response* to the utterance. (128)

In this sense, the speaker in "In the Cold Wintry Night" does more than preserving the neighbor's story. His placement in a unique site in existence in the poem's present, vis-à-vis the neighbor who is fixed in the absolute past, gives him a retrospective understanding. He can evaluate the past from a position in

the present, and this is an excess of seeing that the neighbor himself will never have.

According to Clark and Holquist, what makes an utterance distinct from other utterances is its specific “surplus of seeing,” where excess is defined relative to the lack all others have of that world shaped exclusively by me” (71). Two people may be in “the same event,” but their “surplus of seeing,” or “the law of placement,” will make that event something different to each of them. As a result, their experience of that event will never coincide:

For Bakhtin, the system of reference that created the effect of simultaneity was to be found in the mechanics of self/other transformations, specifically the law of placement. You can see things behind my back, such as a painting or passing clouds, that are closed to my vision, while I can see things that your placement denies to your vision, such as a different painting on the wall or other clouds that are moving behind your head. This difference determines that although we are in the same event, the event is different for us both. (70)

Within the parameters of “the law of placement,” the speaker in “In the Cold Wintry Night” may repeat the neighbor’s story at some future juncture, but that story will be in some way non-coincidental with what the neighbor has conveyed to him.

The architectonic structure in “In the Cold Wintry Night” enables the speaker to stand outside the neighbor and enrich his life by investing it with the transgredient moments that it lacks. Similarly, the author, from his position of outsidness vis-à-vis the work as a whole, is able to enrich the speaker’s life and evaluate it in terms of the architectonic relations that he forms with both the neighbor and other plastic and pictorial features in the poem’s environment.

Silence and Cry: “The Raven”

Said Hamidian traces the development of Nima’s poetry from a Romantic period to a Realist period and then, as his poems reach full bloom and maturity, to a Symbolic period. While *Afsaneh* is Nima’s most important achievement during his Romantic period, his Realism climaxes in “The Night Watchman’s Work.” Nima’s Symbolic poetry in its rudimentary form begins with “Sham-eh Karaji” (The Barge’s Candle 1926) and “Ghoo” (The Swan 1926) and then turns into a full-fledged Social Symbolism with “Ghorab” (The Raven 1938) and “The Phoenix.”

Hamidian contends that Nima, in his Symbolic period, “does not explain or offer any interpretations about the axial symbols of his poems” (133). As an example, Hamidian analyzes the candle as the central symbol in “The Barge’s Candle.” He suggests that in “the darkness which is coupled with the tumult of heavy waves,” the candle becomes “the only source of light and glimpse of hope” for the fisherman on the barge in this poem (134). Nonetheless, the candle is in effect “dejected and sick” and is too fragile to act “as a point of reliance for the fisherman amidst his fears” on the sea (134). The fisherman does whatever he can to keep the candle burning; he gathers the melted wax around the candle and straightens it to keep the flame alive, but the flame is “inconstant and depressed” (134). At the same time, the fitful efforts of the candle to keep on burning increase, but they are no match for “the encompassing darkness and

turbulent and rushing waves” (134). On the surface, the poem simply narrates the attempts of a fisherman to keep a candle burning in the middle of a perilous sea, but what the candle exactly symbolizes opens the way to alternative interpretations. Does it signify struggle for political survival? Or does it just stand for a philosophical view of existence? Or should we merely read the whole poem literally as the battle of the fisherman and the candle with natural elements?

Hamidian explains that symbol is characterized by an “expansiveness” for “potential meanings” since it evokes a “broad range of associations” (141). At the same time, Nima’s symbols enter into complex relations with one another and, like “living and dynamic organisms,” affect and determine the meaning of each other (141). For this reason, unlike the allegorical structures of classical Persian poetry, symbols offer multiple possibilities for interpretation and generate “ambiguity” and unconventional meanings in Nima’s poems (141). Nevertheless, the freedom of interpretation that the use of symbols produces in Nima’s poetry is constrained “within the framework of the intentions that the poet pursues” (141). There are “signs and traces in every poem that, like a compass, shed light on the poet’s outlook and judgment regarding diverse issues and themes” (142). Symbol differs from metaphor because it refers to multiple referents and exhibits a potential for “proliferation of [its] meaning” (142). However, what makes Nima’s poetry innovative is its use of Symbolism in a social context (143).

Hamidian explains the peculiarities that differentiate Nima's social Symbolism from the social poetry that had immediately preceded him during and after the Constitutional Revolution. He points out that the poetry of the Constitutional period resembled political slogans or radical pronouncements about political and social events "in a manner that was similar to announcements in newspapers" (147). Nima utilized the symbol's capacity for multiple meanings and its tendency for "indirection" to inject "a powerful imaginative element into his social and political vision"; he exploited "the most basic and evident principle of art: the image instead of direction" (148). But while Nima embraced Symbolism and its indirect method for conveying meaning, he also "refused to plunge headlong into abstraction and extreme subjectivity of French Symbolist poets, mainly because "commitment" to freedom and social justice remained one of his most enduring preoccupations (148). French Symbolism did not influence Nima in terms of the content and meaning of his poems; instead, its impact is felt much more strongly in respect to form and the manner of symbol-making in his poems (148-49). As a poet who was "deeply concerned with the lives of oppressed classes and the problems that had besieged the community of Iranian intellectuals," Nima took advantage of symbols which exhibited a "perfect capacity for depicting the social background" (149).

Hamidian also discusses the influence of moral and allegorical tales on Nima's use of animal figures in his poems. There are many fables in classical

Persian literature that are either recounted by animals or their protagonists are animals, including Attar's *Manteq al-Tayr* (The Conference of the Birds 1177). Hamidian points out that, while Nima borrows many animal figures from the allegorical poetry of the past, he severs them from that past context to give them a new symbolic resonance (151). That is why the animals in Nima's poems do not resemble or even remotely echo their counterparts in classical Persian literature. As Hamidian suggests, there are, however, rare instances in which Nima remains faithful to classical models, including "the rooster that announces the arrival of the morning" in "The Rooster Cows," or "a corpse-eating vulture that stands as a symbol of death and degraded nature" in "Ruy-e Jedarhay-e Shekasteh" (On Broken Walls 1947) (152). In sum, what the past allegorical poems offer Nima is "the high capacity of animal figures to be constructed as symbols" (152). It should also be noted that some of Nima's animal symbols, such as "the tree-frog," are quite original. One reason for this originality is because Nima has extracted these symbols from his own native environment. At times, these symbols also "reflect the poet's own personality and the quality of his thoughts and feelings" (152).

Hamidian then explains some other symbols in Nima's poetry. The rain, for example, is often "a transformative and life-giving element" that destroys all vices and, in its final reincarnation, turns into "something like a true revolution" (153). Of course, the particular meaning of the rain in each Nima's poem

ultimately depends on the context in which it appears and the relationships it forms with other elements in that context. For this reason, the symbol of rain can also take on ominous and even death-laden dimensions as in “Ruy-e Bandargah” (On the Waterfront 1954). In the same way, the symbol of cloud is sometimes “generative of rain, a source of fertility and joy,” and sometimes the sign of a “stifling, parched, frowning, and wandering life” (153). And while the hot weather frequently symbolizes “stasis or a repressive [political] regime,” the “burned,” “barren” and “dry” farm often stands for “a whole existence that is ruined by injustice and inequality” (153).

Hamidian talks about some other symbols in Nima as well. He suggests that Nima utilizes “the damp and suffocating night of northern Iran” as a telling symbol to expose tyranny and oppression (153). In contrast, the boat, for instance, appears as a symbol of hope and a vehicle of salvation that makes progress and movement possible (153). In a similar manner, the dawn usually symbolizes the first signs of deliverance and victory over oppression (154). Of course, the dawn, too, as in “Anduhnak-e Shab” (Sorrowful by Night), is sometimes contaminated by adverse and threatening elements. Hamidian reminds us that while symbols, such as night and dawn, had a “metaphoric” function in the past poetry, Nima infused them with a “particular social and political significance”; he turned these symbols into a sign of his “commitment” for changing social and political conditions (154). Nevertheless, Hamidian admits

that Nima's poetry partakes of "a rich artistic essence that is timeless" and not necessarily political (161). He cites Nima's own words to substantiate this point: "I do not wish to present my poems as completely political; I only intend to express the connections between poetry and its own time" (161).

Hamidian analyzes "The Raven," the first poem that Nima wrote along with "The Phoenix" in his own innovative metric structure. Hamidian begins his discussion by speaking about the choice of *zahaf-e mash-hur-e bahr-e mozar-eh*, a "slow and heavy meter" in classical Persian poetry that Nima exploits to construct "an evidently heavy atmosphere" in "The Raven" (185). This metric pattern intensifies the sense of "desolation and darkness" that fills the poem. This is a particularly appropriate meter for "The Raven" because one of its two central characters is a "solitary creature" that occupies a place in a "gloomy and ambiguous atmosphere" (185).

Hamidian holds that in Nima's poetry, animal figures mirror man's "mental and characterological subtleties"; they give expression to his "anxieties and inner turmoil" and reveal his "angle of vision" (191). However, the dynamics of the relationship between the man and the eponymous bird, the two main characters of "The Raven," exhibits a much more complex structure. Standing face to face, the man and the raven gaze intently at one another. The man's view of the raven is fractured by dual feelings. Although the man perceives the bird as a symbol of "sadness, ugliness, and vice," a creature that intends "to subject people to the

flow of a long suffering,” he also imagines it as “the destroyer of reactionary beliefs and banal thoughts” (192). Nevertheless, when the man calls the bird, the bird remains “cold and motionless”:

Indifferent to wet and dry
The raven gazes at the man
It sits all cold and motionless in its place
And the waves, sternly, surge and subside.

Perhaps, “The Raven,” better than any other poem by Nima, shows how the author imposes consummating features on characters in their environment while the horizons of these characters remain risk-fraught and eventful from within. Everything in “The Raven” is essentially viewed and described from an outside position. As Bakhtin might have said, the fundamental principle of “organization and ordering” in “The Raven” is transgredient to the characters’ own actual and possible consciousness. Both the raven and the man are seen and sketched from an objectifying distance:

At evening, when over the mountain
The sun is veiled by the yellow colors of its sorrow
A raven is sitting alone on the shore.
And in the distance, the water is tinged
With the color of the sky, and an oak
Turned yellow by autumn,

Has fallen, capsized, on a patch of rocks.

Among those distant points

A black point is visible

It is a man searching for a way,

For a corner to hide from the eyes of others,

Where he can cry out his concealed sorrow.

The descriptions in this opening stanza focus on the exterior or outward expressedness of the raven and the man. Both are situated in determinate spatial and temporal boundaries in an environment that is populated by other objects as well. Each object around them operates as a consummating feature in the plastic and pictorial world of the poem. The time of the poem is an autumn evening. The sun, as it is setting over the mountain, hides the yellow colors of its sorrow; the lonely raven sits on the shore; the surface of the sea mirrors the color of the sky; an oak, turned yellow by the arrival of autumn, has fallen upside down on the rocks while the rocks acquire significance by their very relation to the capsized oak; and finally, the man is spotted in the distance by the narrator.

According to Bakhtin, in a work of art, there is a fundamental difference between “the unity and structure of the object-world,” or the environment that surrounds the hero, and “the unity and structure of the hero’s lived *horizon*” (*Art* 98). Nature, landscape, communal life all are aspects of the unity and structure of

the object-world in a work. As the plastic and pictorial features that constitute the work's environment, they give a "spatial disposition" to the hero's "active, act-performing consciousness" which, in itself, has a purely ethical and cognitive character (99). According to Bakhtin, the hero's spatial disposition is what determines a work's aesthetic value.

Bakhtin points out that from the author's outside position, "the center of spatial disposition and axiological interpretation of all objects" in an aesthetic work is "man's *outer* body and his *outer* soul" (99). The hero's outer body and outer soul, or his outward expressedness, becomes the axis of value that defines the significance of all objects in the work. At the same time, the hero's outward expressedness is itself the result of a certain way of combining with the plastic and pictorial features that exist in the work's environment. The specific placement of these features determines the hero's spatial disposition, his boundaries, and his unique site in the work's environment. Everything that exists in "The Raven," from the sun's sad yellow rays to the overturned oak and "the burned foundations in the distance," contributes to the creation of a particular background that forges the relationship between the man and the raven. Although the man and the raven live in different horizons, the meaning of their existence is defined in the context of this background which encloses both of them.

The man occupies only one corner of this environment; in the other corner sits the impenetrable raven. What gives value to each of them as a "determinate"

character is his/its “I-for-the-other” or “the-other-for-me”; their value and meaning depends on their mutual relationship which results from the temporal and spatial boundaries they occupy in the poem’s environment. As Bakhtin puts it,

[i]t is only with the other that I have the possibility of experiencing the joy of meeting and abiding with him, the sorrow of parting and the grief of bereavement; it is only with him that I can meet in the dimension of time as well as part in the dimension of time; only he can *be* as well as *not be* for me. (105)

From within their horizons, the act-performing consciousnesses of the man and the raven are oriented to the future. Leading an open-ended and eventful existence, they live in the “future of meaning”; they strive toward a meaning that is located in the future. In terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, since the man and the raven are not able to stand outside the event that takes place inside the poem, they perform their actions only on the cognitive and ethical plane. What is required to aestheticize them is the introduction of consummating moments in their life by the author from outside.

Aestheticization of characters takes place when the author gives them a situated awareness in the world. What gives the man and the raven their situated awareness is their spatial disposition, the physical distance that fixes them in two opposing corners of the poem’s environment. If they perceive each other in a certain way or express a particular emotion, it stems from the very distance that

divides them. The man's effort to attract the raven's attention by calling out its name is the immediate consequence of this spatial distance; it gives a specific intonation and resonance to his words that is different, say, from a whisper. It heightens his sense of despair and sadness, just as the man's cry in *The Scream*, Edward Munch's painting, emphasizes a peculiar sense of alienation in the world:

In his eye, the raven is ugly, the essence of sadness,
It embodies a story of sorrow, robbing one of paradise.
The raven is sitting to pile up sadness on sadness
To enter the threshold of sorrow like a dream
To open the door of misery to people
To destroy all other thoughts.
He cries out through his lips from the distance: hey raven!
Hey raven.

Thus, the aesthetic effect and all sense of value in "The Raven" are generated by the poem's spatial specificities.

None of the protagonists in "The Raven" can create the moments that will enable them to exceed their self-consciousness. That is why they cannot gain the necessary outsideness to consummate the objects around them. They are locked in their horizons in which everything appears as a task, a project, to be accomplished. From within their horizons, the man and the raven are not

constrained by “the outer boundaries of inner life—the point where inner life is turned *outward*” (*Art* 104). Hence, the objects stand over against them. Bakhtin points out that from within, I cannot experience the boundaries that delimit me in time and space, but I can experience the other temporally “from his *natus est anno domini* to *his mortuus est anno domini*” (105). In other words, I can consummate the other in terms of the plot of his life, in terms of where that life begins and where it ends. From within, the man’s life in “The Raven” lacks the aesthetic weight that a plot or storyline can invest it with. His actions are prompted by a risk-fraught consciousness that moves into the uncharted territory of the future. Nevertheless, as Bakhtin argues, even if the hero is unable to consummate himself aesthetically, he can “aesthetically justify and consummate the other” (106). This is an essentially authoring activity that many of Nima’s heroes perform in his poems.

Of course, the hero’s authoring activity, which is the result of his outsideness and excess of seeing vis-à-vis other characters, is itself subject to the author’s aestheticizing activity on a higher plane. In the final instance, the hero’s activity really belongs to the cognitive and ethical sphere, chiefly because he can never achieve the extralocal position that characterizes the author’s relationship to his work. Formulated this way, we may even venture to say that the perceptions of the man, which are conditioned by the physical distance that separates him from the raven, enables the author to finalize the spatial

boundaries in the poem. In this sense, Nima utilizes the man's perceptions as a tool to perform the structure of authoring inside the poem.

From within his horizon, the man lives, thinks, feels and acts in "the meaning-governed sequence progression of [his] own life" (108). His life remains unfinalized because he is not able to detach himself from the meaning whose promise of fulfillment is located in the future. That is why he calls out to the raven as if searching for a meaning in life or an answer to the desolate and collapsing state of existence that has besieged him. In this sense, the man's thoughts and acts assume an "extra-temporal" dimension which, in Bakhtinian terms, has an essentially non-aesthetic character. Locked in this state of extra-temporality, the man cannot consummate himself and stop the flux of his own life. Nevertheless, he can project his own feelings and emotions on the hermetic bird; he can involve the raven in the eventful course of his own life.

Bakhtin asserts that while temporal and spatial boundaries of an object have no "*formally* organizing significance" for the hero, they possess this dimension for the author (108). It is this recognition that makes the author capable of aesthetic approach to the world as "the world of other people who have accomplished their lives in it" (111). The author's aesthetic contemplation is not concerned with "questions about meanings and searchings for meaning"; instead, he looks at the world of his characters as "a beautiful given" (111). Being outside the man, the raven and their environment, the author bestows finalized

boundaries on them, a “gift” that only he, as the other, can offer them. The stabilization of the raven and the man in two diverging horizons in the poem’s architectonics gives them their unique sites in the poem’s environment. This condition makes valuational relationship to them possible because it turns them into two distinct axes of value that can be measured against one another. As the man and the raven gaze at one another, the way each feels or remains impassive vis-à-vis the other is transmitted to us through the author’s surplus of seeing which enframes their relationship from outside.

This surplus of seeing opens up because, unlike the man and the raven who do not enter into each other’s horizons, the author enters both of their horizons and co-experiences their lives with them. (While, for example, the raven remains incomprehensible, a mystery, to the man, the author consummates the bird by co-experiencing its inner life, by seeing the world through its eyes). The feelings that the man and the raven express for each other are conveyed alternately as the author/contemplator first moves into the raven’s horizon, co-experiences its life, and then re-enacts the same pattern of activity in relation to the man. This provides the author with an excess of seeing which he gathers by his access to the horizons of both the man and the raven and his final position outside both of them taken together. This excess of seeing enables the author to measure the man’s emotions vis-à-vis those of the raven’s within a single architectonic whole. Enframed by the author’s outside perspective, the raven and

the man do not stand over against each other, but are the integral aspects of a single environment.

The author first describes the raven's reaction as it gazes at the man in the distance:

When [the man] found a concealed spot that suited him
The raven's eye, above the waves that gathered like flood, without
anxiety,
Fixed its gaze at him
To see what transpires
In that concealed corner, joy or suffering?
It is something like everything else it has seen.
He is a line drawn in the horizon's eye, like
The burned foundations in the distance
A patch of cloud on the forgotten shore.

Here the author turns the raven into "the axiological center of receiving contemplation." But this can only happen when the object of contemplation has solidified into what Bakhtin calls "something contentedly present-on-hand" (*Art* 115). From the raven's perspective, the man's existence is justified and consummated by being enframed in a specific background. This background, which is constituted by the "burned foundations in the distance" and the "patch of cloud on the forgotten shore," communicates a cheerless and desolate rhythm of

life. It evokes a sense of environment to which the raven, in the event of its own life, can relate axiologically, i.e., it can regard the man unworthy of any attention.

Of course, the raven can turn into an axiological center for receiving contemplation only when its own “inner determinateness” has assumed an outward expressedness in the plastic and pictorial whole of the poem’s environment. It displays an expressionless exterior that seems neutral in terms of meaning. Not only does the raven show no “anxiety,” It hardly exhibits any other feeling at all; its only perceivable attribute is its curiosity about the emotions that enwrap the man. But even this curiosity fades as the raven ultimately becomes indifferent to the man’s plight. To the raven, the man turns into another object such the “burned foundations in the distance” and the “patch of cloud on the forgotten shore.” One can actually advance the argument that the raven’s undifferentiated vision of all objects that confront him stresses the fact that, from within its horizon, it does not recognize the boundaries that situate the objects in their unique sites in existence. The raven simply views everything as the objects of its own acts and consciousness without making any distinction between them.

As Bakhtin explains, aesthetic activity is not constrained by “the validity of meaning and purpose” (115). Irrespective of any meaning whatsoever, aesthetic activity is prompted by “love” for the other and descends upon him as a “gift” (115). Like the author, the raven has no interest in the man from the standpoint of meaning. To him, the man is only an aspect of the object-world it looks at. Of

course, theoretically speaking, the raven cannot rise above the consummated whole of the work. For one thing, it is constrained within the bounds of the given event in the poem which is temporally and spatially determined. The time of the poem's event, for instance, cannot recede into the temporal past for the raven, a condition that is necessary for the consummation of that event in finalized terms. Only the author does possess the privilege to stand outside the work's temporal dimension and treat it as "the absolute past."

The raven cannot "accomplish an aesthetically cherishing determination and forming" of the experience that unfolds in the poem (116). To do so, it must stand "beyond the bounds of the whole given experience" and not to be a participant in that experience (116). In other words, this experience must recede for the raven "into the absolute past, into the *past of meaning*, along with the entire context of meaning into which it was inseparably woven and in which it received its meaning" (116-17). But as part of the poem's unfolding event, an event which is still in progress, the raven is stuck in a moment that is moving into the future. For this reason, even though the raven mimics the author's aesthetic stance of un-interestedness in meaning, it lacks the necessary transgredient features to relate to the poem as a finished product, as an experience in the absolute past.

The author then switches to the man's point of view on the other side of the poem's spatial boundaries. But before entering the man's horizon, the author

sketches what we might call the poem's "*fabula* or plot." Bakhtin maintains that "the *fabula*, just like rhythm, just like all aesthetic moments in general, is organic and internally predetermined—it can be and must be encompassed at a single inner glance in its entirety, from beginning to end, in all its constituents" (118). Indeed, the poem's axial situation or plot is given to us at a single glance as the raven and the man stand face to face and gaze at one another for a moment. The outsideness of the voice that narrates this encounter enables it to enframe the raven and the man, at a single glance, on the same plane as participants in the same event, an event in which the inability to communicate or grasp the meaning of the other, a deficiency that is emphasized by physical distance, is the main theme:

They look at one another in this moment
From a distance, they gaze at each other
This figure appears as a raven and blackness
And the other as a man, or what you desire.

The author introduces certain consummating features into the lives of the participants in this event. While one of the participants is consummated as a raven with the fixed and static quality of "blackness," the man's inner determinateness assumes an ambiguous form. Nevertheless, the man tries to find some axiological point of reference outside himself in the raven in order to consummate himself, in order to make sense of his existence. But since he does

that from within his horizon in the unique and risk-fraught event of his own life, the raven remains purely a projection of his own feelings and sensibilities.

To use Bakhtin's terms, the man views the raven from his horizon in "the category of moral freedom." This freedom enables him to project his feelings on the raven in order to transform it into an expression of his own sadness. From an aesthetic point of view, experiencing a person morally or emotionally eliminates the possibility of axiological relationship to him, of considering him as the other. From within our eventful life, we experience morality and emotionality as the tasks that are yet-to-be-accomplished. And since from within, all boundaries are diffused, we are unable to relate to others valuationally by consummating them in their unique horizons in existence. All we do is make projections of our own cognitive and ethical stance in life. Within this framework, being moral or emotional in relation to someone else hinders us from consummating him "in the category of the other" (120). A moral or emotional attitude amounts to the loss of outsideness, which is an important aspect of aesthetic activity; it destroys distance. The man in "The Raven" is not capable of maintaining this distance; that is why, from within his horizon, the raven cannot be consolidated and "bodied" as the other; it has no voice. Even when the man directly calls out the raven's name, the latter remains absolutely silent, refusing to answer him.

In Bakhtinian terms, the man and the raven do not "exchange gift," their relationship is not a case of "joint labor" because the raven does not join in the

rhythm of the situation for the sake of the other (121). From the man's field of vision, the bird is just a pure projection of his inner sensations. In fact, the man becomes the sum total of the feelings that he ascribes to the raven. The terms with which he describes the raven become the defining features of his own personality, i.e., a despairing vision of sadness; they manifest all of him in the fullness of the present. At the same time, the man is delimited from outside in determinate boundaries by the distance that divides him from the raven in the poem's environment. From this outside perspective, which looks at the horizons of the man and the raven as the distinct sites within a single environment, the raven is no longer a part of the man's horizon.

The poem's ending asserts the author's outside position. To communicate this point, the author withdraws to a clearly objectifying distance in the poem's last two lines.

But the raven,
Unmoved by wet and dry,
Fixing its gaze at him,
Sits cold and motionless in its place.
And the waves, grim and frowning, surge and subside.
Something is hidden
They chew on something.

In the last two lines, the author no longer looks at the participants in the poem's

event through their own eyes. Until the last two lines, the author has entered the horizons of the raven and the man and has co-experienced their lives with them. The excess of seeing that opens up for the author by co-experiencing the horizons of both participants enables him to delineate architectonically the attitude each of them adopts toward the other. This architectonic structure allows the author to establish an axiological relationship to both of them.

The author's excess of seeing, which is gained by return to his own horizon after co-experiencing the lives of the man and the raven, becomes particularly pronounced in the poem's last two lines. By his surplus of seeing, the author enframes the man and the raven within their larger environment as the visual motif of gazing is replaced by an aural motif. Up to this point, almost all descriptions have resulted from the perceptions of the man and the raven as they have exchanged gazes. From within their horizons, each has invested the other with specific attributes. In the last two lines, a new subject appears that can no longer be seen or looked at. It is a plural subject, a collective "they" that "chew[s] on something."

What transpires in the poem's final lines is enfolded in ambiguity; we do not know who is doing the chewing or what is being chewed on. Nevertheless, the shift to a plural pronoun puts an end to the perception of the events from the raven's and the man's horizons. A possible interpretation is to see this shift as an expression of our entry into a broader framework. For all we know, the act of

chewing, and the negative implications of corrosion and gradual deterioration that it invokes, may refer to a general state of existence in the poem's environment. Or at least, that is what the plural pronoun implies. From the perspective of Bakhtinain architectonics, only the author from his outside position can see the environment of a work in its entirety in distinct terms; only he can make it "viewable." Interestingly enough, and this may sound paradoxical, the environment of the "Raven," or the general mood that prevails its atmosphere, becomes viewable in its final lines through an aural motif, the sound of chewing.

The Illusion of Light: “The Moth of the Near Shore”

Houman Sarshar contends that Nima created a new poetic language by transforming the conventions of classical Persian poetry in two ways: 1) through the changes he introduced in “the formal structure”; and 2) by “refunctionalization of existing conventional images” (“The Anxiety” 160). In Nima’s view, the new poetic language could no longer derive its significance from an “extraneous system of conventional codes” (161). Instead, what produced the poem’s meaning was “an intricate complex of interrelationships between the constituent parts of the text itself” (164). Thus, a major source of Nima’s innovations was his endeavor “to convey significance in the absence of a pre-coded prosodic system” (177).

In a later essay, Sarshar advances the same line of argument and maintains that Nima, in “his attempt to dissolve classical Persian poetic conventions,” replaced the allegorical pattern of traditional poetry with a symbolic structure (“From Allegory” 99). To explain the difference between symbol and allegory, Sarshar cites Gadamer who considers symbol as a much richer source of meaning than allegory: “Symbol and allegory are opposed as art is opposed to non-art, in that the former seems endlessly suggestive in the definiteness of its meaning, whereas the latter, as soon as its meaning is reached, has run its full course” (100). This shift has far-reaching consequences because one-

dimensional allegorical images in classical poetry are transformed into symbols that manifest multiple layers of meaning.

Sarshar also cites Dariush Ashuri who opposes the “ornate and elaborate” garden of classical Persian poetry as a “miracle of creation” to an “ambiguous nature” that frequently figures in Nima’s poetry (108). As an expression of divine order, the allegorical garden of classical poetry embodied the qualities that stood in opposition to wilderness or what was situated outside the garden walls. This dichotomy gave rise to the binary oppositions that appeared in terms of “inside/outside, protected/exposed, controlled/uncontrollable” (108). And while the allegorical garden of traditional poetry remains untainted and pure, Nima’s symbolic garden is contaminated by elements that intrude through cracked or crumbling walls. Sarshar points out that the exposition of the garden to wilderness “may be perceived as a topographical depiction of the interfusion of self and non-self” (108). At the same time, the disruption of the “symmetric design” of the classical Persian garden by the unpredictable and “random” forces of outside nature can symbolize Nima’s own subversion of “the rigid classical prosodic structures and his adoption of more organic rhymes, rhythms and verse paragraphs he introduces in “Qoqnus” (The Phoenix 1937)” (109).

According to Sarshar, Nima also undermines “the pre-coded signs of classical system of signification” by his use of new and unconventional words (109). This produces a cataclysmic shift in Persian poetry because, unlike the

canonical words that reiterated the same meanings endlessly within a closed system of signification, the new words had no pre-existing model of signification they could refer to. To charge them with significance, Nima created a range of new symbols that were extracted from “the nature’s unconventional images” (109). Since these symbols had no precedents in classical poetry, they could take on the meaning that the particular matrix of a given poem required. In other words, Nima did not rely on paradigms that existed in poetic conventions to produce meaning in his poems, but created meaning through the internal dynamics of the poems themselves.

Sarshar correctly points out that the meaning of symbols in Nima’s poetry could “only be decoded in terms of their variation of the given poem’s matrix” (109). Since these symbols were not linked to fixed and conventional meanings, the meaning they conveyed depended entirely on the context in which they were placed and the relations they formed with other elements in that context. For example, regardless of whether “rira” is a sound or an image, no one had ever used it as an axial symbol in a poem before Nima. Since no referential framework existed for rira in literary tradition, Nima could charge it with the significance that his own poetic strategy and the particular matrix of his poem demanded.

Nevertheless, this new poetic sensibility does not lead to Nima’s complete abandonment of traditional poetry. Although in certain ways he breaks decisively

with the patterns of imagery and stylistic features of classical poetry, he still somehow works within that tradition. Sarshar articulates this point eloquently:

Nima extracts the staple topoi from their allegorical frames to readmit different variations of the same prototypical images into his poetry. From a semiotic perspective, this means basic semantic features stay the same while particular semes change or are reorganized to create varying configurations. (115-16)

To clarify his point, Sarshar discusses the case of the nightingale in classical Persian poetry that often embodies the despair and suffering that the poet undergoes at the hands of his beloved.⁹ At the same time, the nightingale in Persian literary tradition is often linked with “the rising Sun” by its association with *morgh-e sahar* (bird of the dawn) which holds “the semes Sun and dawn in its semiotic net” (124).

Nima preserves the nightingale’s main semantic feature as “bird of song” and then alters specific “semes” such as “small” and “bird of flight.” (116). Thus, the symbol he ends up with is the rooster, a “large” and “flightless bird” that plays a critical role in a number of his poems (116). Sarshar continues that “both birds

⁹ We can easily see an example of this usage in the following couplet in one of Hafez’s ghazals: “Benal bolbol agar ba man-at sar-e yari-st/Keh ma do ‘asheq-e zarim o kar-e ma zari-st” (Moan nightingale if you understand my state/Because we are two misfortunate lovers who can only weep).

still represent the poet in the poem,” although Nima is now able to charge the image of the rooster with the “symbolic implications that the nightingale simply could not take on given the fixed implications of its role in classical Persian poetry” (116). But what are exactly these fixed features that cling to the nightingale in classical poetry? If the nightingale comes to represent carnal drive or mystical love in classical Persian poetry, its metamorphosis into the rooster in Nima’s hands makes it a tool for social and political commentary; at least, this is one way of interpreting this transformation. The rooster in poems such as “The Rooster Crows” or “The Amen Bird” enacts a politically encoded role as it announces the arrival of a new era. Basically, this is also the manner in which Nima strips the image of the garden of its fixed features in classical poetry as he transforms it into a “microcosm” that represents “society at large” (119).

Like the rooster, the new botanical body in Nima’s poetry becomes an expression of the poet’s social concerns. Classical poets, including Hafez, Sa’adi and Khayyam, did not conceive of the garden in social terms; instead, they saw it as the manifestation of a “linear” vision of time that was fundamentally “theological.” In the works of these poets, this linear sense of time was coupled with “a vehement drive to seize the day, and live life to its fullest before it passes by” (118). This garden was also protected from outside forces that could imperil its perfect order and symmetry. Sarshar points out that Nima in a poem such as “Notfeh Band-e Dowran” (The Begetter of Time 1950) undermines the function

that the garden wall performed in classical poetry. In Nima's work, the garden is no longer able to act as "a protective barrier" which preserves "the safe, predictable haven inside" from the assaults of the "unknown wilderness beyond" (120). Instead of the sheltering wall of the allegorical garden, the wall in "The Begetter of Time" is a cracked ridge which exposes the garden to the contaminating influence of outside elements.

According to Sarshar, the cracked ridge in Nima's garden emerges as a symbol of "despair" which represents "the loss of structure and predictability, and the decay of a once-safe-sanctuary" (120). As the order and harmony of the idealized garden is disrupted, a perilous sense of chaos and entrapment takes over the botanical body in Nima's poems. This is basically the situation in "Close the Door" and "I Gaze Waiting for You," where an inhospitable desert or distorted botanical body menaces all life. Replacing the allegorical garden, the "hot," "dry" and "dangerous" nature in Nima's poems assumes a demonic dimension that threatens all life (12).

Sarshar's discussion revolves around the premise that Nima appropriates allegorical structures in classical Persian poetry and then converts them into symbols (123). And since, unlike allegorical structures, these symbols are not constrained by a rigid and inflexible system of codification, the meaning they convey could vary from poem to poem. This variation depends on what Sarshar calls the "*overdetermination* of the matrix within the immediate context of the

poem at hand” (123). From this perspective, meaning is no longer imposed on the poem from outside by the conventions of poetic tradition but is engendered internally by interaction between diverse elements within the poem. This explains the dynamics of what Sarshar calls the symbolic structure in Nima’s poetry. Within this framework, the cracked ridge may “arguably represent the breakdown of old structures, the downfall of rigid barriers, and the end of confinement, thereby symbolizing hope” (123).

Let us go back to the image of the rooster in Nima’s poetry once again. Nima’s handling of the rooster as a symbol with new connotations can provide us with a point of entry into a discussion of “Shab Parey-eh Sahel-e Nazdik” (The Moth of the Near Shore 1954). Sarshar suggests that classical Persian poetry had associated flight “with transcendence and escape from the weight of earth-bound matters” (“The Anxiety” 219). Nima rejects this mindset by fashioning the flightless rooster as a “symbol of conquest and defiance of oppressive authority” (219). Sarshar adds that the rooster also symbolizes the “revolutionary” poet who performs the role of the “messenger of change” and “model leader” by choosing “to stay and create change in his environment” instead of flying away “in search of an envisioned utopia” (218-19). Paradoxically, inability to fly may also imply the rooster’s “impotence” and the sense of “hopelessness” that it brings to mind (219).

The term “impotence” may well describe the condition of the moth in “The Moth of the Near Shore.” To my knowledge, Nima is the first Iranian poet who uses a moth as the central symbol in his poem. Within the conventions of classical poetry, we frequently encounter the butterfly that is always consumed by his love for the candlelight. In a manner similar to the transformation of the nightingale into the rooster, Nima empties the image of the butterfly of its conventional attributes of impassioned and frenzied love and, then, turns it into the moth as a symbol of impotence and distorted vision. Thinking that “there is a path behind every light/a path to a haven,” Nima’s moth is disturbingly deluded by a false perspective.

In terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, two distinct unities or structures co-exist in “The Moth of the Near Shore”: the unity of the poem’s “object-world” and the unity of “the hero’s lived *horizon*.” The unity of a work’s object-world is the principle that constitutes its environment. Bakhtin conceives of a work’s environment as “an outward formal combination of plastic and pictorial features” in which characters exist in determinate horizons and negotiate their differences into specific relations (*Art* 99). A work’s environment makes distinct the outer and inner boundaries of each character in order to give him his unique site in a particular background. I can relate to someone axiologically or in terms of value only when he is situated in stable or finalized boundaries. The environment in an aesthetic work bestows finalized boundaries on characters and, therefore, makes

axiological relationship to them possible. According to Bakhtin, a work's environment enables me to see "*all*" of the other in his "exhaustive completeness as a thing among other things *in* the world" (36). It constructs a setting in which specific relations of value can be formed both between the participants that occupy unique sites in the work and between the author and the work as a whole. It should also be added that, as a purely aesthetic principle, a work's environment is "independent of meaning" (99).

In contrast to the work's environment, "the hero's lived *horizon*" exhibits a meaning-directed tendency that treats life as eventful and unfinalizable. As Bakhtin puts it, "my relationship to each object within my horizon is never a consummated relationship" (99). Instead, "it is a relationship which is imposed on me as a task-to-be-accomplished"; my horizon is the place in which "the open event of being" takes place and in which "my situation can change at every moment" (99).

The incident of "The Moth of the Near Shore" takes place in an environment in which two distinct horizons exist. While the narrator is situated inside a room in which a lamp is lit, the moth is located in the space outside it. The room's closed window separates the two spaces and sets them in striking opposition to one another. What consummates the narrator's horizon is the ample light in his room and what gives specificity to the moth's horizon is the darkness that envelops it. The moth, in particular, is identified with an "active" or

“act-performing” consciousness which conceives of the world as “the object” of its acts without having any real capacity to consummate it. This explains the moth’s repeated attempts to enter the room, an activity which the moth perceives from its own horizon as a task to be yet achieved. Its “ceaseless” beating against the window, as it strives to enter the room, indicates that, from within its horizon, the moth does not recognize the boundaries that enclose it on all sides. Instead, it sees life as an unfinalized event which is replete with endless possibilities, including the possibility of entering the room:

Chook, chook! The moth of the near shore
Has lost its way in the darkness of the night.
Repeatedly, it beats against the window.
The moth of the near shore,
What do you mean by your endeavors?
What do you want from my room?

The moth of the near shore tells me (with mute words):
“There is ample light in your room!
Open the door to me
The night has exhausted me.”

Although, from within its horizon, the moth’s consciousness manifests an eventful character which is oriented toward the future, the narrator enacts the

structure of authoring inside the poem by introducing the transgredient moments (a background, an exterior) that fix the moth in determinate boundaries. By enframing the moth in a particular space and time (outside the room and in darkness), these transgredient moments, to use Holquist's words, enable the narrator to make sense out of the moth's life by "fixing the flux of its disparate elements into [a] meaningful whole" (xxiv). The narrator achieves this by shifting the center of gravity from the moth's perception of life as an open event to the givenness of that life and its finalized relationship to the environment that surrounds it. Performing an authorial function inside the poem, the narrator consummates the moth in finalized spatio-temporal boundaries as an impotent and deluded consciousness that is entrapped in darkness and fails repeatedly in its attempts to enter the room. From this angle of vision, the moth's unique site in the poem's environment, its situatedness outside the room, makes it unequal to the task that it has set for itself, i.e., to enter the room.

The narrator's enactment of the structure of authoring inside the poem is the result of the surplus of seeing that he maintains by his outsideness vis-à-vis the moth. It is from this position that he can render the moth and its actions meaningful in two value-contexts, in the context of the moth and in his own context. Equipped with a double perspective, the narrator both perceives the moth's futile efforts in the darkness outside the room and has insight into the reality of the light inside the room. His surplus of vision enables him to perceive

what is essentially inaccessible to the moth, i.e., that the hope of finding a “pathway” to deliverance behind the light in his room is just an illusion:

The moth of the near shore tells me (with mute words):

“There is ample light in your room!

Open the door to me

The night has exhausted me.”

The moth of the near shore thinks that

Every “body” can go anywhere

Toward a refuge,

And there is light behind every pathway!

Here the narrator consummates “*all*” of the moth in its “exhaustive completeness.” At the same time, as the narrator’s consciousness encompasses the moth’s consciousness in a wider band, his evaluative standpoint toward the moth reflects the two value contexts that represent the spaces inside and outside the room.

On another level, the narrator’s evaluative stance vis-à-vis the moth is itself enframed by the author. He also exists in determinate spatial and temporal boundaries which delimit him in the poem’s environment. Situated in a lighted room that is encircled by the night’s darkness, the narrator manifests a situated awareness in the world that stems from his unique site in space and time. This

unique placement constrains the narrator's perspective and defines his relationship with the moth. What makes the narrator and the moth participants in the same event is their response to the light in the room to which they relate as a shared axis of value. In fact, the diverging reactions of the narrator and the moth to the light shape the plot of the poem. Ultimately, the difference between these two responses results from the situated awareness that conditions the perspectives of the moth and the narrator. The specificity of the time and place which enclose the narrator and the moth, as they occupy the bright and dark sides of the poem's environment, produces their worldview. Being inside the room, the narrator, unlike the deluded moth, knows too well the false vision of redemption that the light holds.

As a participant in the poem's narrative, the narrator, despite acquiring a surplus of seeing vis-à-vis the moth, is not endowed with the architectonic privilege to enframe the poem in its entirety as a consummated whole. In fact, the poem's final words are spoken by the moth as the center of gravity shifts to the latter's act-performing consciousness. Here, as the moth, in its incessant efforts, collides with the window again, it complains about the absence of all fellowship in this tormenting night:

Chook chook!...In this night which gives birth to this suffering,
Why no one comes my way?

Throughout the poem, the narrator's surplus of seeing, his insight into the light's false promise, is defined and accentuated relative to the moth's lack of seeing. Nevertheless, the strategic placement of the moth's voice at the end of the poem, as it dislodges the voice of the narrator, exhibits that the poem as a whole is constructed in terms of a dynamic tension between two levels of consciousness. Holquist explains that such a whole "is always a negotiated relation between two powers" which establish "two interdependent systems of laws" (xxvii). It is through this negotiated relation between two value-systems and their axiological relation to one another that the author foregrounds the aesthetic structure inside the poem. Thus, both the narrator and the moth are implicated in the structure of authoring that constructs a meaningful whole out of the potential chaos of parts in "The Moth of the Near Shore."

According to Bakhtin, the work cannot be given to us as a consummated whole from within the hero (*Art* 12). Although the narrator enacts the structure of authoring inside the poem by consummating the moth in determinate boundaries, he, too, is a participant in the poem's event and, therefore, cannot stand outside the whole of the work. To use Bakhtin's words, he "cannot live by this whole, he cannot be guided by it in his own lived experiences and actions" (12). Instead, this whole "descends upon him—is bestowed upon him as a gift—from another active consciousness: from the creative consciousness of an author" (12). In Bakhtin's words, the author's consciousness is "a consciousness of a

consciousness”; it encompasses and “*consummates* the consciousness and the world of a hero by supplying those moments which are in principle transgredient to the hero’s consciousness” (12).

Being inside the poem’s event, the narrator’s relationship to each object form his “lived *horizon*” “is never a consummated relationship” (99). Instead, “it is a relationship which is imposed on him as a task-to-be-accomplished” (99). From within his horizon, the narrator lacks the surplus of seeing to enframe himself in a background. He has no clear understanding of the background that is formed behind his back or how his outward expressedness appears in that background. That is why, just as the narrator consummates the moth in determinate boundaries, he requires another consciousness to enframe him in a background. Only then can the narrator acquire a situated awareness in the world, a condition that, on the one hand, makes possible the narrator’s own meaningful relationship with the moth possible and, on the other hand, enables the author to relate to him valuationally.

In terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, every word “expresses a reaction to another reaction” (218). That is why at every point in a narrative we have two different value-contexts which express the author’s reaction to the reaction of the hero. As Bakhtin says, “every concept, image, and object [in a narrative] lives on two planes, is rendered meaningful in two value-contexts—in the context of the hero and in that of the author” (218). The author in “The Moth of the Near Shore”

performs his formal function by organizing the shifts in point of view and distributing the voices that structure the poem. The fact that no single voice can dominate the poem, as the perspectives of the narrator and the moth assert themselves alternately, draws attention to the author's consummation of these perspectives as opposing poles; while the narrator's tone reveals a defeated mindset that has already accepted the futility of all action, the moth never quits striving, even as its strife is doomed.

Perhaps, we can explain the difference between the inner life of the character and the organizing activity of the author in terms of the difference between intonation and rhythm. According to Bakhtin, the intonative structure strictly corresponds to "the reaction of the *hero* to an object within the whole" (215-16). Since intonation is a quality that is generated inside the hero's horizon, it also manifests an eventful character and is, therefore, "internally differentiated and diversified" (216). In contrast to intonation, rhythm "represents, almost exclusively, the purely formal reaction of the author to the event *as a whole*" (216). On the basis of this distinction, we can argue that while the intonations of the narrator and the moth collide in "The Moth of the Near Shore" as diverging forces, the author unites them as the aspects of a single event by imposing rhythm on the work.

Since rhythm is introduced in the work from an outside position, it presupposes the existence of space and perspective. According to Caryl

Emerson, space and perspective are the parameters that produce the categories of the “I-for-the-other” and “the other-for-me” (*The First One Hundred* 214). From within, the other lives his life as an unfinalized event, but from an outside perspective, I can consummate his image and “leave palpable, almost sculptural results” (214). In the same “sculptural” manner, rhythm imposes form on the hero’s consciousness and the open event of his life. We can make a similar case for “The Moth of the Near Shore” and suggest that author’s form-giving activity encompasses the cognitive and ethical interestedness of the narrator and the moth in the event of their lives through rhythm.

The Sorcerer and the Maiden: “Moonlight Rose”

Paul Losensky in “To Tell Another Tale of Mournful Terror: Three of Nima’s Songs of the Night” advances almost the same line of argument that distinguishes Sarshar’s discussion. He, too, suggests that, in contrast to the allegorical structure of classical Persian poetry, the meaning of symbols in Nima’s poetry changes and is overdetermined by the particular matrix of each individual poem. To prove this point, Losensky examines the symbol of night in “Kiney-e Shab” (The Night’s Rancor 1944), “Anduhnak-e Shab” (Sorrowful by Night 1940), and “Gol-e Mahtab” (Moonlight Rose 1939). However, before engaging in a full-scale analysis of these poems, he explains the interpretative mindset of certain critics, such as Anvar Khame’i and Siavosh Kasra’i, who viewed the symbol of night in Nima’s poems in utterly political terms.

From the viewpoint of these critics, the Nimaic Night functions as a “code-word for the political tyranny and social oppression against which Nima and most Iranian poets of the twentieth century had to struggle” (139). Anvar Khame’i describes the image of the night, along with other images such as “gloom,” “cold,” “autumn” and “ashes,” as “the sign of a decrepit society” that is accustomed to “tyranny, censorship, profiteering, sponging off others, deception and duplicity, privation and indigence, ignorance and helplessness” (as cited in Losensky 139). To Siavosh Kasra’i, Nima’s symbolic night represents an “aggressive being” whose agents are characterized by “gluttony,” “perversion”

and “vacillation” (139). For these critics, the day of “relief” and “salvation” will dawn at the end of this night, a salvation that belongs not just to “one person” but to “a collective” (139-40). To them, the Nimaic night is the dark embodiment of the Pahlavi regime which Nima defied by turning his poetry into a political platform for revolutionary action (140).

Losensky describes this interpretative approach as a “narrow political reading” which “threatens to reduce the Nimaic night to a one-dimensional allegorical figure” (140). This outlook inevitably constrains “our understanding of [the night’s] diverse functions within the poetic text” while “deafening us to its full symbolic resonance” (140). Along with Sarshar, Losensky considers the shift from allegory to symbol as a crucial aspect of Nima’s radical reconfiguration of Persian poetry. Attention to the symbolic structure of Nima’s poems, as opposed to the fixed allegorical images of classical Persian poetry, enables Losensky to release Nima’s “night songs” from the partisan and one-sided political readings that diminish their potential for multiple interpretations. Losensky views Nima’s works primarily as “poetic texts” and approaches them in terms of their “structural and thematic organization” (140).

According to Losensky, there are two basic “types of human-like” beings that populate Nima’s night poems. (146). In “Rancor of the Night,” we encounter both “the malevolent demon whose actions are in league with the powers of darkness,” and “the shadowy ghost whose feelings of sadness and despair find

shelter and sympathy in the obscurity of the night” (146). The night and its denizens are enveloped in an ambiguous atmosphere that can be either a source of ruin or a sign of deliverance. Losensky does not discuss “I Gaze Waiting for You,” but we may once again begin by looking at this poem as an example of intense ambiguity in Nima’s night poems.

Although every motion and activity in “I Gaze Waiting for You” reveals ominous dimensions, the speaker’s consciousness is animated with hope and expectation; it is as if the night, despite its ghastly manifestations, could also be the sign of an impending salvation that would arrive with the morning; or at least, that is what is implicated in the speaker’s act of waiting. Through a series of threatening and ill-omened activities, the shadows darken and descend on the branches of trees, the valleys sleep like dead snakes, and the nuphar’s hand entraps the mountain cypress. Nevertheless, the speaker persists in his waiting. It is not clear whether he is waiting for a beloved or expecting a Messiah, but the very action of waiting injects a sense of anticipation in the poem that relieves it from utter despair. Of course, the waiting, as in “Moonlight Rose,” may be for a false Messiah. But then again, the night, as in “The Amen Bird,” may just turn into an auspicious occasion for overcoming injustice.

If we keep in mind Sarshar’s explanation about the way symbols work in Nima’s poetry, the specific meaning that the night as a symbol takes on depends on the matrix of a given poem and the relations this symbol enters into inside that

poem. Losensky makes the same point when he compares the roles of the night in “Rancor of the Night” and “Sorrowful by Night.” While the night appears as “an active agent of evil” in “Rancor of the Night,” it displays a more empathetic character in “Sorrowful by Night” and even shares the “melancholy sadness” of its “ghostly protagonist” (147). In contrast to “Rancor of the Night,” the night in “Sorrowful by Night” is no longer “malevolent” or opposed to “human happiness”; in fact, the night is affected deeply by the “somber vision of suffering” that has engulfed the protagonist (152). On the other end of the spectrum, the dawn in “Sorrowful by Night” also seems too impotent to “relieve the night’s sorrow.” This impotence is so crippling that all “affirmative progression from darkness to light” becomes impossible in “Sorrowful by Night” (152).

One of the implications of Losensky’s article is the point that the meaning of symbols in Nima’s poetry depends on the context in which they appear and the relationships they form with other elements inside a given poem. For example, the symbol of ashes in “Sorrowful by night,” which conveys loss and demise, stands in stark opposition to the connotations of the same symbol in “The Phoenix.” According to Losensky, the “ashes in the air,” which “have made the owl to sit beside a dry branch,” exhibit a malignant and deathly quality in “Sorrowful by Night.” In contrast, in the last lines of “The Phoenix,” the ashes, which are left in the wake of the eponymous bird’s self-burning, impregnate the poem with potentially positive signs of rebirth and regeneration. Within the same

paradigm, the juxtaposition of ashes with the dawn, which appears in the form of a “spider of color,” evokes a sinister dawn in “Sorrowful by Night.” After all, the most recognizable quality of the spider is its technique of trapping its preys, a predatory movement that is intensely negative.

Losensky observes that “the spider dwells in dark corners with deadly intent” (156). In this sense, the dawn, which should expel darkness and its malice, is itself “tainted” at the core (156). Losensky further explains that

Ankabut-e rang means more literally “the spider of color” and represents the first streaks of light across the night sky. But the connotations of trickery and deceit in *rang* [color] suggest “tainted” as a translation that better suits the threatening atmosphere surrounding the morning in “Sorrowful by Night” (156).

The spider as a symbol for the dawn spawns a disturbing ethos because, for one thing, the depiction of dawn in this manner has no precedence in the tradition of Persian poetry before Nima. It is completely remote from the images of the bird of dawn in classical poetry and the rooster in Nima’s own poems whose songs celebrate triumph over the night and announce the fulfillment of hopes. That is why the looming of the spider in the sky as the harbinger of dawn exerts a disorienting impact. This unsettling effect is amplified by the visions of hanging and suspension which intensify the sense of ambiguity in the poem. Can a day that is hanging from its complete opposite, the night, offer salvation? After all,

hanging from something can also mean clinging to that thing. If so, the dawn in “Sorrowful by Night” is no more than a parasitic extension of night.

“Moonlight Rose” is the last night poem by Nima that Losensky examines. This poem opens with the introduction of a “visionary figure” that, with a whip of fire in his hand, rides a saddle-less horse along the shore. Immediately, after the vivid sketch of this radiant rider, the narrator explains that he is observing this scene from inside a boat that is floating “joyfully on water.” Here we are presented with two horizons in the poem: the horizon of the narrator and the horizon of the rider. The narrator’s horizon is a wider circle of consciousness that encompasses the rider’s horizon and reports the incidents that transpire in it. To use Bakhtin’s words in another context, it is “a consciousness of a consciousness,” a consciousness that consummates the consciousness of the rider by supplying those moments which are in principle transgredient to the latter’s consciousness, i.e., his background and his exterior. This excess of seeing and knowing in relation to the rider enables the narrator to consummate him in his background on the shore as an exhilaratingly positive vision that is associated with order, joy, creativity, and a vitalizing dawn that will overcome darkness.

The distance between the boat and the shore provides the narrator with the space and perspective that are required for enframing the actions of the rider on the shore and his relations with other participants and plastic and pictorial

features in that background. By delimiting the rider in stable boundaries in a particular space and time, the narrator is able to relate to him axiologically. Nevertheless, his valuational stance to the rider still lacks the aesthetic interestedness that characterizes the author's position vis-à-vis his hero. According to Bakhtin, the author's "aesthetically productive relationship to the hero" necessitates "an intently maintained position *outside* the hero with respect to every constituent feature of the hero—a position *outside* the hero with respect to space, time, value and meaning" (*Art* 14). This outsideness enables the author "to collect and concentrate *all* of the hero, who from within himself, is diffused and dispersed in the projected world of cognition and in the open event of ethical action" (12).

Although the narrator maintains a position outside the rider with respect to time and space, he cannot maintain the same distance with respect to "value and meaning." The very joyful movement of his boat on water reveals that he is affected emotionally by what takes place on the shore. The narrator's outsideness dissipates because he begins to mirror and duplicate the rider's experience within himself. As Bakhtin suggests, one function of outsideness in constructing the aesthetic moment is "the transposition of another's experience to an entirely *different* axiological plane, into an entirely *new* category of valuation and forming" (103). In this sense, the other's co-experienced emotion must be a

“completely new *ontic* formation,” an “essentially new valuation” that is generated by an “architectonic position in being outside [his] inner life” (103).

As Bakhtin might have said about “Moonlight Rose,” the narrator is unable “to justify and to consummate [the rider] independently of the meaning, the achievements, the outcome and success of [the latter’s] forward-directed life” (14). To Bakhtin, “not only being *inside* the hero but also being axiologically beside him and against him distorts seeing and lacks features that can render him complete and consummate him” (15). Such condition will lead to the collapse of the aesthetic moment. The narrator’s loss of outsideness in relation to the rider and immersion in his inner life becomes even more overwhelming in the next few stanzas when the rider mutates into moonlight rose. In these stanzas, the narrator merely duplicates the emotions that the presence of moonlight rose conjures up. To use Bakhtin’s words in another context, the narrator is unable to achieve a “sympathetic understanding” of moonlight rose by recreating “the whole inner person in aesthetically loving categories for a new existence in a new dimension of the world” (103).

Nonetheless, the specificity of the narrator’s own spatio-temporal boundaries (inside the boat and at night) in the opening stanzas enables the author to both consummate the rider in his particular environment and define his relationship with the narrator within the poem’s architectonic structure:

When the wave, darkening above the water,

Was receding in the distance,
Vanishing from the eye,
A frightening shape was rending the night's heart with its eye.
A man on a saddle-less horse
With a whip made of fire
Was galloping on the shore in the distance
And his skillful hands
Were busy with their work
And our boat was floating joyfully on water.
Out of the chaotic colors of moonlight
A more blossoming color was born,
Like the dawn
At the end of night
That bursts out of the sneezes of bleak darkness.

The author gives the narrator a situated awareness that is defined by its outsideness vis-à-vis the rider in the opening stanzas. This outsideness, although immediately becomes precarious by the narrator's pure empathy with the rider, enables the author to utilize the narrator's field of vision for enframing the actions of the rider and the way these actions affect the scene on the shore. But the narrator's outsideness dissolves completely in the next few stanzas as the rider is transformed into moonlight rose, the poem's central symbol. In this new guise,

moonlight rose settles on “the nest of some voices” and scatters “the gold dust” on “varicolored-sketched wings of the bird of azure”; it wipes “the rust of sorrow” off “the whole ruinous story of being” and rejuvenates everything it sets its eyes on. Moonlight rose brims with a mysterious power that imparts hope and momentum to everything:

The cherry blossoms were moistened by a cold breath
That made another sketch
Out of the sad dirt-filled fable of life;
The people’s torches lighted the road
Some rushed to the road.
And that delightful newly emerging color
Bloomed like a flower and, erupting with light,
Revealed its shape to us.
With its cheeks and yellow paws
It moved near from those distant mountains
Its eyes, the color of water,
Looked at us
So that the misguided guardian of the vortex
Could see it enwrapped in more illuminating rays,
So that the hand of the passersby
Could pick it more easily.

It settled on the nest of some voices

It rubbed the gold dust

On the varicolored-sketched wings of the bird of azure.

At this stage, the narrator's empathetic identification with moonlight rose, as he moves into its horizon, is almost total; his submersion in this horizon is so intense that any trace of the objectifying distance that had existed in the opening scene entirely vanishes. The poem's middle sections exemplify the emergence of what Bakhtin calls an "absolute consciousness, a consciousness that has nothing transgredient to itself" (*Art* 22). An absolute consciousness is not aware of another consciousness, and the relationships of the "I-for-the-other" and "the-other-for-me" have no place in its repertoire. That is why it cannot be delimited from outside by the other in determinate boundaries which, according to Bakhtin, is the first condition for its aestheticization (22). An "*aesthetic* standpoint" must provide this consciousness "with a background transgredient to it" which can fix it in a particular space and time (17). And this background can only come into being by the excess of seeing that another consciousness provides.

As Bakhtin contends, an aesthetic event takes place only when there are "two noncoinciding consciousnesses" or "two participants present" (22). From this perspective, the poem's penultimate stanza threatens to reduce the "aesthetic event" to an "ethical event" as the narrator, instead of co-experiencing the horizon of moonlight rose, teeters on the verge of co-consciousness with it.

Here the space and perspective that the narrator had somehow maintained earlier in the poem collapse as he, along with his companion, steps on the shore and is transfixed by the enthralling powers of moonlight rose:

Then we paddled hurriedly to the shore
In a state which was
Neither life nor sleep.
My companion wanted to kiss its [moonlight rose's] hand
I wanted him to be,
Like me, always its admirer.
From the grip of sadness, I wished for a moment
To sing another fable with its cold look.
I wished on that silent shore
To sink in my sleep
And not to waste time listening to another voice
Except for its voice,
And there, next to my neighbor's fire,
Light a hidden fire.

This overpowering impulse to capitulate wholly to the spell of moonlight rose is, however, a temporary lapse in the poem's movement. The final stanza introduces a jostling shift in the poem's angle of vision once again; it commences a radical alteration in perspective as the narrator, after co-experiencing the life of

moonlight rose in its horizon, returns to his own horizon. His return signifies a shift away from pure empathy with moonlight rose to an outright disillusionment with it. As Losensky points out, after the narrator's objectifying distance is re-established in a much firmer way in the final scene, "the shining night rider now appears as a sorcerer (*jadugari*), a mere conjurer who keeps up his useless tricks (*batei*) even after his image has been exposed" (163).

In terms of Bakhtinain architectonics, the coincidence of two consciousnesses hinders the formation of the surplus of seeing by which one consciousness can enframe the other in determinate boundaries. As Bakhtin puts it, the excess of seeing, which results from securing an outside position in relation to the other, is the first condition of "aesthetic activity"; it begins only when, after experiencing the other "from within himself," we "*return* into ourselves":

Aesthetic activity proper actually begins at the point when we *return* into ourselves, when we *return* to our own place outside the suffering person, and start to form and consummate the material we derived from projecting ourselves into the other and experiencing him from within himself. And these acts of forming and consummating are effected by our *completing* that material (that is, the suffering of the given human being) with features *transgradient*

to the entire object-world of the other's suffering consciousness.

(26)

Losensky refers to the same aesthetic activity when he discusses the dissipation of an "interior perspective" and return to "an objectifying distance" as a formal principle in "Sorrowful by Night" (156). The final scene of "Moonlight Rose" also pulls the narrator out of moonlight rose's interior perspective and prepares the way for the introduction of features that are transgredient to that perspective. The shift to an outside field of vision restores the sense of space and perspective that had existed in the poem's opening scene, although in a much more stable manner. And this is precisely the source of the panoramic view that we acquire in the concluding stanza. Within this panoramic background, every element is engaged in a distinctive activity: a passing wave suddenly darkens; a shape runs down the road; moonlight flower withers; under the pine tree and on the shore, the rider, now turned out to be nothing but an imposter, re-emerges as a sorcerer and performs pointless magic; and finally a fright settles and replaces something whose identity is not clear:

But suddenly

A passing wave darkened;

A shape ran downward

And then rose to a peak on an ascending slope

Before us, moonlight rose

Faded and sank into a dark image;
Under the pine tree and on the shore,
It turned into a sorcerer with futile tricks,
And the pleasing flower withered even more.
A fright sat and something rose,
A maiden went another way.

A new figure is also added to the final scene: the maiden whose appearance is quite unexpected. On the cognitive and ethical plane, the maiden may be a symbol of the narrator's emerging disillusionment with the redemptive powers that moonlight rose had embodied earlier in the poem; it may also point to the gestation of alternative hopes and possibilities. On the aesthetic plane, it is the product of finalizing moonlight rose in terms that render it impotent and enfeebled. As this consummating strategy dismantles moonlight rose's interior perspective, which has held sway in the poem's middle stanzas, it enables other horizons to assert themselves by becoming "viewable" in the poem's environment. In this sense, the poem moves outward by breaking out of moonlight rose's horizon in order to reveal other plastic and pictorial features that constitute its environment. It is within this environment that the poem's architectonics and the relations between diverse horizons become visible and assume a final and definite form. Thus, we can argue that the viewability of the maiden in the poem's final scene is a consequence of pulling back from

moonlight rose's horizon and the dissolution of its interior perspective. From this outside perspective, we can easily see two colliding axes of value instead of just one as the moonlight rose and the maiden come to represent diverging possibilities.

By giving viewability to different horizons and distinctive self-activities in the poem's environment, the final stanza of "Moonlight Rose" communicates a sense of collective experience in which all participants, even as they move in opposing directions, contribute to the creation of a single environment. As Bakhtin might have said, all participants in the final scene of "Moonlight Rose" become "participants in rhythm" (121). In its Bakhtinian sense, rhythm, which can be imposed only by the other from an outside position, is the manifestation of a "communal mode of existence" (121). Through rhythm, each horizon turns into an aspect of a consummated whole (121). If intonation represents the object's self-activity in its own horizon, rhythm represents the whole that brings all objects and their disparate horizons into architectonic relationship with one another. Without the other that can enframe me from outside in a specific background and define my relationship with other aspects of that background, no rhythm can exist. It is in this sense that rhythm reveals a communal character. It represents the pulse of an environment as a whole and not just the pulse of a horizon in that environment. The subjection of all participants to rhythm in the closing scene of "Moonlight Rose" makes axiological relationship to all of them possible. From this

perspective, the maiden can offer fresh possibilities because her self-activity is measured against the empty promises that moonlight rose had offered.

What matters in rhythm is the value for and in relation to the other in his complete “givenness.” As Bakhtin suggests,

in relation to myself I do not know any form of givenness...I am—in my meaning and value for me myself—thrust back into the world of endlessly demanding meaning. As soon as I attempt to determine myself *for myself* (and not for and from another), I find my self only in that world, the world of what is yet to be achieved, *outside* my own temporal being-already-on-hand; that is, I find my self as something-yet-to-be with respect to meaning and value. (123)

In the poem’s middle stanzas, moonlight rose is “thrust back into the world of endlessly demanding meaning”; from within its own horizon, it moves ahead of itself in an eventful life toward the future of meaning. It finds itself “as something-yet-to-be with respect to meaning and value” without any determinate boundaries that can enclose it from outside.

In Bakhtin’s view, when meaning is not already consummated by the author from an outside position, when we are confronted with the future of meaning, we are experiencing a purely ethical or cognitive event. This condition, “in which I am actively active, can never come to rest in itself, can never stop, end, and become consummated” (125). In contrast, the aesthetic event depends

precisely on the author's act of fixing the hero in determinate boundaries, on rendering him "passive" in his outward expressedness. In fact, one of the functions of rhythm is to compel the hero into a passive position. From within his horizon, memory for the hero is "the memory of the future"; he will never stop seeing life as a task that is yet to be achieved. Inversely, memory for the author is "the memory of the past" (125). Within this framework, the hero is passive, finished-off and existing in the absolute past from the moment he enters the aesthetic work. This is a task that rhythm accomplishes by subjecting the hero's movements to its overall design.

With the shift of perspective to an outside position in the closing stanza, moonlight rose is no longer an active agency in the poem; it no longer turns to the future in an intently meaning-directed manner. Instead, moonlight rose becomes passive by surrendering itself to what Bakhtin calls "the mercy of the other" (128), that is to say, the mercy of the rhythm which the author imposes on the work from outside. In the final scene, moonlight rose is no longer the hegemonic force within the poem, but only an aspect of a collective in which every part participates equally in the creation of meaning within a single whole.

The Trapper of Visions: “Rira”

Mahmoud Falaki approaches Nima’s poetry through an archetypal perspective that is based on Karl Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious. This approach appears in its most rigorous form when Falaki discusses “Rira” (Rira 952), one of the most celebrated poems by Nima. There have been many controversies among Iranian critics regarding the exact meaning of the word “rira.” Falaki contends that rira is a “voice [or sound] which partakes of a mythical essence.” Concealed in “the distant past” and secreted in “the mind’s dark recesses,” rira survives in the collective unconscious and appears to the poet in a breathtaking moment of illumination (18).

Falaki continues his argument by pointing out that rira “emerges out of the heart of the night,” which in Nima’s poems frequently reveals a frightful or oppressive vision of existence. After the speaker speculates a little about the exact location from which the sound rises, he concludes that its source “must be something other than a human voice” (16). In Falaki’s view, this introduces a streak of “ambiguity” in “Rira,” driving the poem toward fashioning “an internal meaning” (17-18). By “internal meaning,” Falaki may be referring to the meaning which, regardless of the social and political context, is generated by the particular way images move inside the poem and the relations they form in and through language. Houman Sarshar suggests the same thing when he discusses Nima’s attempt to replace “the pre-coded signs” of the system of signification in

traditional poetry with “non-canonical words and images” (“The Anxiety” 109). By subverting the rigid moulds of classical poetry, this strategy enables Nima to invest his images and symbols with “a particular meaning specific to the poem at hand” (109).

Falaki begins his discussion of “Rira” with a description of its nocturnal setting. He first suggests that the night in Nima’s poems is a symbol for “the darkness that prevails over society” (17). But the night in “Rira” no longer acts as an enveloping atmosphere that affects every facet of the poem as, for example, is the case with “Night Is” or “I Gaze Waiting for You.” Instead, rira as a sound becomes the sole form-generating agency in the poem. One implication of this evaluation is to see language and its movements as the poem’s shaping principle. In fact, the whole poem, along with all the impressions and memories that make up its plot, appears as a reaction to the sound rira or an attempt to grasp its meaning. It is this dynamics that structures the poem’s “internal meaning.”

When “Rira” opens, the speaker tries to locate the source of the sound that he hears by gazing behind the *kach* (a patch of forest entering the field), where “the darkness-reflecting water” in a small dam “draws an image of ruin in the eye.” Falaki equates this darkness with “the dark depths of history” out of which rira suddenly emerges (18). Initially, the speaker likens rira to the song that someone is singing:

“Rira”...a sound rises tonight
From behind the *kach* where
The darkness-reflecting water in the dam
Draws an image of ruin in the eye
It is as if someone were singing.

Falaki describes this sound as “the sum total of mankind’s moaning throughout history” which has now found a chance to resurface from man’s collective unconscious (18).

Rira comes from “the farthest reaches of history” and, therefore, “appears as strange” (18). In a Jungian fashion, Falaki describes rira as the anima or the female life within man. To him, rira is “a complete physical woman,” the poet’s lost half” that materializes with a shocking force precisely at the moment when the poet’s imagination is at its ripest:

It is as if man’s other half has been lost on the other side of history.
This other half moves invisibly, but it flashes up momentarily and in the form of a sound (voice) only when man gets out of his “self” and transcends life’s ordinary moments. The poet is someone who in that moment recognizes his lost half and knows how to seize it. (21)

According to Falaki, the poet is a “trapper” who “traps the moments that unexpectedly appear to him” (21). He hunts these moments not in their ordinary state, but in their “climactic” form (21). Since rira is drenched in ambiguity and

“climactic” implies a sense of finality beyond which things cannot go, Falaki by this word seems to refer, not to the precise nature of the entrapped moment, but to the awakening impact that it exerts on the poet.

Although Falaki’s Jungian insight into “Rira” is quite interesting, the poem’s aesthetic structure can be better grasped in terms of Bakhtinain architectonics. Rira in itself cannot be placed in determinate boundaries; it has no viewability or definable features that can be consummated positively. That is why the speaker searches for other models outside rira that may help him to enframe this mysterious sound. Hence, he thinks about “the songs of men” which he situates in determinate temporal and spatial boundaries:

But this is not the voice of man.

With a rapturous alertness

I have heard the songs of men

In the circling of heavy night

Heavier

Than my sorrow

And I know by heart

All the songs men sing.

One night in the boat

They sang with such despair

That I still see

The horror of the sea

In my sleep.

Since the men in the boat and their songs are conjured up by the speaker through an act of remembrance, they exist in what Bakhtin calls the “absolute past.” As Bakhtin might have said, this temporal distance, which is gained by the receding of the men and their songs into the past, enables the speaker to shape them positively “in the category of the *other*” (129).

Situated in the past of the poem, both the men and their songs coincide with themselves completely; they cannot be anything else but what they *were* and we can see “*all*” of them at every given moment of the aesthetic approach (131). By enframing the men and their songs in the absolute past, the speaker basically enacts the structure of authoring inside the poem. As Bakhtin puts it, it is by means of this distance, by standing outside characters as they are enclosed in the past, that the author can finalize and make them “aesthetically significant” (130). The acquirement of this distance enables the speaker in “Rira” to take an evaluative stance toward the men and their songs. (In Bakhtin’s words, an evaluative or axiological position vis-à-vis the other is possible only when he is placed in stable spatial and temporal boundaries). As Bakhtin may have said, the men and their songs enter the poem as a memory and assume form through a “process of commemoration” (131). In this sense, they are “hopeless with respect to meaning” from the moment they appear in the poem (131).

Caryl Emerson cites Elena Volkova who contends that outsidership prevents us from being absorbed in the other completely; it hinders us from duplicating the other's self "in the name of empathy or devotion" (*The First Hundred* 209). As Emerson points out, the "position outside creates the possibility of finalizing an event, and the act of finalizing or consummating is the most crucial aesthetic moment" (210). Outsidership enables us to enter "another's worldview and then, with a memory of that other horizon," return to our own horizon (209). The speaker in "Rira" enters the horizon of the men in the boat, co-experiences their singing, and then returns to his own horizon. In this way, he acquires a "distinctive excess, or surplus, of vision" vis-à-vis the men in the boat that allows him to consummate their songs as a memory, as an event that has transpired in a determinate space and time in the past.

Bakhtin outlines the stages that generate the excess of seeing and consummate the experience of the other by turning it into memory:

[T]he excess of my seeing must "fill in" the horizon of the other human being who is being contemplated, must render this horizon complete, without at the same time forfeiting his distinctiveness. I must empathize or project myself into this other human being, see his world axiologically from within him as he sees this world; I must put myself in his place and then, after returning to my own place, "fill in" his horizon through the excess of seeing which opens out

from this, my own, place outside him. I must enframe him, creating
a consummating environment for him out of this excess of my own
seeing, knowing, desiring, feeling. (*Art 25*)

When “Rira” begins, the speaker has already returned to his own horizon after co-experiencing the life of the men and hearing their songs in the boat. He has secured a place outside that experience which, for him, has receded into the past. This opens out an excess of seeing by which he can “fill in” the horizon of the men and enframe their songs in finalized terms. From a Bakhtinian perspective, this process creates the aesthetic moment proper. Constrained in the absolute past, the men and their songs are enclosed in a consummating environment that is marked by determinate temporal and spatial features; they sing their songs *in “the circling of heavy nights” inside a boat on the sea*.

From the speaker’s outside position, the songs are fraught with an oppressive quality that is inherent in the night. This is a night that has a circling movement and is “heavier” than the speaker’s sorrow. At the same time, the men sing their songs with *deltangi*, a Persian term that may either be translated as “despair” or “longing.” Notwithstanding what *deltangi* precisely means, it causes the speaker to have a recurring vision of “the horror of the sea” in his sleep. In fact, this horror may be the key to decoding the meaning of the sound rira. Whatever rira may mean, it must be *opposed to*, or *other than*, what the songs of men convey or the horror of the sea evokes (“But [rira] is not the voice of man”).

Even if the ultimate significance of the sound *rira* slips out of our grasp, it conjures up an antithetical experience, vis-à-vis itself, which is consummated definitely in time and space. In this sense, *rira* may itself be seen as a transgredient moment that the author introduces from outside to consummate the men and their songs. Seen this way, the primary function of *rira* as the poem's axial symbol is to elucidate, by opposition, what itself is not, namely, the songs of men.

Bakhtin suggests that aesthetic quality can be bestowed on one consciousness only by some other consciousness that is situated outside it. As Emerson puts it, "what grace there is must be found in otherness and otherwise-ness" (*The First Hundred* 212). Seen from within one's horizon, everything is unfinished, set as a task to be accomplished in the event of life. From this inside position, no form-giving activity is possible. To create form, a stable point of support is required outside the object that receives form. And this point of support, or form-giving agency, is provided by another consciousness. That is why Bakhtin believes that the creation of form depends on the existence of at least two consciousnesses (213). Implied in this notion is also the valuational stance of the consciousness that engages in form-giving activity vis-à-vis the consciousness that receives form.

In "*Rira*," the giver of form is the speaker and its receiver the men and their songs. What makes the speaker's form-giving activity possible is the surplus of

seeing that he has gained by returning to his own horizon after co-experiencing the songs of men with them. This surplus of seeing, which enables the speaker to fill in the men's horizon by seeing what is in principle inaccessible to them, i.e., the background that envelops them in time and space, is also formed by the speaker's experience of rira in some other dimension in space and time, namely, the poem's present. It is true that rira itself does not assume any finalized form or outward expressedness; the poem's ending perfectly shows that it does not coincide with itself, "[i]t is not with itself":

Rira. Rira...

Is in the mood to sing

In this dark night.

It is not with itself

It has gone with its voice but

It cannot sing.

Nevertheless, rira provides a measure for the speaker to consummate the songs that the men have sung in the boat. Rira may not be able to sing, but, ironically, the whole poem is constructed in response to this sound: it is formless, and yet it has been employed as a strategic device to bestow form on the poem. It has also made the aesthetic moment possible by compelling the speaker to assume an evaluative stance from outside toward the men and their songs.

From the author's transgredient position, the horizon that the speaker occupies is also an aspect of the poem's environment. Nevertheless, the author utilizes the speaker to foreground the structure of authoring inside the poem. In this sense, the speaker's relationship to other horizons in the poem makes the process of aesthetic activity viewable; it enables the poem's architectonic relations to emerge in full visibility. To be consummated, the men and their songs, as Bakhtin might have said, have an "absolute need for the other, for the other's seeing, remembering, gathering, and unifying self-activity—the only activity capable of producing [the men's] outwardly finished personality" (36). And Nima furnishes this other in the guise of the speaker. In the same vein, *rira* is a transgredient element that the author employs to stabilize the boundaries that enclose the men and their songs in the poem's environment. Thus, *rira*, in spite of its own formlessness, is an aspect of the aesthetically productive moment that makes the author's form-giving activity in the poem possible.

The Third Circle of Consciousness: “Maneli”

“Maneli” (1945) is another important poem by Nima which Falaki discusses. Falaki claims that with “Maneli,” the sea takes on a “symbolic form” and enters Iranian poetry as a “major character” (29). But “Maneli” is even more important in the context of Falaki’s own methodology as another occasion for the reappearance of Jungian anima or the feminine side of the hero, a side which must ultimately be interpreted as the poet’s source of aesthetic creativity. Falaki, however, does not really tackle the aesthetic issues in Nima’s poetry; it is a task that Kamran Talattof tries to perform in “Ideology and Self-Portrayal in the Poetry of Nima Yushij.” Nevertheless, Falaki offers some valuable insights that, though a little sketchy, can shed light on Nima’s aesthetic vision.

Falaki points out that Nima uses nature and its elements as “a mirror to register the colliding emotions of Maneli, his central character” (35). According to Falaki, “while the sea’s peacefulness reflects Maneli’s serenity, its turbulent moments find their corollaries in his fears” (35). The tension, which the clash of polarized tendencies creates in Maneli, plunges him into a crisis that is “a necessary step toward acquiring a higher consciousness” (35). This tension compels Maneli “to think and display [...] his innate or social strengths and weaknesses to the reader” (35). The sea waves symbolize Maneli’s internal tension by playing a “dual role”: on the one hand, they rob him of the control of his boat and take him to their own intended destination and, on the other hand,

by their perpetual ascending and descending movements, they mirror his vacillating thoughts (36).

Oppressed by a false consciousness, Maneli, who is a fisherman, is accustomed to the misery of his crippling poverty. Nonetheless, when he encounters a mermaid on the sea during a stormy night, all his repressed wishes find a chance to be expressed. Falaki points out that when Maneli “submits to his imagination, the mermaid suddenly leaps out of the water before him” (37). Associated with imagination and creativity, the mermaid is also “the symbol of Maneli’s need and desire for kindness and plenitude” (37). If, however, as Talattof holds, we understand “Maneli” primarily as an elucidation of Nima’s aesthetic theory or a symbolic tale in which the mermaid, as the embodiment of an aesthetic vision, enables Maneli to recognize the path to artistic creativity, this poem’s connection with “Rira” becomes clear.

Within Falaki’s own theoretical framework, the mermaid can be viewed as the anima, a feminine impulse which is closely associated with artistic creativity. The fact that the mermaid, a feminine figure, acts as the transmitter of consciousness by releasing what is repressed in Maneli legitimates a Jungian reading of Nima’s poem. Falaki himself suggests that “the dialogue between Maneli and the mermaid depicts the struggle between a false and a true conscience, between stasis and movement, between ignorance and awareness” (38). The mermaid tries to show “the beauties of life” to Maneli and “her function

is to instill consciousness in him” (41). These are basically the functions that Talattof also ascribes to the mermaid.

Talattof argues that “Maneli” manifests, in a symbolic form, Nima’s attempt to articulate his aesthetic theory. In his view, Nima employs “the dichotomy between the shore and the sea as a metaphor of the poet’s opposition to what he judges to be the lethargic nature of the Persian literary discourse of the nineteenth century” (69). Within this context, “Maneli” signals an urgent need for “a new poetic language” that can emancipate poetry from the stagnant conventions of the millennial tradition of Persian poetry (69).

Talattof asserts that the birth of this new poetic language depended on the creation of “a new form, to the extent that for [Nima] form and new poetry become ideological elements of the modernist discourse of the early twentieth century” (69). In this light, form is the most vital aspect of modernist Persian poetry which sets it radically apart from the classical poetic discourse. Talattof also views Nima’s *Sher-e Now* (New Poetry) as an expression of “Persianism,” a trend in the early twentieth-century literary discourse which constituted a major front of Iranian modernism. According to Talattof, the main attributes of Persianism were “love for the Persian language and literature,” return to “the pre-Islamic era,” embracement of “rapid modernization,” and, finally, “opposition to Islam” (70).

To these tendencies, Nima adds another layer that becomes a major hallmark of his aesthetic theory. In Talattof's terms, Nima utilizes the notion of "suffering" as a crucial metaphor in "Maneli" to explain "the obstacles [that are] continually placed in his way as he attempts to express himself in poetry" (69). From this perspective, suffering becomes the source of aesthetic productivity in Nima's poetry. This suffering does not result from social misery or political oppression, but has a strikingly individual nature. Talattof tries to wrench Nima's poetry and aesthetic concerns away from a social or political reading by placing them within a purely depoliticized framework. He further argues that Iranian modernist writers were not "nationalists" and there are no "indications that they advocated any sort of leftist revolutionary politics" (71). Regardless of whether this assertion is valid or not, Talattof maintains the position that Nima's poetry must be understood primarily from a particular aesthetic perspective that is totally severed from social realities.

Talattof formulates the aesthetic issue in Nima's poetry within the larger framework of Persianism that, in his view, assembles together the most pressing concerns of Iranian writers and poets in the first half of the twentieth century. These writers and poets intended

to reduce the use of Arabic terminology; to work toward the purification of the Persian language; to promote a language closer to common parlance instead of the formulaic style; to link ancient

Iran to the present time through diverse linguistic structures; and, finally, to promote modernity by presenting new literary genres. (71)

The Persianists incorporated these elements in their works mainly as a strategy “to purify and secularize language and, at times, to show how damaging the Islamic invasion had been to the country” (72). According to Talattof, Nima in “Maneli” exploits the resources of Persianism to signal his break with classical Persian poetry. The change in poetic style which Nima envisions would also actuate the transformation of society (72).

Viewed from this angle, “Maneli” functions as a kind of manifesto for modern poetry. During his encounter with the mermaid, Maneli speaks about his poverty and a life full of hardships. But as the narrative moves forward, no doubt remains that he is actually voicing Nima’s own concerns about the poet’s calling and the nature of poetry (78). This prompts Talattof to suggest that “the theme of self-portrayal” lies at the core of “Maneli” (78).

Talattof speaks of the mermaid in “Maneli” in terms that at times echo Falaki’s discussion of the role of anima in “Rira.” There is, however, a crucial difference between the two critics because, while Falaki contends that rira rises out of “the collective unconscious and the distant past,” Talattof links the mermaid “with new ideas about the future” which, incidentally, have a strikingly individual dimension (83). Talattof interprets the mermaid as a symbol for “cultural change through poetry” because she embodies “creativity, an

imaginative mind, and a truth-seeking character” (83), features which stand in sharp contrast with what Nima considered to be the inert and ossified state of classical Persian poetry. According to Talattof, the opposition between the sea and the shore in “Maneli” highlights the struggle between the New Poetry and its traditional counterpart. Unlike the sea that is “always changing,” the village and the shore are “decrepit” and shrouded in “silence” (84). Linked to the sea, the mermaid performs her symbolic function as “the provider of the sign that the sea (the future, the new poetry)” reveals; the sea can liberate Maneli from the land or what comes to symbolize “the past and the vanishing present, the old poetry” (83).

During a crucial scene, Maneli takes off his old shirt and gives it to the mermaid. Talattof explains Maneli’s gesture as a symbolic act that expresses the poet’s decisive break with the constraints that had fettered pre-Niamic poetry:

The surrendering of the shirt to the mermaid represents for Maneli a shedding of his former worldview, attitude, and lifestyle. That is, the shirt symbolizes the old form...Thus, Nima is metaphorically recounting his own shedding of old forms and style of poetry and creating the new. (85)

Maneli needs to discard “his old shirt because the new phase in his life requires new clothes” (91). This moment is a significant turning point in the poem because it is conjoined with a visible change that has been in a state of gestation

throughout the poem. Talattof makes a perceptive observation by explaining the change of style that Maneli's language undergoes after the encounter with the mermaid.

Through a shift in style, Maneli's language becomes more risqué, more lucid, and more energetic, a change that signifies our entry into the realm of New Poetry. Talattof sustains his argument by contrasting this lively style with the formal and thematic rigidity of traditional poetry. In the earlier sections, we encounter "at times meaningless and at times grammatically awkward" rhymes while "Maneli's thoughts about the mermaid, the sea and the near future are presented in a far clearer verse, [and] with abundant embellishment" (86). As Maneli revolts "against stagnant and unchanging forms" by preferring "the adventures of the sea to the safety of the shore," nature is also "rejuvenated" before his eyes (87). This organic link between poetry and nature only shows that Nima conceived of poetry as a powerful tool that could affect and transform all facets of life.

"Maneli" then emerges as an expression of Nima's crusade for advancing New Poetry. Talattof holds that the "binary opposition," which is created between the new and old poetry in "Maneli," has nothing to do with "committed literature" whose advocates tried to claim Nima's poetry as a justification for their own political cause (93). By "committed literature," Talattof seems to allude to the

social realism of the communist Tudeh Party¹⁰ and other leftist groups which appreciated literature only “in terms of class” (93). Nima’s poems may embody

¹⁰ Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak shows how the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party tried to claim Nima’s poetry as an expression of its own ideology and political standpoint. In a preface to “Ommide-Palid” (The Filthy Hope), which was first published in 1943 in Namehy-e Mardom, the Tudeh Party’s a weekly newspaper, Ehsan Tabari, a chief party ideologue, described the symbol of morning in this poem as “an allusion to the dawning of a new society.” As Tabari injects an “ideological specificity” into the poem’s symbols which “would otherwise be absent,” he comes to view the symbol of “morning” as an embodiment of “Soviet-style socialism.” Karimi-Hakkak points out that Tabari contrasts morning with night which he “equates with reaction, backwardness, ignorance, and corruption of the present day society” in Nima’s poem.

Karimi-Hakkak argues that symbols such as “night,” “darkness,” “morning” and “light” in “The Filthy Hope” can be interpreted in multiple ways, but Tabari’s reductive preface “initiates a reading process which focuses on one of many of the poem’s potential—and theoretically valid—readings.” See Karimi-Hakkak’s *Recasting Persian Poetry, the Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran*, pages 253 to 256.

Karimi-Hakkak is absolutely right in seeing Nima’s poem as yielding multiple interpretations. In a letter to Tabari dated May 25, 1943, Nima himself criticizes Tabari’s one-sided Zhdanovian conception of art as reflective of social relations. The “reflection theory of art,” as Raymond Williams in *Marxism and Literature* points out, conceives of artistic productions as mere “reflexes, echoes, phantoms, and sublimates” of material conditions (95). Nima rejects Tabari’s definition of art as a vehicle for mechanical materialism. Mechanical materialism advocates a rigid view of art which overlooks the fact that an artwork is “at once “material” and

his era's social and political ethos or certain ideals of freedom and justice, but these elements are secondary and incidental to his poems. His poetry may be an arena where the sufferings of the masses are portrayed, but it must be understood primarily in aesthetic terms. Nevertheless, Talattof's view of individual suffering as the central theme or the root of Nima's aesthetic vision can be contested. At least, poems, such as "The Amen Bird" and "The Phoenix," advance along the lines that depict a social vision of suffering, even as the final act of aesthetic creation is individual.¹¹

Nima himself points to suffering as the origin of his aesthetic vision and as the source that shapes the formal and thematic structures of his poems:

"imaginative"" (97). Nima, on the other hand, refuses to regard art as a super-structural phenomenon that simply reflects its material base.

In the letter to Tabari, Nima goes even further and claims that art is independent from all social conditions:

Despite the importance of science and morality, art is essentially autonomous from them as it tries to create its own aesthetic effects. It is only then that it can shape, along with itself, what exists in us and the nature of life. Art clings to form and structure and is not born out of any immediate conditions (472).

¹¹ For a detailed treatment of this topic, see my discussion of the views of Mohammad Mokhtari and Shapour Jorkesh in the chapter on "In the Cold Wintry Night."

The source of my poetry is my suffering. In my belief, any true poet must have that source. I write poetry in response to my and my people's suffering. Words, rhythm, and rhyme have always been tools which I have had to use to write just in order to better express the suffering of myself and others. (as cited in Talattof 94)

In a manner that reminds one of "The Phoenix", Nima also speaks of the suffering of others, but, just as in "The Phoenix," the poem as an ultimately aesthetic product is the result of the poet's own unique and solitary struggle. The phoenix draws on the sufferings of the collective as the raw materials that shape his vision, but, as in "Maneli," he experiences the most intense moment of this suffering in solitude as he burns in the fire of his own making. Talattof, however, disregards this collective dimension of suffering in Nima's poetry.¹² Instead, he

¹² Reza Baraheni, as I have shown in "Chapter One," speaks extensively about Nima's social and historical responsibilities and the way the poet shares the sufferings of his people. To clarify this point, let us look briefly at Nima's "The Phoenix," a poem in which the eponymous bird and his struggles, according to a number of critics, symbolize the poet's own endeavors to forge his poetry. One point that should be emphasized here is the fact that the thoughts and sentiments of the phoenix in this poem are not entirely his own. In fact, the voices of other birds exert a formative influence that guides the phoenix's actions. The phoenix is really a kind of synthesizer that seems quite obsessed with collecting the voices that are already lost or are in danger of being buried for good in the depths of history: "He combines the lost moans/From the torn cords of hundreds of far voices."

The phoenix's synthesizing activity presumably imposes shape and order on the chaotic existence of disjointed voices that are aimlessly afloat in every direction. Nima in *Harfhay-e Hamsayeh* (The Neighbor's Words) bases his theory of poetry on a dialogic understanding of existence by maintaining that "you need to have two ears: one for listening to rightful songs and voices, one for listening to any wrongful and conflicting word" (9). This should help us put in context the role of the phoenix as a collector of voices, the voices that, although are oppressed, can be harmonized, as "The Amen Bird" shows, into an effective tool for changing social conditions. As such, the phoenix's activity resembles those of the "ragpicker," a figure which appears frequently in Baudelaire's poems, including "Le Vin des Chiffoniers."

Walter Benjamin cites Baudelaire's remarks on the ragpicker in some lengths in his article, "The Paris of the Second Empire":

Here we have a man whose job is to gather the day's refuse in the capital.

Everything that the big city has thrown away, everything it has lost, everything it has scorned, everything it has crushed underfoot he catalogues and collects. He collates the annals of intemperance, the capharnaum of waste. He sorts things out and selects judiciously, like a miser guarding a treasure, refuse which will assume the shape of useful or gratifying objects between the jaws of the goddess of industry. (48)

Benjamin points out that Baudelaire utilizes the ragpicker's profession of collecting the day's refuse in nineteenth-century Paris as an "extended metaphor for his own poetic practice":

"Ragpicker and poet: both are concerned with refuse, and both go about their solitary business while other citizens are sleeping" (48).

Like the ragpicker, the phoenix engages in his "solitary business" by salvaging the unregarded and the obscure in order to charge them with meaning and value. In the manner that uncannily duplicates the ragpicker's enterprise, the phoenix recovers the birds' "lost moans" and

suggests that Nima's "suffering may have originated from the problems he faced during his own career rather than from his specific concern for social problems" (96). Thus, in Talattof's view, suffering assumes a purely aesthetic function in Nima's "discourse of self-portrayal" as it turns into a "metaphor for the difficulties that he faced during his career as he promoted New Poetry" (96).

Although it may sound rather odd, a comparison of "Maneli" with "Rira" may be productive. For one thing, as Falaki points out, the poet in "Rira" resembles a hunter who, in an exceptional moment of creative clarity, traps a sound or an image that, after centuries, has surfaced out of the farthest recesses of history. Cannot one make a similar case for the mermaid as a symbol of Maneli's deepest desires that have been repressed throughout his arduous life? When "Maneli" opens, the eponymous hero, "in the hope of catching fish," "rows his boat quietly on the sea." The sea is serene and "the poor man" has no other companion except "the frightful night." But right in these opening lines, a major

establishes relations between "the torn cords of hundreds of far voices." None of the voices that the phoenix amasses belongs to the dominant discourse of conquerors and victors; they are a mass of "lost," marginal and "scorned" voices that are "thrown away" and languish in oblivion. As such, they have no place in a unitary vision of historical progress. But the phoenix brushes history against the grain by retrieving the voices that, under the pressure of hegemonic forces, are denied agency.

consummating feature of Maneli is highlighted; he is filled with regret and desire for “Ra’na”:

The sea was silent
Lonely in the frightful night, the poor man,
Full of regret and desire, poured out his heart
He sang in the quietude of the vast sea:

“Hey Ra’na!
Your deer-like body,
Ra’na!
The magic eye, Ra’na!
Hey Ra’na, Ra’na.”

Ra’na may only be the name of a woman in a local song that Maneli is singing. But it can also mean “beautiful” or “beautifully embellished” in Persian. Since Maneli has set out on his perilous journey *to catch* fish in this terrible night, should not we, following Talattof, interpret his whole enterprise in symbolic terms as an aesthetic quest? Is not hunting or *catching beauty* one of the ultimate goals of aesthetic activity? From this perspective, Maneli is consummated at the very outset by a defining feature that echoes the poet’s own aesthetic concerns.

Of course, there is always a distance between the author and the hero in an aesthetic work. As Bakhtin puts it, this distance gives the author an “invariably determinate and stable excess of [...] seeing and knowing” in relation to both the

hero and “all those moments that bring about the consummation of the whole” (*Art* 12). If the author fails in securing this distance, his valuational stance toward the hero collapses; and this valuational stance is achieved only through the finalization of the hero’s “actions within the open ethical event of his lived life” (13). To approach the hero axiologically, the author must enframe him from outside in determinate boundaries. This is a point to which I will return at the end of this chapter.

As the poem advances, the features that consummate Maneli in his determinate horizon in the poem’s environment become pronouncedly “viewable.” Basically, these features are the intensifications of the feeling of loneliness, regret and desire that have besieged Maneli in the opening stanzas. He now asks questions such as “Who will protect me in the heart of this dark night?” and “What will relieve me from my agonizing work?” Soon, he realizes:

I must walk on my own path.

Amidst the tribulations of this eventful life

No one will tend to my wounds.

Even if they deny it, everyone is alone.

The one who tends to me is my work.

This passage is crucial for understanding Nima’s aesthetic theory as Talattof expounds it. It can be interpreted as a statement by Nima which clarifies his relationship to his poetry and the solitary struggle that poetic creativity entails.

Nevertheless, Maneli needs an outside agency to help him break out of an oppressive existence. This outside agency materializes in the guise of the mermaid. A life of endless destitution and infertility, which also symbolizes the aesthetic aridity of traditional poetry, must recede for Maneli into the absolute past. Maneli must move out of his vapid self and, by introducing transgredient moments in the life of that self, distance himself from it. It is the mermaid who provides these transgredient moments by permitting Maneli to move out of his own horizon and see that horizon from an outside position. Maneli enters the mermaid's horizon, co-experiences her life with her, sees himself from the mermaid's eyes, and then returns to his own horizon. In this way, he gains a surplus of seeing that opens out for him by this return to his horizon. Maneli's consciousness of how the mermaid perceives his former atrophied consciousness gives birth to a third circle of consciousness which, in Bakhtin's view, is the aesthetic consciousness proper.

As Holquist puts it, although aesthetics assumes the form of a "struggle to achieve a whole," this whole is always "a negotiated relation between "two powers" (xxvii). Every aspect and "constituent in the artistic whole is determined in terms of two value-systems," a condition that endows "every constituent of the whole and the entire whole itself with the axiological weight of an event" (xxvii). Bakhtin points out that an aesthetic event transpires "only when there are two participants present"; it "presupposes two noncoinciding consciousnesses" (*Art*

23). In this sense, what gives “Maneli” the weight of an aesthetic event is the negotiated relation between the two value systems that are represented inside the poem by the hero and the mermaid. It is out of this relation that, as Bakhtin would say, an aesthetic consciousness is born. From this perspective, Maneli’s transformed consciousness (his aesthetic consciousness) is structured by the productive encounter of his barren self with the mermaid’s regenerative vision.¹³

When amidst the rising waves, Maneli encounters the mermaid, the mermaid’s questions steer him into taking an evaluative position toward his own self:

Anyone will evolve toward perfection on a particular path.

To achieve perfection in one thing

You must turn away

From some other thing.

This is life,

And you must free yourself in this way.

¹³ Of course, we must keep in mind that from a Bakhtinian perspective, Maneli as the hero cannot really stand outside the poem and perform the authorial function of aestheticizing it. After all, he, too, is a participant in the event that takes place inside the poem and, therefore, cannot be situated outside it. And, of course, outsideness in Bakhtin’s view is a condition that is essential to the production of the aesthetic moment. Nevertheless, we can argue that Nima uses Maneli to foreground the structure of authoring inside the poem in order to make his own aestheticizing activity visible. This is a point to which I will return at the end of this chapter.

Perhaps, your labor is caused by your heart and your wife's desire?

That is why you have forgotten about everything else.

I wish to ask you something,

Will you tell me the truth?

Is my body whiter and softer than your wife's?

Does the color of my eyes seem to you

Blacker than hers?

Her question prompted the man to see her unmatched beauty,

How beautifully she is embellished!

She has no rival in the expanse of the plane

Nor is there a beauty on the mountains that can match her.

She is all sketches and the magic of colors

But she has hesitated to enthrall the people!

It is as if from the consciousness-robbing brightness of
moonlight

They had planted flowers in water.

And from the vast heart of these heavy waters

They had revealed the meaning of creation.

Maneli's evaluative position becomes possible because he steps outside his own horizon and sees himself from the mermaid's eye. In terms of Bakhtinian

architectonics, Maneli's life from within his horizon exhibits an eventful character that resists finalization in determinate boundaries. Hence, it is not possible for him to relate to himself from within valuationally. From within, one can neither perceive himself in a background nor comprehend his relationship to that background. That is why Maneli must move outside his horizon and perceive himself as the other in order to gain an objective understanding of the conditions that constitute the background of his life.

Maneli's entry into the mermaid's horizon enables him to see himself in the other's "pupil of the eye." When Maneli returns to his own horizon on the shore, he has gained the necessary outsideness in relation to his own self, even if this outsideness may still appear in unstable terms. This outsideness enables Maneli to make sense out of his life on the shore by what Holquist calls "fixing the flux of its disparate elements into [a] meaningful whole" (xxix). Without outsideness vis-à-vis his old self, Maneli can never take an axiological position toward his life on the shore and enframe it as a sterile existence that he must discard. As Holquist puts it, I see the world from a "horizon" and, therefore, remain oblivious to the "environment" that encloses my horizon on all sides (xxix). I, however, can see the other's horizon "as existing in an environment" because my outsideness in relation to the other allows me to enframe him in determinate spatial and temporal boundaries within a background (xxix), an activity which also makes my valuational relation to him possible. Only by moving

outside himself, by enframing his old self as the other in a particular environment, can Maneli relate to it valuationally.

After Maneli's encounter with the mermaid and his entry into her horizon, the fisherman puts in perspective the limitations that have crippled his life up to that point. In one brief glance, Maneli exposes his whole life or, to use Bakhtin's terms, consummates it in finalized terms:

I am innocent

My job is to fish.

In the hope of a small catch

My whole life has been wasted on these waters.

In a world full of despair and hardship,

No one is more destitute than me.

Maneli explains to the mermaid that a "crushing life" "has cracked his bones." He complains that "death, in the guise of poverty, knocks ruthlessly on [his] door."

On other hand, the mermaid is situated in a kind of utopian or imaginative zone which stands in stark opposition to the sphere of terribly unimaginative reality that constitutes Maneli's life. The mermaid describes herself in this manner:

I am an element of the hidden sea, lodging in the waves,

More unique than anything you can imagine.

I am that hidden goodness which man's sharp thought

Cannot conceive
And the insatiable map of his desires
Fails to grasp.
I am more beautiful than anyone else
I can bestow serenity on the people's hearts.

The mermaid appears to Maneli as *mani-yeh khelqat* (the meaning of creation), a quality which is clearly absent in his own life. One way of interpreting this last phrase is to maintain that she is an emblem of pure creativity that appears only to the visionary artist. She tells Maneli that not “every poor man/Can see me in the light that you have/And find me with the ease that you have.” As in “Rira,” the moment of lucidity or insight into the aesthetic vision occurs only when the artist is prepared to recognize and seize it. Within this context, the mermaid's appearance in the poem signals Maneli's readiness to move out of his own horizon and co-experience the creative wealth that she offers.

The contact with this imaginative zone provides Maneli with an excess of seeing by which he can enframe his old life and take an axiological stance toward it. He now sees that life in a critical light and is aware of the potential for transforming it:

You, who are stuck in the mire of your life,
Care a little for your own heart.
Soar to a higher plane

Gaze at her [the mermaid's] beauty.

Why are you wandering so much

In the circle of life

Like an animal who is searching for food?

What is then the goal of being human?

As opposed to the bland reality of Maneli's "ruined earthly" life, the mermaid's world vibrates with "sketches and the magic of all colors"; her beauty reminds Maneli of the flowers that are planted in water by "the consciousness-robbing brightness of moonlight." In this sense, the mermaid's horizon is also fixed in distinct boundaries in the poem's environment. It is finalized by determinate features to which Maneli can relate architectonically from outside after returning to his own horizon. But to do so, he must first project himself into the mermaid and co-experience her world with her.

When, after spending the night with the mermaid, Maneli finally returns to the shore, he can no longer tolerate his life as it used to be. Something has changed in him, "The sea's breath/has intoxicated him" by anchoring his life in a "different desire." The encounter with the mermaid has also made him more receptive to the voices of nature: "Unlike every other night/Everything utters its secret to him." The voices of all creatures (the lizard, the wild nuphar and the rooster) all become signposts that entice Maneli back to his home, where his

dozing wife expects his arrival before a half-extinguished stove. But everything has become “strange” and “altered” in Maneli’s eyes:

I am so unsettled
So perturbed at the end of my life!
Where are all these voices coming from?
Who is watching my disconcerted state?
What spell did they
Bind on me on the sea
That everything has become strange and altered in my eyes?
Has not the mad heart of the secretive sea
Turned me into a lunatic just like itself?
Why everything in my eyes has the color of the sea?

Although Maneli’s words create the impression that his consciousness has completely merged with that of the mermaid, his return to the shore provides him with a surplus of vision that hinders his complete coincidence with the mermaid and the sea. Here Maneli demonstrates a situated awareness that is rooted in the unique site that he occupies in the world at a particular time and in a particular place. It is early morning and he has returned to the shore, a time and place which decisively separate him from the spatio-temporal horizon that he had occupied on the sea with the mermaid the night before. As Bakhtin suggests, one of the basic traits of aesthetic activity is to “fill in” the horizon of the other human

being who is being contemplated and to render that horizon “complete, without at the same time forfeiting [its] distinctiveness” (*Art* 26). Maneli projects himself into the mermaid and sees her world as she sees it herself. Returning to the shore, Maneli no longer occupies the mermaid’s horizon; his co-experience with her has not led to pure-co-consciousness. Instead, the imaginative intensity that marks the mermaid’s world has become a constituent of Maneli’s consciousness, an aspect of his surplus of seeing that enables him to relate to both the mermaid’s and his own old life axiologically. As Bakhtin might have said, the mermaid’s vision of existence is refracted through the optic of Maneli’s uniqueness in life; it becomes a crucial dimension of his consciousness enabling him to perceive things on the shore from a vibrantly fresh angle.

Although Maneli is enthralled by the vision of the sea, worldly concerns still torment him after his return to the shore. An anxiety, which had vanished in the mermaid’s embrace, now triggers an internal struggle in Maneli. Although a “sea-swept odd longing” prevails over him, he is still troubled by how to explain the loss of his shirt to his wife:

With every moment, he was digging into his agitated mind

With every step, he was asking himself:

“How did I pass my time last night?

What was I looking for?

If my wife asks me: where is your shirt?

What should I answer?

Who in this calculating world

Will see my action as an act of generosity?

One can argue that Maneli's character at this point becomes rather unstable as he seems torn by inner tensions. Of course, in Bakhtinian architectonics, the character's resistance to stabilization in determinate boundaries makes the author's valuational stance toward him precarious; and this situation radically undermines the construction of the aesthetic moment. A character, whose boundaries are dissolved, participates in the event of life as an unfinalized and open-ended experience. Within this framework, we can suggest that the poem loses its aesthetic solidity at this point and lapses into what Bakhtin calls "the projected world of cognition" and "the open event of ethical action" (*Art* 14). Maneli's unsettled attitude just before the closing stanza threatens to make him "diffused and dispersed" as a character. To restore the aesthetic moment, the author must stabilize Maneli; he must collect him and, as Bakhtin would say, "complete him to the point where he forms a *whole* by supplying all those moments which are inaccessible to the hero himself from within himself" (14).

One of Falaki's most crucial insights is his contention that when at the end of "Maneli" the protagonist returns to the shore, his "visit of the old world occurs from another point of view" (46). Falaki does not try to either unpack the

implications of this suggestion or make clear whose point of view narrates this segment of the poem. However, this is an area of discussion that has momentous repercussions for the formulation of Nima's aesthetic theory from the perspective of Bakhtinain architectonics. One can make a case that in the poem's final stanza the author utilizes his outside position to enframe Maneli's eventful life within fixed and consummating boundaries. The poem's final four lines sound much less hesitant and more confident in suggesting the course that Maneli's future life should take. In this sense, one can sense a shift in the tone that takes us out of the hero's horizon to the author's outside position:

But while his eyes
Were fixed at the sea
He did not know where to go
His destination was lost to his eyes
And yet he longed for the sea.
His heart wished to listen to the tale of the heavy sea,
Singing his sorrow.
It was better for him to return to the heavy sea.

The final line sounds conclusive as it charts, or at least recommends, the course that Maneli's future life should take. The contrast between Maneli's mostly tension-ridden state of mind after his return to the shore and the firm, and even prescriptive, tone of the narrator in the final stanza confirms Falaki's point about

a visible change in point of view at the end of “Maneli.” Here, we have an instance of what Bakhtin calls a “point of support” or “stable position outside the hero” (*Art* 18). According to Bakhtin, the author’s “outsideness” is the most distinctive attribute of an aesthetic work, and for a work to qualify as an aesthetic product, “the author must not lose his valuational point of support outside the hero” (17).

The author’s outsideness is at the basis of his “aesthetically productive relationship to the hero”; it enables him to experience “the hero’s life in value-categories that are completely different from those in which [the hero] experiences his own life” (16).¹⁴ The closing lines display this difference as the

¹⁴ The final lines of “Maneli” reintroduce the narratorial position that is completely visible when the poem begins:

I do not know why
I remember the story of a man
Who was journeying toward a mad sea!
I only know that old man
Was going to the sea again that night,
Just like every other night.
Hoping to catch fish,
He was rowing his boat quietly on the sea

After these early passages, the narratorial voice somehow subsides as Maneli’s consciousness takes over the poem. This voice, however, reasserts itself forcefully in the final lines to stress both its own framing function and the author’s outside position vis-à-vis the poem. Here, the narrator’s

narrator's more collected and assured tone collides with Maneli's still conflicting emotions. Of course, the narrator is also inside the poem and, in this sense, participates in its action as a single event, but we can also view him as a transgredient moment by which the author makes his own value-category explicit in the poem. At the same time, one can interpret the final lines of "Maneli" in the spirit of Talattof who maintains that Maneli's desire to leave the shore and embrace the sea symbolizes Nima's own struggle to leave behind the rigid conventions of classical poetry in order to forge a new poetry.

voice turns into an aspect of the structure of authoring in the poem as it makes visible the difference that exists between the two value-categories of the author and the hero.

A Stable View of Unstable Things: “Makhula”

Majid Nafici in *Modernism and Ideology in Persian Literature: a Return to Nature in the Poetry of Nima Yushij* explains the different functions that nature performs in Nima’s work. Nafici traces the root of Nima’s particular use of nature to the concept of “natural rights” that was circulating among the Iranian intelligentsia around 1890s, just a decade before the inception of the Constitutional revolution (15). Along with the ideas of “consensus, justice, [and] progress,” natural rights offered a democratic vision which challenged the despotic structure of mind that had dominated Iranian society for centuries. This democratic outlook also freed Nima from adhering to the millennial tradition of classical poetry that had stagnated by ossified conventions.

Nima reveals the initial impact of this democratic thought on his poetry by using dialogue as a major device in *Afsaneh* (Afsaneh 1922). To capture the “natural” flow of the dialogue between the lover and Afsaneh, the poem’s two main characters, Nima sometimes breaks a line into two halves, “dedicating some of it to what Asheq (the lover) says, and the rest to Afsaneh” (19). This technique enables Nima to discard the classical device of “*gofta goftam* (“(s)he said—I said”),” which required the designation of at least one complete line to each side of the dialogue, a tendency that frequently burdened the line with superfluous words. As Nima suggests in his own preface to *Afsaneh*, this structure enables characters “to talk at their will and in a natural way in just one

or more lines or one or two words” without being constrained by the often unnecessary fillers that tradition had imposed on poetry (19). Of course, the Nima of *Afsaneh* is still overpowered by romantic sensibilities, but the presence of a less rigid poetic structure points to the direction of his later innovations.

According to Nafici, *Afsaneh* elevates “romantic love” in opposition to the “mystical love” which had held sway over much of the Persian poetry of the past (21). In the hands of Nima, love takes on “worldly” and “concrete” dimensions as it is directed at “a specific individual in a specific social and natural environment” (25). Nafici cites Shahrokh Meskub who describes *Afsaneh* as an attempt to invert the mystical notion that had eclipsed classical poetry and held that “the truth of nature” should be found in the higher truth of “meta-nature” (25). Thus, along with the use of a natural language, Nima invests his characters in *Afsaneh* with immediacy and concrete features. Wrenching poetry away from the mystical plane and grafting it onto palpable realities, even if still limited in range, points in the direction of Nima’s more mature poetry in the last decade of his life. It opens the way for a more involved and committed evaluation of life in society and allows words, such as *khalq* (masses), *azadi* (freedom) and *adl* (justice), realize their full significance in the context of social and political circumstances.

Nafici discusses Nima’s “night poetry” in which nature and its manifestations figure as the essential elements of a powerful “political symbolism.” According to Nafici, the night in Nima’s poetry stands for “the

poetical evil and the sun symbolizes freedom and happiness” (50). Nafici suggests that “The Phoenix,” as one of Nima’s night poems, depicts the eponymous bird as a symbol of hope for a “white dawn” in which the oppressed people will be freed from the tyranny of the night (51). He also adds that we should not confine our interpretation of “The Phoenix” to a merely optimistic vision of “social uprising” against despotism because the poem also tells the story of Nima’s “development as a poet” (51). Nafici makes this point because Nima invented his own idiosyncratic metric structure with “The Phoenix” in 1937. The Nimaic meter liberated poetry from the constraints of “equal length of lines” and “the yoke of rhyme” which had limited the scope of traditional Persian poetry (51).

Nafici points out that *The Value of Feelings in the Life of Actors*, Nima’s short theoretical pamphlet on poetry, marks his transition from “romantic naturalism to a materialist view of history”:

In his early work, Nima emphasized reaching down to one’s feelings and emotions and establishing harmony with one’s nature and the nature as a whole; whereas in *The Value of Feelings* he focused on historical and social conditions in which sentiments are created. He rejects that there are different laws governing intellectual life and that of “ordinary people.” Intellectuals and

regular people are both subject to exterior and objective laws which govern social life in general. (61)

Here Nima emphasizes the common bond that unites the artist's life with the "ordinary life" of people (61). As Nafisi correctly points out, Nima in *The Value of Feelings* regards artists and intellectuals as the "clocks" that "are set to work by social and historical conditions" (61). In this period, Nima envisions the artist as a chronicler who registers the slightest alteration in the sentiments of society. Nima expresses this point emphatically in *The Value of Feelings*: "Nowhere in the world, artistic works and their intrinsic sentiments have changed unless as a result of transformation of forms of social life" (as cited in Nafisi 61).

As Nima's romantic sensibility develops into a Marxist worldview, his "night poetry" begins to rely extensively on a "metaphorical struggle between dawn and night" (93). Within the paradigms of this opposition, the dawn symbolizes regeneration and freedom and the night embodies terror and fascism (93). This metaphorical struggle motivates the plot of a number of Nima's poems, including "The Amen Bird," "The Rooster Crows," "Barf" (The Snow 1955), and "Kak-Ki" (The Bull 1956). In these poems, natural elements, such as dawn, flood, rooster, snow, and bull, assume a definite ideological charge by symbolizing the poet's convictions, hopes, aspirations and despair. If the erupting flood in the final scene of "The Amen Bird" signals the eradication of all injustice, the titular bull in "The Bull" echoes the poet's solitude and his abandonment by others. As

Nafici suggests, these figures of nature manifest Nima's own ideological preoccupations

Although the presence of nature as an ideological device in Nima's poetry is the main focus of Nafici's book, he admits that Nima does not always evoke nature to express his political sentiments; indeed, it will be a serious distortion to reduce nature and its elements to "sheer political symbolism" in Nima's poetry (98). As an example, Nafici points to "Khandey-eh Sard" (The Cold Laughter 1940) in which symbols are not necessarily signs for the existing political conditions (98). Nature in this poem no longer functions as an ideological device; rather, we must enjoy the poem for its narrative fluidity and sheer beauty of its images. The direct and unmediated grasp of nature assumes a more pronounced form in Nima's mature poems.

In the final phase of his career, Nima also adopts a different attitude toward the bird motif in his poems. If birds, such as the rooster, appeared frequently in Nima's earlier poems as the heralds of social transformation, a bird such as Kakoli in "Marg-e Kakoli" (The Death of Kakoli 1948) no longer performs the function of a "social symbol or a vehicle for conveying a political opinion" (105). Instead, Kakoli is depicted as "a bird in nature" with no obvious social or political implications (105). At the same time, the dawn in this poem is no longer "an allegorical dawn, but a usual morning in a forest with all its aromas" (105). Of course, Nima never entirely relinquishes the utilization of nature and its elements

as the symbols of struggle against political oppression. “The Amen Bird,” a fairly late poem in Nima’s career, amply proves this point.

Nafici argues that with *Makhula* (1948), a celebrated volume which includes poems such as “The Moonlight” and “When the Crying Begins,” Nima’s work “becomes identical with nature poetry” (109). According to Nafici, the images in *Makhula* are open-ended and yield themselves to “different interpretations”; they play out their significance on multiple levels and are not confined to reflecting social and political realities (108-09). Nafici associates *Makhula* with Nima’s shift from sign to symbol. Citing Jung, he points out that while sign has a clear referent, “symbol is an arrow towards knowing something unknown” (109). Framed this way, symbol is particularly apt for creating indirection and ambiguity in poetry.

Along with this shift, Nima’s awareness of nature as an independent being is heightened in *Makhula*. Here nature and its objects are not just the extensions of the poet’s inner feelings. Instead, “a reciprocal connection exists between [the poet’s] internal emotions and the impression which the natural objects make on him” (109). To put it more succinctly, Nafici understands the presence of nature in *Makhula* in a double sense. Nature exists both as itself and as a symbol for the poet’s meditations on society. By interlacing these two strands, Nima creates a rich poetry with multiple planes of significance in *Makhula*.

Nafici briefly discusses “Makhula” (Makhula 1948), a rather short poem in the volume that bears the same name. He contends that in the latter part of this poem, the poet’s voice merges with the song that Makhula river is singing and, therefore, we end up with a composite “poet-river figure” (110). In terms of Bakhtinian architectonics, if, as Nafici suggests, the poet’s voice coincides with the singing of Makhula, if the author does not maintain an outside position vis-à-vis the river, he cannot make it “aesthetically significant.” Only from outside can the author consummate and, thereby, enrich the hero positively and make it “aesthetically significant”; only then can the river become a “hero” (*Art* 130).

According to Bakhtin, if the author coincides with the hero, he becomes “placeless” and “neutral within the unitary and unique event of being” (129). For me, the meaning of someone else becomes clear only when I look at him from “my own unique place” in the event of existence; and “the more intensely I become rooted in that place, the clearer that meaning becomes” (129). Even if we presume that the poet relates to Makhula river as a kind of mirror-image on the ethical and cognitive plane, the moment he provides Makhula with an exterior and a specific background, he steps outside its horizon and enframes it as the other (to give outward expressedness to someone by enframing him in a background presupposes a position outside that person). In fact, Nima gives Makhula a singular exterior through vivid images as the river leaps and “weaves [itself] downward”:

Makhula, the long body of the river
Flows aimlessly,
It roars at each moment
Its body leaps from stone to stone,
(Like a fugitive,
Not seeking smooth paths).
It weaves its body downward,
It hurries to escape.
Randomly, with the dark night it runs away,
Like a lunatic chained to another lunatic.

From an architectonic perspective, the hero's life from within is eventful; it is a project that is yet-to-be-accomplished at some future point. Situated in his own horizon, the hero can see himself only in fragments and without the consummating wholeness that can be bestowed on him by an enframing consciousness from outside. In its own horizon, Makhula, without a cohering purpose in the eventful course of its existence, flows in every direction. In Bakhtinian terms, Makhula is incapable of finding "forms of justification for [its] life" from within because, aesthetically speaking, it cannot perceive itself in stable terms. A character can find forms of justification for himself only when he coincides positively with himself "at every given moment of an aesthetic

approach”; “at every given moment we must see *all* of him, even if only potentially” (*Art* 130).

Lacking stability and all sense of direction, Makhula cannot determine itself positively from inside; it cannot take an evaluative position vis-à-vis itself. For that, it requires a point of support outside itself, and it is the author that provides that point of support. The author’s outside position gives him a surplus of seeing by which he can clearly see the relationship that the river forms with the landscape on which it flows. Even if Makhula from inside leads an erratic and eventful life, it stands in a definite relationship to its environment; it manifests a particular situated awareness in existence which makes axiological relation to it possible. In other words, the author’s excess of seeing enables him to gain a stable view of the river’s unstable character. Bakhtin argues that

even when the *other*, from within himself, negates himself, negates his own being-as-a-given, at that point *I*, from my own unique place in the event of being, affirm and validate axiologically the givenness of his being that he himself negates, and his very act of negation is, for me, no more than a moment in that givenness of his being. What the *other* rightfully negates in himself, *I* rightfully affirm and preserve in him, and, in so doing, I give birth to his soul on a new axiological plane of being. The axiological center of his own vision of life and the axiological center of my vision of his life do not

coincide. In the event of being, this mutual axiological contradiction cannot be annihilated. (128-29)

From within, a character may be undeterminable or fail to coincide with himself. But from the author's outside position, he coincides with himself and, through an "integrating experience," becomes "a hero" in the aesthetic work (129). From this outside perspective, Makhula coincides with itself as a restless drifter that longs for companionship, but is not understood by others. These are the distinct terms by which the author stabilizes Makhula as a hero in its unique site in the poem's environment.

Nafici suggests that the poet and Makhula merge and become the same. He further adds that in the poem's final lines, the poet's voice even begins to dominate the scene completely:

It has been a long time since it flowed on this path,
It has joined with many streams.
For a long time, no one has minded it,
And it sings mutely
On the terrain of this ruin,
Concealed from the eyes of others.
With its water, mutely singing,
Makhula expresses its longing for friendship
And speaks about a known destination.

But it drifts
On any pathway it chances upon
Like a stranger meeting another stranger.
It flows not knowing where
It roars in every minute
To find a source
Like the one thrown out of a house.

There is an irresistible temptation to see Makhula as a stand-in for the poet. Nima has spoken amply about his lonely and single-handed crusade to create New Poetry; he has also complained vociferously about being misunderstood by the public.¹⁵ Keeping in mind poems such as “The Snow,” “The Moonlight” and

¹⁵ In a letter to Ehsan Tabari, Nima describes his milieu as “the city of the dead” where, from his “seclusion,” he watches “with hatred” “the creatures that wallow in the narrow circle of their existence” (*The Letters of Nima Yushij* 471). The fact that Nima, throughout this letter, assails an unresponsive public to his poetry so savagely makes it quite clear who he means by “the creatures.” From Nima’s perspective, the public, consumed by their “dark and insular” life, are like “the sheep” that are “herded to the slaughterhouse” (473). He continues that “we live in a graveyard” where “everything smells of bones and shrouds” and is reminiscent of “failure and death” (472). This landscape provides the backdrop to many Nima’s poems, including “Close the Door,” “The Snow” and “The Moonlight.”

One should understand Nima’s disparagement of the collective, as they appear in his letter to Tabari, as the product of particular social and political circumstances. In fact, Nima in

“The Bull,” which express the isolation of the poem’s central figure as a highly conscious and sensitive intelligence who is ignored by an oblivious and unenlightened crowd, Nima’s own words should be adequate to convince us that “Makhula” is no more than a poetic self-expression. From Bakhtin’s architectonic perspective, if we maintain this line of argument and view the poet as the hero of his own work, the work’s aesthetic value falters and dissipates completely.

We should make a distinction here between the cognitive and ethical plane on the one hand and the aesthetic plane on other. From within its own horizon, Makhula is not constrained by any limitations and flows endlessly in the

some other places advances the views that sharply contradict his declaration of “hatred” for the ignorant collective. In *The Neighbor’s Words*, he contends that the poet should possess the ability to be at once himself and everybody else:

Not accepting does not require any ability. Ability lies in putting ourselves in the place of others and looking through their eyes. Even if we don’t approve of what they do, we should be able to feel the pleasure they experience in what they do.

If you don’t have this art, you should know that you lack the necessary strength in your work. (13).

Nima points out that he even gains in poetic strength by observing crude and unenlightened people, because “everything that surrounds us, whether good or bad, contains in itself a benefit” (16). Nima further maintains that a poet receives his raw material from “the collective,” but he then shapes “this commodity” into something unique in his “solitude”; without solitude, “your poetry will not be refined” (11).

eventful course of its existence to meet ever new streams and vistas. From within, it “flows not knowing where,” but from outside it is consummated by being enframed in a specific background that is characterized by its “terrain of [...] ruin.” The poem’s environment is depicted in clear terms as a kind of hellish and devastated region. Being “thrown out of the house,” Makhula, from within its own horizon, is placeless in the world. However, its place is fixed in the poem’s environment as a river that flows on an infernal terrain.

Seen from the river’s own horizon, its aimless wandering is a negative trait; it constitutes a moment in an open-ended life that, without givenness in being, turns to the future. Seen from outside, this negative feature can be affirmed axiologically as a moment in the givenness of the river’s being. By introducing transgredient moments into the poem from outside (i.e., providing a background and environment for the river), the author consummate it in all its definiteness, even as the river negates this definiteness from within. Thus, we can argue that Nima in the text of “Makhula” “preserves” and fixes the attributes that give the river a distinct personality. Otherwise, it would not have been possible to approach Makhula as the poem’s axiological center and relate to it valuationally.

Conclusion

It is impossible to imagine that modern Persian poetry could have even existed without Nima's cataclysmic inventions. Many critics consider Nima's inventive use of *aruz* meters, his utilization of short and long lines in the same poem, and his view of all parts of the poem as interconnected aspects of an organic unity as his most crucial contributions to Persian poetry. As the present study has tried to demonstrate, we can also add that another momentous impact of Nima's reinvention of Persian poetry was his architectonic approach to his poems. In a Bakhtinian sense, an architectonic structure is engendered as differences in the work are negotiated into specific relations to create a meaningful whole. Linked to this notion is the horizon of the self that always needs the other to give it, from an outside position, a sense of unity as a concrete whole. According to Bakhtin, no absolute consciousness exists, and consciousness is always "the activity of being-with."

This sums up, at least from my perspective, Nima's unique legacy to modern Persian poetry. Nonetheless, the all-out engagement of this study with a limited number of poems by Nima leaves plenty of room for exploring other aspects of his fairly large oeuvre. Since many Nima's poems utilize the same motifs, symbols and patterns of imagery, they stand in an architectonic relationship with one another. These poems are often structured as responses to one another as each "fills in" what the other lacks. Each poem possesses an

excess of seeing, knowing, and possessing vis-à-vis other poems by virtue of what Bakhtin calls “the uniqueness and irreplaceability of [its] place in the world” (*Art* 23). We can see this dynamics at work in the close relations that exist between “In the Clod Wintry Night,” “The Phoenix” and “Ojaq-eh Sard” (The Cold Campfire 1948).

“The Cold Campfire” inherits its double perspective from “In the Cold Wintry Night.” In Both poems, a story is consummated and shared through “the activity of being-with” another consciousness. Indeed, if we imagine the speaker in “In the Cold Wintry Night” in the act of interpreting of the story that the neighbor leaves behind, we may end up with the plot that unfolds in “The Cold Campfire.” In an episode that seems to come right after “In the Clod Wintry Night” ends, the speaker in “The Cold Campfire” tries to grasp the meaning of the story that he stumbles on. This story appears in the guise of the “ashes” from a campfire that someone else has left behind “along the forest’s silent track.” The presence of the ashes also explicitly evokes the ending of “The Phoenix” and the possibility of rebirth that they offer. The speaker in “The Cold Campfire” faces the promise of regeneration that impregnates the ashes in “The Phoenix,” even as he rejects this chance.

This structure of authoring, as the individual tries to achieve a meaningful whole “out of the potential chaos of parts,” is rooted in the experience of the unique site each of us occupies in the world at a particular time and in a

particular place. From our unique sites in existence, each of us consummates the same event in different axiological terms. The little phoenixes that at the end of “The Phoenix” will rise from their parent’s ashes will begin a new cycle which can open up fresh possibilities and offer an enriching upheaval. In contrast, the speaker in “The Cold Campfire” is in the autumn of his life. That is why his act of consummating the ashes, of finalizing them into a meaningful whole, takes on a dark and despairing tone.

As I have tried to demonstrate throughout this study, Nima relates to each of his individual poems as a single whole on the aesthetic plane by virtue of maintaining an outside position vis-à-vis that poem and its hero. Within this framework, the relations that he forms with each poem are consummated in determinate terms. But in another sense, these poems are never whole because their central concern or idea is constantly reframed by other Nima’s poems that reveal a different situated awareness in the world. For example, a poem such as “Night Is,” which is drenched in a despair-laden ethos, reflects only the condition of “a moment” in Nima’s works that can be reframed in a radically new way by the moment that arrives next. In other words, within Nima’s entire oeuvre, every poem is a moment on the scale of possibilities that may be tipped in a different direction by the poem that arrives next.

If we clothe this point in Bakhtinian terms, we may say that every poem enjoys an excess of seeing in relation to other poems and, therefore, “fills in”

what they lack. In this sense, Nima's poems may be viewed as active reframing of one another on a single aesthetic register. For example, while a tragic mood overwhelms poems such as "On the Waterfront" and "Night is," a triumphal tone sweeps everything in its range in poems that include "Naqus" (The Bell 1943), "The Amen Bird" and "The Rooster Crows." All these poems are responses to the same oppressive conditions that Nima experienced throughout his life. Nevertheless, they also manifest a dynamic tension by their ever-present excess of seeing, knowing and possessing vis-à-vis other poems which results from the "uniqueness and irreplaceability" of their place in the world."

As Holquist states, an architectonic activity makes sense of the world by "fixing the flux of its disparate elements" and ordering them into meaningful wholes (xxiv). Within this structure, everything is perceived "from a point of view," and "point of view is always situated" in a particular space and time (xxix). Of course, point of view or perspectival stance in an architectonic structure invariably depends on the act of enframing or finalizing the other in determinate boundaries. Through this act of finalization, the other recedes for me into the past of meaning. What is finalized no longer requires our engagement with it in terms of meaning. In this context, every poem, in relation to the poem that enframes it from a new point of view, must recede into the past and take on a "congealed" form (Emerson & Morson 418). The congealment of the past, as Bakhtin describes it, gives the past an "embodied" form which prompts a "creative

effectiveness” from the present” (418). The “fullness of time,” which is achieved in this way, enables the present to respond creatively to the past.

Within the architectonic scheme in which Nima’s poems thrive, a “represented world” in the guise of an earlier poem enters into dialogue with a “creating world” in the form of a new poem. Through this uninterrupted activity, what is handed down from the past in consummated form is greeted with the present’s creative understanding. That is why a fuller treatment of Nima’s poetry necessitates the examination of connections that cluster his poems together. To see “Night Is” in isolation from “I Gaze waiting for You” reveals only part of a broader and more complex situation. Thus, a more productive way to approach “Night Is” entails its exploration within the architectonics of answerability that it establishes with “I Gaze Waiting for You.”

Both “Night Is” and “I Gaze Waiting for You” conjure up the atmosphere of a dangerous and stifling night. But while “Night Is” submits to the asphyxiating pressure of an unbearably dismal night, “I Gaze Waiting for You,” despite its immersion in a deadening landscape, throbs with hope and anticipation. Actually, “I Gaze Waiting for You” utilizes the grim condition of “Night Is” as its point of departure. What matters here is to turn adversity into advantage. Within the broader scope of Nima’s poetry, the same image or symbol may embody opposing qualities in different contexts. For example, the speaker in “Night Is” charges the image of the cloud with a terribly macabre quality; it is the progenitor

of “the wind” that “invades” the speaker and saturates the poem with a “dampening” atmosphere that makes breathing difficult. But the image of cloud in Nima is also a source of hope and fecundity; it can pulsate with a regenerating rain that, as in “The Tree-frog,” will revive the speaker’s barren and “parched” farm. From this perspective, a single image in the same poem or in two different poems by Nima may evince both demonic dimensions and messianic qualities.

Nima’s poetry stresses the unique sense of time and place from which each particular character or poem relates to the world. The angle of vision should only shift to the horizon of another character or another poem and their corresponding unique sense of time and place to unravel contradictory attributes in the same object. We can see this dynamics at work in its most succinct and compelling form in “The Moth of the Near Shore” where the light of a lamp becomes the focal point around which contrasting assumptions by the moth and the speaker gestate. Interestingly, the speaker is inside and the moth is outside the room and, from their unique sites in the poem’s environment, they impute to the light, respectively, utopian and anti-utopian attributes. Nima also allows the moth and the speaker to utter their particular interpretations of the significance that the light holds through a dialogic set up. This shifting, and yet continuous, perspective is bound up with the notion of “alterity.” If the world requires “my alterity to give it meaning, I need the authority of others to define, or author, my self” (Clark & Hoquist 65). Only then can a more authentic reality emerge.

Another area that requires a great deal of attention is Nima's influence on his disciples, a topic that has been neglected to some extent. We see Nima's shadow everywhere in the works of his disciples who responded to his poems in markedly disparate ways. Ahmad Shamlu, Mehdi Akhavan Sales and Forough Farokhzad are the most celebrated poets who have channeled Nima's influence in three diverging directions. While Akhavan Sales, in poems such as "Zemestan" (The Winter) seems to be predominantly affected by the vision of defeat in Nima's darkest poems, including "Night Is," Farokhzad, particularly in *Tavalodi Digar* (Another Birth), reworks the story of the phoenix's resurrection in a language that is strikingly feminine. In Farokhzad's work, the theme of rebirth assumes a disruptive force that topples the discourse of patriarchy. But among Nima's disciples, Ahmad Shamlu, perhaps, exhibits the most complex and problematical relationship with his precursor.

Enclosed at a particular time and in a particular space in the oppressive atmosphere that followed the defeat of Dr. Mossadeq's national movement in 1953, Shamlu responds to Nima from his unique site in existence. Shamlu reacts to Nima in a variety of ways that range from total submission to his precursor's towering achievements to massive efforts to overpower his influence. There are moments in which Shamlu leaves Nima behind by probing the domains that the older poet rarely or never entered. For one thing, Shamlu discarded the Nimaic poetic structure with its recognizable metric pattern and turned to a blank verse

which was no longer impeded by any considerations for meter or rhyme. Instead, he produced music in poetry by relying on words' intrinsic sounds. In his attempt to experiment with even more new poetic forms, Shamlu went as far as to introduce prose poetry into modern Persian poetry. More importantly, his place in the forefront of intellectual resistance and political struggle against the Pahlavi dictatorship in the 1960s and the first half of 1970s gave him the appellation of "the poet of liberty." This was a status that Nima never acquired.

Apart from his innovative use of blank verse, Shamlu also gave a new shape and intensity to epic poetry by elevating it to unprecedented heights. Although there are soaring moments of epic magnitude in Nima, as in "The Amen Bird," he never tried consistently to forge an altogether new form or language for epic poetry. Shamlu, on the other hand, makes it his business to set fresh and unparalleled standards for epic poetry. His "Sorud-e Ebrahim dar Atash" (The Song of Abraham in Fire) conjoins an archaic language with the images of Achilles and Esfandiar, a grandiose figure in *Shahnameh* (The Book of Kings 1000), to give birth to one of the most memorable epics of our time. Of course, unlike Ferdowsi, Shamlu does not structure his epic as a long narrative poem. Instead, the poem is often framed by a structure and sprinkled with a language that, although telling a story, is more like a lyric or love poem and nearly as short.

In his mature period, Nima comes closest to love poem in poems such as "I Gaze Waiting for You," but Shamlu has created a body of distinct love poetry

that is incomparable in modern Persian poetry. One can even argue that only Rumi surpasses him in this arena. In his best love poems, Shamlu unites personal and earthly love with respect for human dignity and freedom without sacrificing the enormity of one to the other. But Shamlu is not always able to distance himself from Nima so successfully. If he affectionately acknowledges Nima as his poetic father in “Hanooz dar Fekr-e An Kalagham” (I Am Still Thinking about that Crow), he seems agonizingly distressed about the influence of his precursor in *Qoqnus dar Baran* (The Phoenix in the Rain). But once again, Shamlu’s dialogue with Nima is full of unpredictable turns. For example, Shamlu in “Hekayat” (The Fable), one of his most beautiful poems, borrows the theme and structure of “The Cold Laughter,” but invests his poem with such exquisite imagery and emotional intensity that it becomes a thrillingly unique poem all on its own. Thus, a fuller examination of the complex dynamics that animate Shamlu’s architectonic relationship with Nima is a fairly unexplored area that requires urgent attention.

Works Cited

- Akhavan Sales. Mehdi. *Bed'atha va Baday-eh Nima Yushij*. Tehran: Zemestan, 1979.
- Alishan, Leonardo Paul. "Trends in Modernist Persian Poetry." Diss. Austin: University of Texas. 1982.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Baraheni, Reza. *Tala Dar Mes*. Vol 2. Tehran: n. p., 1371. 1992.
- Benjamin, Walter. "On the Concept of History." *Selected Writings*. Ed. Michael W. Jennings. Vol. 4. Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.
- . "The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nicolai Leskov." *Selected Writings*. Ed. Michael W. Jennings. Vol. 3. Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002.
- . "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire." *Selected Writings*. Ed. Michael W. Jennings. Vol. 4. Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.

- Clark, Katherina and Michael Holquist. *Mikhail Bakhtin*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Emerson, Caryl and Gary Saul Morson. *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.
- Emerson, Caryl. *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*. Princeton: Princeton University, 1997.
- Falaki, Mahmoud. *Negahi be Sher-e Nima*. Tehran: Morvarid, 1994.
- Hamidian, Said. *Dastane Degardisi: Ravande Degargunihaye Sher-e Nima Yushij*. Tehran: Niloofar, 2003.
- Holquist, Michael. Introduction. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*. By Mikhail Bakhtin. Ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.
- Jorkesh, Shahpour. *Butighay-e Sher-e Now: Negahi Digar be Sher va Nazariy-eh Nima*. Tehran: Nashre Qoqnoos, 2004.
- Karimi-Hakkak A. *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995.
- Klyashtorina, V. B. "The Structure of Imagery in 20th-Century Persian Poetry: M. Bahar and Nima Yushij." *Critical Perspectives on Modern Persian Literature*. Ed. Thomas M. Ricks. Washington DC: Three Continents, 1984.
- Losensky, Paul. "To Tell another Tale of Mournful Terror: Three of Nima's Songs of The Night." Ed. *Essays on Nima Yushij: Animating Modernism in Persian*

- Poetry*. Ed. Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak and Kamran Talattof. Boston: Brill, 2004.
- Mokhtari, Mohammad. *Ensan dar Shere Moaser: ba Tahlile Shere Nima, Shamlu, Akhavan, Forough Farokhzad*. Tehran: Nashr-e Toos, 1990.
- Majid Nafici. *Modernism and Ideology in Persian Literature: A Return to Nature In the Poetry of Nima Yushij*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1997.
- Nima Yushij. *Harf-haye Hamsaye*. Tehran: Entesharate Donya, 1979.
- Nima Yushij. *Majmueye Kamele Ashare Nima Yushij*. Ed. Siros Tahbaz. Tehran: Entesharate Negah, 2004.
- Nima Yushij. *Namehaye Nima Yushij*. Tehran: Entesharate Negah, 1997.
- Pournamdarian, Taghi. *Khane-am Abrist*. Tehran: Soroush, 2002.
- Sarshar, Houman. "The Anxiety of Remembrance: The Shift from Allegory to Symbol in the Poetry of Coleridge, Baudelaire, and Nima Yushij." Diss. Columbia University. 2000.
- Sarshar, Houman. "From Allegory to Symbol: Emblems of Nature in the Poetry of Nima Yushij." *Essays on Nima Yushij: Animating Modernism in Persian Poetry*. Ed. Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak and Kamran Talattof. Boston: Brill, 2004.
- Shafi'ee Kadkani, Mohammad Reza. *Advar-e Shere-e Farsi: Az Mashrut-e ta Soghoot-e Saltanat*. Tehran: Sokhan, 2001.
- Shamisa, Sirus. *Rahnamay-e Adabiyat-e Mo'aser: Sharh va Tahlil-e Gozidey-e Sher-e Now-e Farsi*. Tehran: Nashr-e Mitra, 2002.
- Talattof, Kamran. "Ideology and Self-Portrayal in the Poetry of Nima Yushij."

Essays on Nima Yushij: Animating Modernism in Persian Poetry. Ed. Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak and Kamran Talattof. Boston: Brill, 2004.

Vahabzadeh, Peyman. "The Space between Voices: Nima Yushij and the Receding Signified." *Essays on Nima Yushij: Animating Modernism in Persian Poetry*. Ed. Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak and Kamran Talattof Boston: Brill, 2004.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977

Appendix

Hey Humans

Hey humans,
Who are sitting on the shore, joyous and laughing,
Someone is losing his life in the water,
Someone is constantly struggling
In this raging, dark and heavy sea that you know.
When you are drunk
With the thought of overcoming your enemy,
When you think in vain
That you have given a hand to a feeble person
To dispel suffering,
When you tighten your belts
Over your waists...

When can I tell you
That someone is sacrificing his life in the water pointlessly?

Hey humans,
Who sit around a sumptuous feast on the shore,
Bread on your spread, clothes covering your bodies,
A drowning man calls you.
He beats the heavy wave with his tired hand,
His mouth is dragged shut with eyes torn by terror,
He has seen your shadows from afar,
Has swallows the water in the azure hole as his impatience grows every moment,
Sometimes he raises his head, sometimes his foot, out of the water.

Hey humans,
He takes the measure of this old world again from afar,
He shouts and hopes for help.
Hey humans,
Who are watching indifferently from the shore,
The wave pounds the silent shore,
It spreads like a drunk man on the bed, gripped by unconsciousness.
It recedes, and the voice rises roaring from afar again:
Hey humans...

And the sound of the wind grows more desolate by the moment
And in the wind, his voice grows freer.
From the near and far waters
Still this voice penetrates the ears
Hey humans...

My House is Cloudy

My House is Cloudy
The whole earth's surface is cloudy with it.

Above the narrow, ruined and drunken pass
The wind is wounding downward.
The whole world is crushed with it,
And so are my senses.
Oh, the reed-flute player, who are lost in your own melodies, where are you?

My house is cloudy, but
The cloud is about to burst with rain.
Absorbed in the thought of my bright days that no longer exist,
To see the sun's face,
I gaze at the sea's yard.
And the whole world is ruined and dissipated by the wind
And the reed-flute player, who constantly plays his flute, continues
His journey in this cloud-cloaked world.

Rira

"Rira" ... I hear a sound tonight,
From behind the *katch* where the little dam
Drags in the eye
The pitch black glare of the image of ruin.
It is as if someone were singing...

But this sound does not resemble the voice of men.

With thrilling rapture

I have heard the men's songs
In the circling heavy nights,
Heavier
Than my sorrows.
And I know by heart
All the men's songs.

One night in the boat,
They sang with such despair
That I still see
The Sea's horror
In my sleep.

Rira ... Rira ...
It longs to sing
In this black night.
It is not with itself
It has gone with its voice, but
It cannot sing.

The Boat

My face is withered
My boat is stranded.
With my stranded boat

I cry: "This stranded boat is troubling me
Along this ruined seashore that is filled with terror.
The water has cut me off from you,
"Help me comrades!"
But a derisive smile has bloomed on their lips
Mocking me,
My lopsided boat,
My words that are strange to them
My anxiety which is intolerable.
In this intolerable anxiety
I cry:
"At the time of death when

I only fear annihilation and danger,

The absurdity, commotion and mockery of being and not-being
Is nothing but neglect and anguish.

With their neglect

I dip into oblivion

From their disheartening words

I am burdened with pain

Blood surges out of my pain!

How can I release my boat?

I cry.

My face is withered

My boat is stranded

My intention is clear to you:

One hand has no sound

I, my hand, need the help of your hand.

Although my cry has broken in my throat

It is loud

I cry for mine and your deliverance

I cry!

The Cold Laughter

In the Morning, when the black fish

Is trapped in chains

The peacock's tail spreads its feathers

On this rooftop washed by black asphalt.

The portrait-painters of this grand mansion

Hold the palettes on their palms.

A wild creature with a torn back

Rushes on the waves that are like shells.

It laughs from all sides,

Over the bustle of dawn risers.

The stars, one after the other, have dipped their heads in the water,

Hanging from a hair.

The voluptuous beauties of water

Have settled beside the water.

The passersby are taking their place

Hurriedly and with great commotion.

But a sweeping wind blows,
Wild and violent,
The lips are stopped from laughing,
An [ominous] shape is standing and watching.

Like a robbed caravan, the morning
Sits dejected;
It gazes at the vanishing robber,
Learning the cold laughter.

Not a New Story

At night, when the surface of the sea
Was folding purple sketches in purple sketches,
It began not a new story,
Tying a string and untying another,
The waves took away the other strings.

In the place, where the old hazelnut tree
Was spreading its shade entwined with shade on the ground,
When the stream ceased running,
A branch dried up and the leaf turned yellow.
The wind came and took it away in a rush.

Still opening the door and lighting a candle,
That skillful master with its expert hands
Slapped the harp and sat
And then placed a lantern before the wind's blast.
She took everything from us with a rebuke.

She began not a new story, yes
Delighted over our being plundered;
She left, not looking behind
Invigorated by our destruction
But she took our shattered heart with her.

Makhula

Makhula, the long river's body
Runs aimlessly
It roars at every breath
It leaps from rock to rock,
Like a fugitive
(That does not take a smooth path).
It weaves itself along downward slopes,
It hurries, ascending upward slopes.
Like a lunatic tied to another lunatic,
It drifts blindly with night.

It has been a long time since it has flowed on this path,
It has joined with many streams.
For a long time, no one has cared about it,
And it still continues singing mutely.
But it has been forgotten by others
On the range of this ruin.

With the mute singing of its water
Mackula utters its old familiarity
And speaks about its destination.
But it drifts
Into any path that it chances upon
Like a stranger that encounters another stranger.

The Tree-Frog

My farm grew parched
Next to my neighbor's farm,
Although they say: "Mourners cry with other mourners
On the near shore."
Tree-frog, messenger of rainy days,
When the rain will come?

On a spread that is not a spread
Inside my dark hovel,
In which there is not even a particle of happiness,
And the walls of my room that are made of the reeds' ribs

Are exploding of dryness,
Like the heart of lovers that long for their absent beloveds.
Tree-frog, messenger of rainy days,
When the rain will come?

I Gaze Waiting for You

At night, when I gaze waiting for you,
When the shadows on *talajan* branches absorb the color of darkness,
And that fills your spurned admirers with plenty of sorrow,
I Gaze waiting for you.

At night, in that moment when the valleys sleep like dead snakes,
In that turn when the nuphar's hand wraps a trap around the foot of mountain
cypress,
If you remember me or not, I never forget you,
I gaze waiting for you.

When the Crying Begins

When the crying begins
This smoke-natured back-clouded shape,
When the azure-eyed sea
Strikes blow on its face out of rage,
The one who has long gone away from me
Begins its coquettish song.
With familiar excuses,
I unfold one of her images before me.

But it makes no difference whether I cry or the storm rages.
It is a silent night for all that is lonely.
Travelling, a lonely man plays a reed-flute
And his notes float depressingly.
Another lonely man is I whose eye
Stirs a storm of tears.

When the crying begins
This smoke-natured back-clouded shape,

When the azure-eyed sea
Strikes blow on its face out of rage.

The Moth of the Near Shore

Chook chook! The moth of the near shore
Has lost its way in the dark night.
Ceaselessly, it beats on the window.
The moth of the near shore!
What do you mean by this endeavor?
What do you want from my room?

The moth of the near shore tells me (mutely):
“There is so much light in your room!
Open the door to me
The night has exhausted me.”
The moth of the near shore thinks that
Every “body” can go anywhere
Toward a refuge,
And there is light behind every aperture.
Chook chook!...In this night which gives birth to this suffering,
Why does not everyone come my way?

Night Is

It is a dampening night, and earth
Has lost the color of its face.
The wind, the cloud's infant, from the mountainside
Has invaded me.
Night is like a bloated shape standing in the air.
That is why no lost soul can find his way.

With its hot body, the long desert
Is like a dead corpse in his narrow grave;
It is like my burned heart
Which in my tired body is scorched by the horror from a fever!
Night is, yes, is.

The Snow

The yellows have not turned red without a reason
The redness has not colored the wall
Without a reason.
The morning has arrived from the side of Azakuh mountain, but
Vazenah [mount] cannot be seen.
The bright particles of snow which only give birth to turmoil
Are settled on every glass window.
Vazenah cannot be seen.
My heart is terribly compressed by this
Guest-murdering inn with its darkened day
That has thrown together a bunch of strange characters:
Some sleepy;
Some intractable;
Some unconscious.

The Bell

The long and delightful chime of the bell
In the solitude of the dawn
Has ripped the harvest of air's ashes,
And from every ripped path, with its claws
At every moment, it tears down
The dawn's cold walls.
Like the bird of cloud
In the silent air of far lagoons
Flies free, it flies at every moment with the meaning
Lodged in its ring.
Entangled with its ring is a meaning
That rises out of that ring.

Ding Dong...what is this sound?
The bell!
Who has died? Who lives?
Many times, like the shadow over water,
Thousands of incidents have occurred
But the one who was asleep
Did not wake up.
Now what has happened
Rousing everyone from slumber?

Have the warm bazaars of Moslems
Turned cold?
Or has the peasant's humble hut
Filled with pain?
Or from the roof of castle, colored by our blood,
A corpulent despot has plunged into his death?
Or has the Gorji's house
Become the prey of unforgiving flames?
Or is the unruly enemy
Attacking our city?
Or is the morning, bringing a laughter into shape
Against this deceitful night
(Which is the womb of horror
hurriedly retreating in tears)?
Or is it a night about to escape
From the gate of morning
In this vast desert?

Ding Dong...what is happening?
Who is passing?
From the candle that is burning in the passageway
Which usurer
Has profited?
From which funeral or wedding the word floats in the air?
The bell!
Who is joyful and who is despairing?

The enchanting bell
Flirtatiously, has sojourned warmly in the cold heart of dawn
His song drifts every way.
Toward every height you know
In every depth you sing, in the dark cracks of our ruins,
It quivers
Everywhere a corpse is mourned over
Or a dejected heart opens toward a light.
It interprets
(Lost in the fabric of a cold night)
A blissful life and day.
From each of its veins that becomes jubilant
By every song it sings,
Overjoyed with spreading happiness,
It sings its song.

With its warm song,
The word that points everyone to everyone,
To join everyone together,
The tired hearts.
It has enraptured people and their gaze little by little.
With its song
It breathes life into them
To make them aware
To prevent them from swelling their despair,
It flows in the enmeshed warp and woof of life
It deciphers with each subtle note
A sealed secret.
From each note,
This truth looms
That this old apparatus
Will change.

Ding Dong...every moment
Opens a window to life
From the origin
To the end of existence.
Whether a friend laughs like fire
Or an adversary appears like a frozen grave—
The path is cleared by the gestating embryo.
It will recount another story.
The infirm wall shudders
And everything stirs
By its sound.
This old machinery
Tries to mend its sickly veneer.
He is ignorant
Who does not believe in this cataclysm.

Ding Dong...undoubtedly
More ignorant are those who,
Bewitched by the resounding caravan,
Sharpen the foe's blade.
Vile men who secure an unworthy life.
In the narrow cold night of their graves
(Which they have dug by their own hands)
They burn in vain,

Their gaze is fixed on an easy life,
A compromise with death,
Surrendering theirs and others' lives
In obedience.
But when the wind blows
It will take away everything from those,
Who waver to this or that side,
Who plunge in self-regard,
In search of satisfying every desire.
Kindred companions in appearance,
They are in truth
The deceiving foes who only
Make progress more arduous.

But in the resurrected world of the living
Another tune is being played.
Every arriving news is impregnated with some other news.
Swelling a line on a page like a spell
At the roots of orderly lines,
It recounts another story today.
And its words
In the ears' eyes
In the eyes' ears
Can be heard tomorrow.

Ding Dong! Ding Dong!
This blooming song ascends to the sky
Spreads this news from the hidden passageway.
Open your ears vigilantly
To its sound.
The dance of its song
Sketches
The day that will come.
With the throne of dust
It sinks despair
And proliferates hope.
It has made a covenant
With the joints of deceptive earth.

It conceals
Thousands of secrets,
In every secret

Many untold things. Rise
In search of that secret which is unraveled
In the world of rising men.
It has bared the essence of all customs
In the interest of masses
It has unknotted many words
It has torn the curtain over this enigma.
But no word has taken shape
In the mind of any creature on this path
And the workshop of sins
Is still open.
By what is said and not said
And from the suffering of every crowd
A truth emerges:
As long as man has not wiped out
The rust of hollow thoughts,
He does not deserve to desire.
Alas! No door will open to us
Without a reason.
Without endeavor and industry
No captured bird will be freed from manacle.
The evildoer who deceives
Will not cease his malevolence and ruse.

Ding Dong!...in the stretch of the street
In the tight graves of eyes,
With all those lifeless glances
In the jails smeared with the color of night
With naked and doleful sleepers
In underground houses (which flirt with death
Through the breaths of sleepers)
Amidst the clamor of struggle between the weak and the strong
Amidst the ugly lust of villains
In the quiet and deserted cracks (in which
The broken-faced destitution
Teaches the rite of theft)
In the foul sleeps to which
The despots are accustomed,
In every place where a harvest
Is left infertile
In every place where a heart is burned
Dislodged

And collapsed, or a wound pierces the shoulder,
It dwells,
It redeems
It purchases ecstasy.
And from its moment to moment song
Are awakened
The sleepers,
And the benumbed corpses
Are struck by consciousness.
Like hailstones
A bright rain
Will shower from a cloud's breath, full of tumult
(Gathered of our sighs).
And the mournful tales of sorrow
Will turn into tales of rage.
And a time will come when in the realm of horror
A conflagration will upsurge,
And, with the tremors of kindness,
An iron hand
Will take the hand of the wounded,
And the burned crops of that day
Will transform
Into budding gardens;
And the destination that this discontented generation strives for
Will be held worthy by others;
And the fire that
A cold body seeks
Will tread in the world's warm womb.

Ding Dong!...this pleasant song
Exited from
The dawn's dwelling
To extinguish
The lanterns hanging in the death's silent sorrowing abodes.
A heaving sound was heard
To shake off dismay
And uproot malice.
It wipes out the quagmire of body
Frees the heart and rips
Through the tired caravan
To ward off that false villain, who for profit,
Weaves fables of deception.

This song resounds deeper
And it rises, my comrade,
From every city corner
So that the neighbor can
Light the cold snow
And inject another blood in his veins
Which is tangled with pain,
So that his lips
Can laugh
At the lingering corpses of shapes that existed.

Ding Dong!...utterly
That chain is severed
From east to west.
And the spell of the repulsive devil
Is broken.
Its colorful faces
In memory
Were rubbed in the dust
It was obliterated
And the foundation of an old myth
Collapsed.
Disagreeing words
Contrary rites
The flaw (which was deemed
Merit)
The merit (which was deemed
Flaw)
Were discarded
Were uprooted
The wind, blowing over
The dead lamps,
Its pillaging path
To the garden of people
Was scattered.

Ding Dong!...in haste
In every needed hesitation
There lie endless hopes
In this tender air.
The dawn-singing bell

Does not burn in vain.
In concealed agony,
In his tale
There is noting but goodness for all.

With the morning laughter of its tale
(Which draws thousands of shapes
And buries blackness under our blood's color)
It writes
On this page
With a different handwriting
And it inscribes
This word out of its voice's organon:
"In her workshop, that beloved
Is repairing the chains
Weaved from iron
Enthusiastically."

Ding Dong!...cold and hot
The tide has turned for us
Gently. It has brought joy
And it is enwrapped in thought
(The thought of man who defeats
Every speck)
[(The thought of man whom
A speck defeats)]
It strides side by side with time.
It ensures the people's currency of hope
Amidst tribulations of life.

Its swift eyes
(Which the movement of its companion)
Brings to a pause the spots full of motion,
In every indolence-inducing irresolution
It inflames every breath with passion to gallop
The passion to gallop,
To break loose of wickedness
To embrace goodness.
It will conjure up new images
In the house of deception where we dwell;
It will then enchain the devil;
It will invoke a new pattern for life

(As deserved).

Each of its chimes announces: “We
Must build something new for what is destroyed.”

Ding dong...in our watchful life
This is the path to the day of liberation
Which offers the key to the transparent morning
And ends the black night.
This is the condition life deserves
Yoked to the consequence of the day of reckoning.
What the bell deciphers, without any embellishment,
Is revived by a youthful vision.
Its voice resonates:
“Our short life is not worth anything
If it does not become more fecund
With desiring good for others.
Life becomes pleasant for thousands
Only if a few are toppled.”

Ding dong...in this way
The bell has filled the air with its song.
From a nook of dawn, it spreads the news of a
New morning.
And it paints
The hope of a new world.
With each of its chimes
It searches the way (as it finds it with you)
And shares its secret with you:
“In her workshop, that beloved
Is repairing the chains
Weaved from iron
Enthusiastically!”

The Cold Campfire

Left from distant nights
Along the forest's silent track
A small stove made of broken stones
Filled inside with cold ashes.

Tedious like the inside of my dust-cloaked thoughts:
The sketch of an image that reflects anything,
A story whose end is pain.

My sweet day that gave me peace
Has become a discordant image.
It has become cold and turned into stone
With the breath of my life's autumn that mocks the spring of a yellow face.

Still, left from distant nights
Along the forest's silent track
A small stove made of broken stones
Filled inside with cold ashes.

The Phoenix

The phoenix, the bird of pleasant songs, the fame of the world
Is left wandering by cold winds.
On bamboo branches
He perches alone.
Around him, perching on every branch, are other birds.

He combines the lost moans
From the torn cords of hundreds of far voices.
In the clouds that are like a dark line on the mountain
He erects
The wall of an imaginary edifice.
Since the time when the sun's yellowness on the wave
Has faded and surged toward the bank
The howls of the coyote, and the villager
Have lighted the house's hidden fire.
Red in the eye, a small flame
Draws a line under the night's two large eyes
And in far places
People are passing.
That rare singer, concealed as he is,
Flies from where he perches.
Through the things that entangle
With the light and darkness of this long night
He passes.

He stares
At a flame ahead.

Where there is no plant or breath
And the stubborn sun has cracked its stones,
Neither this earth nor its life is a delightful thing.
He feels that, like his, the longings of other birds
Are dark like smoke; although their hopes
Sparkle in the eye like a harvest of fire
And a white morning.
He feels if his life ends
Like other birds
In eating and sleeping,
That will be a torment no one can describe.
That bird of graceful songs,
In the place that has been adorned with fire,
And now turned into an inferno,
Gathers his tranquility in intervals and shakes
His perceptive eyes.
And from the hills,
Suddenly, as he flaps his wings,
He utters a bitter and excruciating cry,
Which not every passing bird can know its meaning.
But when ecstatic with his inward pains,
He throws himself into the fire.
Is the wind blowing hard and is he burned?
Has the bird conserved his ashes!
Then his chicks will arise out of his ashes.

The Moonlight

The moonlight is flowing
The glow-worm is shining
But not even for a moment, the sleep breaks in anyone's eye.
And yet, the sorrow of these sleepers
Breaks sleep in my wet eye.

The dawn is standing worried by my side
The morning bids me
To bring the news of its welcome breath to this lost tribe,

But a thorn in my heart
Is crushing my resolution for this journey.

The delicate adorning body of a flower's stem,
Which I planted with my life
And watered with my love,
Pity, is breaking over my body.

I rub my hands
To open a door
I watch in vain
For someone to come to the door
But all their crumbling walls and ceilings
Are collapsing over my head.

The moonlight is flowing
The glow-worm is shining
A lonely man, with blistered feet from a long journey,
Is lingering on the village's threshold.
A bundle on shoulder,
His hand on the door, he tells himself:
The sorrow of these sleepers
Breaks sleep in my wet eye.

Close the Door

Close the door because
I have no desire to see anyone.
The thought of this house's flourish
Was the plaything of a Whim.

The Whim came and set down a mud-brick,
Mocking our disarray.
I saw it and asked for the way. It said:
From now on, you will be left with this night and destruction.

I asked: what about the promise of your red lips?
It said: it was a mirage.
I asked: what about that voluptuous body?
It said: it was a reflection of destruction.

I asked: what about the hut from which the smoke rises?
It said: it is burned to the ground;
The skeleton of its roof and door
Is a reserved pleasure for death.

I said: no laughter will settle on my lips again
By seeing the sun or a lamp's light.
It said: it is better you cover you face
From shame with your gown.

I said: but the hands of the wretched
Are scratching the floor behind the door.
It laughed and said: but
A terrible Horror keeps an eye on everything.

If a light shines on the horizon, it is the devil,
Holding a half-burned lantern in his hand.
He, on whom the hope opens a door, will die,
The desert will only annihilate him.
The road is empty, the pear is rotten.
Everything withers from long suffering.
Every voice has died in this decay,
Just as no sound breaks the desert's silence.
With every flower that collapses into sleep, the narcissus
Hides its face in the map of thorns.
Close the door! No one desires
To see anyone else.

In the Cold Wintry Night

In the cold wintry night
Even the sun's stove is not burning like the warm stove of my lamp.
Nor any other lamp,
Nor a frost-tied moon which sheds light from above.

I lighted my lamp amidst the arrival and departure of my neighbor
One dark night
And it was a cold wintry night,
The wind was entangling with the cypress

Among silent huts.
He got lost, separated from me on this narrow road.

And I still remember this story
These words hang from my lips:
“Who is lighting the lamp? Who is burning?
Who will preserve this story in his heart?”

In the cold wintry night
Even the sun’s stove is not burning like the warm stove of my lamp.

Moonlight Rose

When the wave, darkening above the water,
Was receding in the distance,
Vanishing from the eye,
A frightening shape was rending the night’s heart with its eye.
A man on a saddle-less horse
With a whip made of fire
Was galloping on the shore in the distance
And his skillful hands
Were busy with their work
And our boat was floating joyfully on water.
Out of the chaotic colors of moonlight
A more blossoming color was born,
Like the dawn
At the end of night
That bursts out of the sneezes of bleak darkness.

The cherry blossoms were moistened by a cold breath
That made another sketch
Out of the sad dirt-filled fable of life;
The people’s torches lighted the road
Some rushed to the road.
And that delightful newly emerging color
Bloomed like a flower and, erupting with light,
Revealed its shape to us.
With its cheeks and yellow paws
It moved near from those distant mountains
Its eyes, the color of water,

Looked at us
So that the misguided guardian of the vortex
Could see it enwrapped in more illuminating rays,
So that the hand of the passersby
Could pick it more easily.
It settled on the nest of some voices
It rubbed the gold dust
On the varicolored-sketched wings of the bird of azure.

Then we paddled hurriedly to the shore
In a state which was
Neither life nor sleep.
My companion wanted to kiss [moonlight rose's] hand
I wanted him to be,
Like me, always its admirer.
From the grip of sadness, I wished for a moment
To sing another fable with its cold look.
I wished on that silent shore
To sink in my sleep
And not to waste time listening to another voice
Except for its voice,
And there, next to my neighbor's fire
Light a hidden fire.
But suddenly
A passing wave darkened;
A shape ran downward
And then rose to a peak on an ascending slope
Before us, the moonlight rose
Faded and sank into a dark image;
Under the pine tree and on the shore,
It turned into a sorcerer with futile tricks,
And the pleasing flower withered even more.
A fright sat and something rose,
A maiden went another way.

The Amen Bird

Drenched in pain, the amen bird is left wandering
He has gone to the other side of this era of injustice.
Having returned, no longer does he yearn for water and seeds.

He has sought
The arrival of the day of deliverance.

That penetrating gaze (the concealed ear of our suffering world) looks at
The oppressed people.
With every amen that the friendly bird utters,
He brings together the people
Lessening their crushing pain.

The story of his people
Has blocked his throat.
Entwining strand with strand (indifferent to the accusations leveled against him)
He has picked up in his beak the lost end of these strands.

He is the sign of the awakened day of triumph.
He has insight into the life's secret anguish.
From the wounded veins of this dust-covered path he gathers an image
From the cries of suffering throngs
From the heart of such a dismal night, he leaps out.
By his turbulent gaze at this life,
From which he cannot free himself even for a moment,
He greets the people from above the roofs.

Like the sign that reveals the trace of fire in the smoke of ashes
He moves his head as a secret sign to show that
He understands the coded tongue that expresses the people's suffering
He listens to their laments
And asks about their grief, to know
What has happened and not happened to them
Everyone tells the story of his life to that alert confidant.

Thinking of the days of hope,
The people speak of their agony,
Calling the amen bird by its name.

Under the rain of voices that cry:
-“May there be an end to the people's undeserved suffering”
(while every passing moment adds to their suffering),”
The amen bird speaks with the people's tongue of anguish.
He cries:
“Amen!

May there be an end to the torment that corrodes the people's lives
May the foundations be shattered that, in the name of salvation,
Deceive the people and
Dupe the world with the false promise of enchanting words."

The people say:

"Amen!

In such a night, when injustice prevails,
Redeem us, you the nocturnal bird!
Show us a path to deliverance.
You, friendly bird, grant everyone their wishes."

"Deliverance will come
And the dark night will turn into a bright morning", the bird says.

The people say:

- "But that world-eater
(the man's ancient enemy) will gulp down the whole world."

The bird says:

- "He would take his wish to the grave."

The people say:

"But, pursuing an aim, their war-mongering hatred
Beats the drum every second."

The bird says:

"May they be destroyed!
Death is the ultimate cure
For the illness
Of man-eating.
And after their days of joy and glory,
May their last days be burdened with shame and disgrace!"

The people say:

- "But only if villains leave us alone!
All we demand is a safe life
Without answering for it to anyone.
A life in which enslavement will end
And their crumbling and crooked walls
Will not imprison us again.
A life in which the despairing people will feel happiness."

The bird says:

-“May villainy be dismantled.”

The people say:

-“Shall it be thus.”

The Bird says:

-“May all the chains that have shackled the people’s feet be broken.”

The people say:

“May the chains be broken.”

The bird says:

-“May the despairing masses be the masters of their own fate
And may an end come to the desert of this horrid night
Which, in random,
Plundered all with ease.
And now, in darkness,
May the doors of our homes in this wasteland
Be illuminated with the streams of light
And may the day arrive when the rogues escape, the evildoers
Who now reap the harvest they sow
And may their hunger uproot them,
May their calamity consume them
Now, may they collapse like their prisons
May their garden be ruined
May their conniving blind eyes move, like a candle at the bottom of grave,
From confusion in the bowl of their head.
May each of them
Be transfixed with wonderment on their front stairs
And despite their (futile) struggle, may the song of death tear their ears.”

The people say:

-“May their garden be even more ruined,
May they, squatting on their front stairs, be torn asunder from their families,
And from the song of their death,
May more silent icicles settle on the walls of their porches.”

-“Shall it be thus!” a voice says from afar
And a voice nearby
Among the mass of voices that are in turmoil:

-“May it be their deserved punishment,
After all their joyful years
After their debauching days.”

“Amen!” Calls a voice from afar
And a voice from near,
Amidst the throng of voices that have gathered on this path:

The bird says:

-“May they leave their ruined state
For their prosperity to
Pay for their crimes.”

The bird says:

-“May this destruction be a due reward
For those who thrived on injustice.”

-“Shall it be thus!” (cry, the distressed people)

-“Shall it be thus, amen!

And may the tongue of the one who understands the people’s pain be
thundering!”

-“Shall it be thus, amen!

And may every thought that teaches death be destroyed!”

-“Amen! Amen!”

“And may the awakened roaring curse of the oppressed
Shatter every wicked thought with which the tired people
Cannot be reconciled.”

And in their prisons and under the wound of their whips, a voice cries:

“Now, this is the gate and this is the wound”

(Or else the oppressed should bow before injustice

Or else, the oppressed should cower for the fear of torture and prison)

“Amen!”

“When the virtuous were living through tormenting days,

Some, in the hope of reward,

Tight-lipped,

Enjoyed the moment.”

-“Amen.”

“Seeking reward for their dark service,
They derided foreseers and wise men
And blinded the springs of light
May there be a just punishment for them.”

-“Amen!”

-“This is a punishment
For the hideous deeds of this degenerate lot
That gave birth only to the dream of tyrants.”
-“Amen!”

-“A punishment for their sinister deeds
That began with our death
And extinguished the people’s light.”
-“Amen!”

-“A punishment for their ugly deeds
Which murdered noble souls
And disdained compassion.”
-“Amen!”

-“This is a just reward
For their shameful deeds
Which only opened a path for the traders who sought gains,
And by which only a trace was left from us on the swamp’s throne.”
-“Amen! Amen!”

And through the raining echo of the people’s repeated amens in every moment
(Like the sound of a river that erupts from the bed of a swamp),
The amen-saying bird flies away
Over the roofs
The rooster crows
In the vast peaceful realm from afar
It tears the wall of dawn
And over that cold smoky silence
Everything, with the color of realization, adds color to life.
Night escapes
Morning arrives.

Selections from “Maneli”

I do not know for what reason
I remember the story of a man
Who was journeying toward a mad sea!
I only know that old man

Was going to the sea again that night,
As all other nights.
Hoping to catch fish,
He was rowing his boat quietly on the sea.

That night, like many other nights,
Was a quiet night
The streaks of moonlight were shining from above
Through the scattered clouds that had covered the moon's face,
The wind was hesitant.
The sea was silent.
Lonely in the frightful night, the poor man,
Full of regret and desire, poured out his heart
He sang in the quietude of the vast sea:

“Hey Ra’na!
Your deer-like body, Ra’na!
The magic eye, Ra’na!
Hey Ra’na, Ra’na.”

A little time had passed
From the night, with little light from the moon,
When the wind
Shook the sea by convulsive strokes this side and that
Heavy in the head, the sea's drunken body
Little by little, formed the thought of roaring and storming
A wave rose on the shoulder of another wave,
And from the moan which it produced,
escaping from other waves, rose to a peak.
The man lost the control of his boat
And fear overtook him.

Amidst the tumult of the arriving and departing waves,
Trembling all over, he began to think.
He said to himself: “What a night!
With all the laughter of its moonlight, it is dark to me.
This green sea
Gazes with horrifying wide eyes at me!
What am I to do with all my misery?
Who will guard me in this dark night?
Although I was hungry, what
Brought me to this chaotic sea?
What light of hope dragged me here?”

On the pitiful shore, no half-extinguished light is burning from afar.”

The labor of my work has exhausted my life.
For a passing breath
My body and soul have become enslaved.
It is better if I go toward the quite blue river,
Perhaps, I can catch some fish there?”

Saying this, he began to row
Rending the heart of the flowing waves;
As he struggled laboriously through the flowing waves,
This thought passed through his mind:
I must walk on my own path.
Amidst the tribulations of this eventful life
No one will tend to my wounds.
Even if they deny it, everyone is alone.
The one who tends to me is my work.

Deep in thought,
In the middle of agitated waves
Suddenly, a vision rose before Maneli,
The astonishing beauty of the concealed sea.
She was naked
Like the flood, her tears were burning
She was like a flaming candle from foot to head,
Her tresses were spread on her shoulders,
The sea moss, hanging from her head and shoulders, covered her body.

She asked: “What prospect has brought you to the sea
To live through this terrible labor,
In the heart of this heavy night in which,
The dust of its moonlight is a stain at the far end of the sky,
With a small paddle
In a lame boat
Which the flick of a wave can capsize!”

The paddle in his hand,
The man could not speak;
First, fear crept into him.
Startled,
His hair stood on end.

I am innocent
My job is to fish.
In the hope of a small catch
My whole life has been wasted on these waters.
In a world full of despair and hardship,
No one is more destitute than me.

I am an element of the hidden sea, lodging in the waves,
More unique than anything you can imagine.
I am that hidden goodness which man's sharp thought
Cannot conceive
And the insatiable map of his desires
Fails to grasp.
I am more beautiful than anyone else
I can bestow serenity on the people's hearts.

The kindness of the sea [the mermaid] said:
"The endeavor of one person
May be futile, and this is the truth. But the value of a man
Emerges out of long suffering.

Anyone will evolve toward perfection on a particular path.
To achieve perfection in one thing
You must turn away
From some other thing.
This is life,
And you must liberate yourself in this way.
Perhaps, your labor is caused by your heart and your wife's desire?
That is why you have forgotten about everything else.
I wish to ask you something,
Will you tell me the truth?
Is my body whiter and softer than your wife's?
Does the color of my eyes seem to you
Blacker than hers?

Her question prompted the man to see her unmatched beauty,
How beautifully she is embellished!
She has no rival in the expanse of the plane
Nor is there a beauty on the mountains that can match her.
She is all sketches and the magic of colors
But she has hesitated to enthrall the people!

It is as if from the consciousness-stealing brightness of the
moonlight
They had planted flowers in water.
And from the vast heart of these heavy waters
They had revealed the meaning of creation.

[Maneli talks to himself]
You, who are stuck in the mire of your life,
Care a little for your own heart.
Soar to a higher plane
Gaze at her [the mermaid's] beauty.
Why are you wandering so much
In the circle of life
Like an animal who is searching for food?
What is then the goal of being human?

[After spending the night with the mermaid, Maneli is now back on the shore]
I am so unsettled
So perturbed at the end of my life!
Where are all these voices coming from?
Who is watching my disconcerted state?
What spell did they
Bind on me on the sea
That everything has become strange and altered in my eyes?
Has not the mad heart of the secretive sea
Turned me into a lunatic just like itself?
Why everything in my eyes has the color of the sea?

With every moment, he was digging into his agitated mind
With every step, he was asking himself:
“How did I pass my time last night?
What was I after?
If my wife asks me: where is your shirt?
What should I answer?
Who in this calculating world
Will see my action as an act of generosity?

But while his eyes
Were fixed at the sea
He did not know where to go
His destination was lost to his eyes
And yet he longed for the sea.

His heart wished to listen to the tale of the heavy sea,
Singing his sorrow.
It was better for him to return to the heavy sea.

The Raven

At evening, when over the mountain
The sun is veiled by the yellow colors of its sorrow
A raven is sitting alone on the shore.
And in the distance, the water is tinged
With the color of the sky, and an oak
Turned yellow by autumn,
Capsized, has fallen on a patch of rocks.
Among those distant points
A black point is visible
It is a man searching for a way,
For a corner to hide from the eyes of others,
Where he can cry out his concealed sorrow.

When [the man] found a concealed spot that suited him
The raven's eye, above the waves that gathered like flood, without anxiety,
Fixed its gaze at him
To see what transpires
In that concealed corner, joy or suffering?
It is something like everything else it has seen.
He is a line on the horizon that is drawn in its eye, like
The burned foundations in the distance
A patch of cloud on the forgotten shore.

They look at one another in this moment
From a distance, they gaze at each other
This figure appears as a raven and blackness
And the other as a man, or what you desire.

In his eye, the raven is ugly, the essence of sadness,
It embodies a story of sorrow, robbing one of paradise.
The raven is sitting to pile up sadness on sadness
To enter the threshold of sorrow like a dream
To open the door of misery to people
To destroy all other thoughts.

He cries out through his lips from the distance: hey raven!

But Indifferent to wet and dry,
The raven fixes its gaze at him
It sits so cold and motionless in its place
And the waves, sternly, surge and subside.
Something is hidden.
They chew on something.

Unmoved by wet and dry,
Fixing its gaze at him,
Sits cold and motionless in its place.
And the waves, grim and frowning, surge and subside.
Something is hidden
They chew on something.