

Challenging Exile: On Translating a “Political” Poem by Esmail Khoi

I. Silencing the Individual and the Text: Execution Real and Literary

Execution is the most definitive form of violence through which a state exercises its authority. For the executed individual, the punishment carries no corrective or redemptive value and offers no possibility for reform. The “offender” can neither regain entry into the offended society or political order nor seek its pardon. Thus, execution attempts a severe and permanent exclusion; its victims become the physical embodiment of that which the state forbids to exist.

Esmail Khoi’s (1938-) “A Portrait of Saeed” (*yek chehreh az sa’id*), which I present here in translation, arises from a discreet historical fact: in the early morning hours of June 21, 1981, the Islamic Republic of Iran executed by firing squad the poet and playwright Saeed Soltanpour.¹ Soltanpour was charged with “having a criminal record, smuggling money, and being a member of the Feda’iyan-e Khalq Organization.”²

The primary motive for executing Soltanpour, however, does not appear to be the official charges against him; the poet’s true “offenses,” in fact, posed a far graver threat. Soltanpour, a committed Marxist, had denounced Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s leadership of the Iranian revolution, the same revolution that the radical poet and his comrades had perceived as their own. In doing so, Soltanpour had challenged the very

¹ There is no standard English spelling of Saeed Soltanpour’s name (Persian=*sa’id soltânpur*). This fact alone attests to the infrequency with which Soltanpour’s life and works have appeared in English scholarship. My spelling is meant to encourage a fairly accurate pronunciation for the non-specialist reader.

In this essay, I use the IJMES system for transliterating Persian words, with the exception of vowels. Here, *a e o* represent the short vowels in Persian and *â î û* the long.

² There are very few detailed accounts of Soltanpour’s arrest and execution available in English. One fairly rigorous reconstruction is available at “Omid: A Memorial in Defense of Human Rights,” a project of *The Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation* at: <http://www.abfiran.org/english/person-35843.php>. Accessed May 22, 2007. Several dozen international writers and scholars signed a letter of protest against Soltanpour’s execution that was published in *The New York Review of Books*, vol, 28, no. 13. August 13, 1981. The letter, however, mistakenly cites the day of execution as June 22, perhaps an indication of the general lack of information regarding the event.

ideological parameters, that is, the rhetorical boundaries, of the burgeoning Islamic Republic. The state in turn responded with violence in order to erase this challenge precisely at its embodied source. Execution, therefore, at once defined and redrew the margins of the state. Condemning the poet to death defined him as outside the margins, as incompatible with the new order, execution then enacted the closing of the new parameters by denying the executed his right to exist.

“A Portrait of Saeed” resists the execution of Soltanpour by speaking for the silenced individual. The poem contests the notion that execution can achieve a total erasure; its subject has been killed, but the margins continue to be expressed in the poet’s verse.

English translations of Esmail Khoi’s poetry have appeared in journals, anthologies, and two collections dedicated to his work. Those projects, however, which have never included a translation of “A Portrait of Saeed,” generally tend to underemphasize the specific political commitments of the poet. Instead, Khoi’s poetry is presented as achieving a certain type of universality by voicing for *the* exilic experience or by speaking for a general human condition. If universality is understood as an opposite or a lack of particularity, then the poetics of a context-specific resistance might seem to be incompatible with the translators’ attempts to universalize and, in doing so, to canonize the poet. Poems such as “A Portrait of Saeed,” when they are read as “political,” that is, as performing an act of defiance in a particular political context, interfere with the canonizing translator’s attempts to present the poet as an accessible voice for a universal audience. Simply put, if a “great” poet is supposed to achieve universality only at those points in his/her poetry where particularities of ideology, nation, language, and, above all

else, experience, become invisible or non-existent, then the “political” poems of Khoi are less worthy of the canon and thus are relegated to the margins.

However, the “rewriter,” to use André Lefevere’s term, not only defines the “great” and the marginal, but, through translating and anthologizing, actively determines which elements of a poet’s work are allowed to exist.³ In the case of a poem like “A Portrait of Saeed,” the rewriter passively defines the margins by choosing not to translate the poem or excluding it from a collection. The parameters of the canon are thus drawn and closed; the agent of literary authority has determined what, in the poet’s translation to a new linguistic system, is to be silenced, what is forbidden to exist.

My translation addresses a two-fold form of erasure, then. I do not confuse the metaphorical, textual violence of translation for the real, material violence of execution from which this poem arises. Nonetheless, my translation might serve to contest both the silencing of the executed individual and the silencing of the eulogizing text.

II. Resisting Execution: On Translating “A Portrait of Saeed”

Esmail Khoi’s poetry has appeared in two book-length collections of parallel English-Persian texts, both selected and translated by Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak and Michael Beard. The first, *Edges of Poetry: Selected Poems of Esmail Khoi* (1995), includes poems from over three decades of Khoi’s life and work, with poems written in Iran and, later, in exile, between 1961 and 1994.⁴ The second collection, *Outlandia: Songs of Exile*, was published five years later, in 1999, and contains only those poems in

³ André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁴ Esmail Khoi, *Edges of Poetry: Selected Poems of Esmail Khoi, A Bilingual Parallel Text in English and Persian Selected and Translated with an Introduction by Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak and Michael Beard* (Santa Monica, CA: Blue Lagoon Press, 1995).

which, according to the translators, “exile itself emerges as a primary character.”⁵ The different manners in which the two works represent Esmail Khoi are quite telling of the process in which a poet is “rewritten” in translation. Articulating these differences will clarify the task of the translator of “A Portrait of Saeed.”

Karimi-Hakkak and Beard’s introduction to *Edges of Poetry* provides a historical, cultural, and political background for the English-speaking reader of Khoi’s work. They open their essay by asserting the importance of contextualizing a poet such as Khoi: “There are poets whose works bear eloquent testimony to their lives and thoughts, as well as to their place in the poetic tradition which has made and molded them. Esmail Khoi is preeminently such a poet.”⁶ The translators then go on to acquaint the reader with some details of Khoi’s life—his early, “juvenile” poetry written and published in Iran, his time in England in the early 1960s, where he completed his graduate studies in philosophy, his subsequent return to Iran, his deepening social commitment and philosophical attachment to Marxism, his advocating for revolution in the years preceding and immediately following the Shah’s fall, his disillusionment with the Islamic revolution and his vocal criticism of Khomeini’s regime, then his life in hiding from 1982 to 1983 and, finally, his escape from Iran and his return to England where he continues to live in exile to this day. Of particular interest to this translation project, Karimi-Hakkak and Beard name several individuals who have been executed or murdered by the Islamic Republic of Iran and about whom Khoi has written in his poems. The translators note the historical significance of Soltanpour’s death as such:

⁵ Esmail Khoi, *Outlandia: Songs of Exile, Selected and Translated by Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak and Michael C. Beard with an Introduction by Erik Nakjavani* (Vancouver: Nik Publishers, 1999), from “Preface and Acknowledgements,” VII.

⁶ Khoi, *Edges of Poetry: Selected Poems of Esmail Khoi*, XV.

Eventually the attacks on the Writer's Association of Iran culminated in the arrest and execution of poet Said Soltanpur and scores of other known activists, as well as the purge of hundreds of writers and academics. For many Iranian intellectuals, this was a crystallizing moment in a revolutionary process they had helped to initiate.⁷

Thus, the translators introduce the poetry of Khoi as having a specific relation to the poet's own life. The inclusion of Soltanpur's name (and, later in the introduction, others like Feraydun Farrokhzad and Niusha Farrahi) further marks the specificity of Khoi's work, implying that these prominent figures were not simply political abstractions who were terminated in the murderous path of the regime, but real and unique individuals with their own lives and names. Overall, to the extent that the essay rewrites a single "voice" in Khoi's poetry, it presents the collected poems and translations as a voice for the poet's own life and thought, that is, his unique experience of living as Esmail Khoi.

Erik Nakjavani's introduction to *Outlandia*, on the other hand, forgoes any relation of Khoi's life to his work, beginning with the following, rather loaded pronouncement on the function of poetry in general: "This collection of poems by Esmail Khoi radicalizes the concept of poetry's irreducible originary absence. It provides an occasion for a general meditation on the language of poetry itself."⁸ Nakjavani then goes on to explain what he means by "irreducible originary absence" in terms that will be perhaps reasonably clear to those readers who are already well-versed in literary and critical theory and who are willing to reread the text a number of times. The short essay includes no specifics of the poet's life—no places, dates or names—explaining instead how Khoi's poetry speaks for the universal condition of exile and, perhaps more importantly, how Khoi's poetry exemplifies the work of "truly authentic poets."⁹ If the

⁷ Ibid., XXIV.

⁸ Khoi, *Outlandia: Songs of Exile*, IX.

⁹ Ibid., XII.

introduction to *Edges of Poetry* situates Khoi's poetry among his own life experiences, Nakjavani's introduction presents the poems of *Outlandia* as articulations of a universal theory of language and hermeneutics. Even exile, the theme of the collection, is not specific to the poet's life, and instead becomes absorbed into this larger understanding of the human condition:

After all is said and done, Khoi sees all of us as exiles—living on isolated islands and outlands, surrounded by the infinities of time and space, hoping to survive as well as we can as transients in the lee of our protective imagination—poetic or otherwise. In this light, human history may be no more than the recorded narratives of the long, lonely sad sagas of living on such islands and outlands.¹⁰

In this rewriting of Khoi, the specific facts of his exile are irrelevant; the fact that he escaped Iran to save his life produces no significant difference from the conditions of an exile who escaped Iran—or any other country, for that matter—to preserve, let's say, his or her own wealth. Moreover, the physical act of leaving one's country, for Nakjavani, does not necessarily define exile and the difference between these “real” exiles, like Khoi, and those who experience “lonely sad sagas of living” in their native countries is only a matter of degrees. In Nakjavani's words, “the situation of poets in voluntary or involuntary exile is, objectively, more complex.”¹¹ Thus, Khoi's exile is *complex*, not unique, and the poet has achieved greatness by writing about universal truths.

My translation of “A Portrait of Saeed” will, it is hoped, complicate this reading of universalism in Khoi's poetry and destabilize the category of “exile” or “exilic” as a meaningful classification of any poet's work. My intention is not to disprove the

¹⁰ Ibid., XX. It should be noted that the back cover of *Outlandia* describes the collection as “the next step in [the translators'] effort to introduce this important poet to English-speaking readers.” The translators may have felt that it was unnecessary to reprint the biographical information on Khoi from the first book (though they reprinted a dozen of the same poems) and considered the globalizing essay by Nakjavani as part of their “next step.” Nonetheless, I am not concerned here with speculating on the intentions of the translators; rather, I am interested in the work that the two introductions, in their representations of Khoi, perform.

¹¹ Ibid., XII.

universality of Khoi's work. Indeed, why translate a poem such as "A Portrait of Saeed" if it does not on some fundamental level transcend the particularities of time and place and invoke a universal empathy? Rather, I wish to demonstrate that Khoi achieves a powerful sense of universality by engaging the particular itself. That is to say that the specificities of Khoi's politics do not conflict with the poet's basic universal appeal and, by extension, that the particular does not preclude universality. In another introduction to translations of three of Khoi's poems that appeared in *Iranian Studies*, Karimi-Hakkak and Beard claim that Khoi's poems written in exile "fall into two major categories."¹² The first group, as they explain, "describing his political views and his posture as a leading opponent of the Islamic Republic, *lies outside our concern here*" (italics added).¹³ "A Portrait of Saeed," though written before the poet went into exile, clearly would fall within this first category and lies precisely within my concerns. However, my translation is meant not simply to provide an example from the underrepresented first category, but to suggest that the second category of poems, which "articulates his condition, as man, as poet, and as an Iranian living abroad," becomes profoundly richer in meaning when it is understood with the specificities of the poet's life and thought.¹⁴ In other words, "A Portrait of Saeed" arises from and, to some extent expresses, a specific historical event that eventually led the dissident, Marxist poet to leave his homeland. Thus, a rather vague sentiment such as longing for the homeland, which occurs in the second "category" of Khoi's poems (a sentiment to which Nakjavani would surely ascribe an exilic universality) is complicated by an understanding of that homeland as the site of a

¹² Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak and Michael Beard, "Time and Displacement: Three Poems by Esmā'īl Kho'i (Translators' Note)," *Iranian Studies* 30, no. 3-4 (Summer/Fall 1997): 327.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

revolution betrayed. Furthermore, this betrayed revolution means, for Khoi, not only the abstract failure of an ideology to take root, but the real spilling of human blood.

To return briefly to Nakjavani's introduction, he understands the expression of an "irreducible originary absence" in Khoi's work as a metaphysical reflection on the nature of reality. Words, that is, language addresses the absence "of the unnamed and the as-yet unnamable objects that make the horizon of our psychical and physical world."¹⁵ For Nakjavani, then, Khoi's language (at least in his "authentic" poetry) addresses an abstraction. "A Portrait of Saeed" indeed addresses an absence; however, its absence is the very tangible, physical absence of the executed Saeed Soltanpour. The poem addresses the absence of a man who was absent from his own wedding ceremony because he was arrested at the site of that very celebration, imprisoned and tortured for sixty-six days and, in the absence of his admission of any form of guilt and the absence of his willingness to perform a public recantation—a not uncommon act of self-preservation under totalitarian regimes—was placed against a wall and executed by firing squad at dawn.¹⁶ The poem addresses the absence of this named poet from Khoi's life. However, the poem is neither a philosophical treatise on the nature of absence nor an expression of grief and mourning alone. Rather, the poem addresses, and by doing so contests, the attempts of a repressive state to eliminate an individual deemed incompatible with the new order. The state has executed Soltanpour, not only to ensure his physical absence, but also to remove his undesirable ideology from the rhetorical parameters of the new republic. "A Portrait of Saeed" resists this erasure; the poem creates a presence of

¹⁵ Khoi, *Outlandia: Songs of Exile*, IX.

¹⁶ "Facts" of Soltanpour's death from: Ali Kamrani, Golmorad Moradi and Bahram Armani. Statement (in Persian) delivered to the Congress of the Iranian Writer's Association (In Exile), November 24, 2006. Accessed on-line at: <http://www.iranian-writers-exile.org/bayanie/2006/darj%20shod/bayanieh%20kanoon-%20landan.htm>, May 21, 2007.

Soltanpour in the form of words and memory and the poem rearticulates its speaker's commitment to an ideology that was meant to be eliminated along with the actual face of Saeed.¹⁷

The poem in fact performs a more radical act of resistance as well. Not only does the poem deny the erasure of Soltanpour, but the lyric voice also refuses to mourn the death of its subject in the manner that the “death-obsessed” Islamic Republic prescribes. While the followers of Khomeini “gloat” over their state of “perpetual mourning” and “forever grief,” the speaker of the poem insists on dying “with elation,” empowered by the belief that deaths such as Soltanpour's will lead to a utopian future as he had envisioned it. There is indeed an absence in the poem—an absence of the speaker's willingness to acknowledge any sense of legitimacy in Khomeini's Islamic Republic of Iran, neither in life nor in death.

In my reading of “A Portrait of Saeed,” the ideological center of the poem therefore lies in its aestheticizing of Saeed Soltanpour's death. Consequently, the task of the translator cannot be simply to convey the semantic “message” of the poem, but must be to attempt a recreation of the poetics with which Khoi culminates in an intense, lyrical, at times almost ecstatic, celebration of life in the face of a tragic death. In other words, the “message” of the poem and its underlying act of resistance is the very fact that it produces music and, in doing so, continues to strive for aesthetic beauty in the world from which its subject has been violently removed. The real challenge of translating the poem has been to find a suitable means of representing this music in English. In approaching this challenge, I consider Khoi's masterful use of rhyme an essential element

¹⁷ The poem's title (*yek chehreh az sa'id*) might also be translated as “a face of Saeed.”

of the poem's musicality, an element which is not represented sufficiently by alliteration, consonance or other subtle markers of music in the English rendering.

Where rhyme occurs within the stanza, it has been possible to follow somewhat Khoi's pattern of rhyme. Thus, a stanza such as *mâ niz koshteh mi shavim/ âri/ ammâ/ barâye âzâdi/ va/ pas bâ shâdi* becomes "we too lose ourselves to dying/yes/ but/ for liberation/ and/ therefore with elation." In this example, the rhyme follows the Persian exactly—both in the words translated and their location in the line—even though a more "literal" translation might read "we too get killed/ yes/ but/ for freedom/ and/ therefore with joy." For other stanzas, although the exact rhyme could not be reproduced, another set of rhyming words could serve as markers. In the stanza immediately preceding the one described above, for example, "dying" and "crying" mark the rhyme in English, when in fact Khoi's rhyme occurs in "living" (*zîstan*) and "crying" (*gerîstan*). This example may at first seem incidental; however, if it is accepted that the ideology of the poem is inextricably bound to its poetics, then it becomes evident that more than a simple rhyme is at stake. Of course, there are several occurrences of rhyme within stanzas for which I could not find English renderings at all and was left with the more subtle attempts at musicality.

In addition to these rhymes within stanzas, the poem also maintains one rhyme throughout. Expressing this element of the Persian has been the most problematic aspect of my translation. Although Khoi's poem looks quite modern or experimental on the written page, the Persian-speaking audience will hear a strong resonance of the classical ghazal in the repeated rhyme. Like a ghazal, several of Khoi's stanzas end with a rhyme and a repeated word (see f.n. 22 of my translation for a further explanation of the poetics

of a ghazal). The poem carries the rhyme and refrain as such: *hâri-ye bozorg, bimâri-ye bozorg, nâchâri-ye bozorg, me'mâri-ye bozorg, âri-ye bozorg, jâri-ye bozorg, ham kâri-ye bozorg, kh^wâri-ye bozorg, sarshâri-ye bozorg, bizâri-ye bozorg, qâri-ye bozorg.*

Simply finding eleven rhyming words in English would be challenging enough. But the rhyme would also have to create a sense of pacing and anticipation, and, at the same time, mark the poem's echoing of a classical Persian form. In my translation, I have chosen to remain close to the semantic value of the words, thus "a/the great" followed by "Rabidity," "Disease," "Helplessness," "Structure," "Yes," "Current," "Camaraderie," "Contempt," "Bounty," "Disdain," and "Reciter." The value of these words, however, is more than semantic; that is to say that the words perform a musical function in the poem that is as significant as their expression of meaning. I have therefore chosen to capitalize the translated nouns in order to mark a loss of value in the English text. While the capitalized words may create a sense of anticipation that faintly echoes the Persian rhyme, it is also hoped that their marking will indicate a certain foreignness to the words, a certain relationship between these eleven nouns that this translator has been unable to express adequately and which thus remains inaccessible. The capitalized words may, furthermore, appropriately mark a lack of equivalence between the Persian and English, as Persian writing does not distinguish capitalized and lower-case letters. These capitalizations might ultimately come to signify an irreconcilable space through which Khoi's poem in its entirety must be maneuvered and yet through which complete transfer is never quite possible. In traversing that space, the poetic system of Persian is left behind, as the poet's homeland is left for the place of exile. *Yek Chehreh az Sa'id* resists the erasure of the poet Soltanpour, and yet the physical presence of the executed poet can

never be returned. “A Portrait of Saeed” approaches Khoi’s poem and yet, in its effort towards the universal, erasure remains inevitable.

I translate Khoi’s poem as follows:

A Portrait of Saeed¹⁹

Perpetual mourning
forever grief:

Saeed-*jân*²⁰
the religion of the death-obsessed
wants us without splendor
ah

how splendorless
the religion of the death-obsessed
groans and
ravishly gloats.²¹
perpetual mourning
forever grief.

¹⁸ Fedâ'i refers to the *fedâyân-e khalq* (People's Devotees), a Marxist guerrilla organization that worked towards overthrowing the Shah of Iran. The organization split after the rise of the Islamic Republic, with the "Fedâ'i Minority" (*fedâ'iyân aqaliyyat*) opposing Khomeini's regime. Its members were arrested and executed for "sowing corruption on earth" and "declaring war on God."

I have tried to use the simplest form of transliteration possible. Here, *a e o* denote the short vowels in Persian and *â i u* denote the long. Thus *jân* sounds much like the English "John" whereas *a* correlates roughly to the first vowel in "apple."

¹⁹ Esmâ'il Khu'i, "Yek Chehreh Az Sa'id," in *Kârnameh-ye Esmâ'il Khu'i (She'r) Ketâb-e Dovvom* (Spanga, Sweden: Nashr-e Bârân, 1996), 66-74. Originally published in *Kâbus-e Khunsereshteh-ye Bidârân: Daftari az She'rhâ-ye Esmâ'il Khu'i (Bloodied Nightmare of the Awakened: A Collection of Poems by Esmail Khoi)*, 1984. Translated by Samad Alavi.

²⁰ *jân*: a term of endearment, perhaps best translated as "dear," though literally meaning "[my] soul" or "[my] life." This term of endearment is perhaps more common and natural than any corresponding form of address in English.

²¹ *bi kh'od* can mean "ecstasized, out of one's senses, unwarranted, and motiveless." The invented "ravishly" might likewise conjure the multiple meanings of "ravish."

یک چهره از سعید

مدام سوک ،
همیشه اندوه :

سعید جان!
آئین مرگ اندیشان
چه بی شکوه می خواهد مارا ،
آه

چه بی شکوه!
آئین مرگ اندیشان
می نالد و
بی خود می بالد :
مدام سوک ،
همیشه اندوه .

And so it is
so it must be
when in the tribe of pre-historic blood-drunk wolves
anachronistically
or rather
in this barren prolonged night
under sight of the full moon
the spellbound grief-howl of great Rabidity²²
spouts towards that death-imbibing I-don't-know.

And from the pack of the wild boars
a galaxy of ominous stars
rises

²² The first of the capitalized nouns in my translation. The capitalization marks the single rhyme that is carried throughout the poem and occurs at the end of several stanzas. Thus, "the great Rabidity," *hâri-ye bozorg*, will later correspond to other rhyming nouns (*bimâri*, *nâchâri*, *me'mâri*, etc.) all qualified with "the great" (*bozorg*: big, great, etc.). This rhyme pattern echoes the classical Persian ghazal, a form in which one rhyme (the *qâfiyeh*) occurs in every distich of the poem and is followed by a word, the last of the line, which is also repeated in each distich (the *radif*). Thus, if this poem were a ghazal, the distiches would end with *hâri-ye bozorg* then *bimâri-ye bozorg*, then *nâchâri-ye bozorg* and so forth. Since Khoi's poem is not a ghazal, these rhymes occur at the end of most (though not all) of the several-line, loosely arranged stanzas. Nonetheless, the rhyme pattern is common to the Persian milieu and creates a familiar sense of pacing as well as an anticipation for the next rhyme to come. Since I could not find a way to relate a similar rhyming pattern in English, I chose simply to capitalize the rhyming words as a way to signal both that there is a relationship between the words and, at the same time, that the English does not successfully capture that relationship. That is, the capitalized nouns are meant to signal the origins of these words in a "foreign" text with its own poetic system, a system that I have been unable to translate in a literal, accurate, or direct manner.

و اینچنین است ،
اینچنین باید باشد ،
وقتی که در قبیله گرگان خونجوندگه پیش از تاریخ ،
در نابهنگام ،
یا ، یعنی ،
در این شب سترون دیر انجام ،
زیر نگاه ماه تمام ،
فواره می زند به سوی آن ندانم مرگ آشام
غمزوزه فسون شده هاری ی بزرگ.

وز گله گرازان
یک کهکشان سناره شوم
بر می دمد :

which means
in anger's horizon
three hundred thousand eyes
feverish for ruin
kindle the torch
meaning
this is the forest again which burns
in nocturnal fires of the great Disease.

And so it is.
And so it must be
until
-behold-
the cleverest of the leopards are
one by one
and
thus meaning pack by pack
horde by horde
at the peak of the deepest precipice
cornered by the great Helplessness.

We too give ourselves to dying²³
yes
but
for the sake of living
and
therefore without crying.

We too lose ourselves to dying²⁴
yes

²³ *mā nīz koshteh mi dahim*: literally, "we too give [our] dead."

²⁴ *mā nīz koshteh mi shavim*: literally, "we too get killed"

که یعنی
در آفاق خشم
سیصد هزار چشم
به ناگهان
در تب ویران کردن
مشعل می افروزد :
یعنی
این جنگل است باز که می سوزد
در آتش شبانه بیماری ی بزرگ.

و اینچنین است
و اینچنین باید باشد
تا
- آنک -
زیرک ترین پلنگان را
تک تک
و ،
پس ، یعنی ، گروه گروه ،
انبوه انبوه ،
به اوج های ژرف ترین پرتگاه برآرد
ناچاری ی بزرگ.

ما نیز کشته می دهیم ،
آری ،
اما
برای زیستن
و ،
پس ، بی گریستن.

ما نیز کشته می شویم ،
آری ،

for liberation
and
therefore with elation.

but

We too have a destiny
yes
but
pure
meaning
cleansed from the metaphysical lies
which we
with our free hands²⁵
construct.

We too have a paradise as well
yes
but
on the ground
meaning
a world founded on the elements
of purity and beauty and truth
when we construct this world
merrily
and with a face to prosperity
in the heart-luring direction of a great Structure.²⁶

²⁵ *beh dast-e âzâdi*: literally, "with the hand of freedom/liberation."

²⁶ *me'mâri* usually corresponds to the English "architecture." "Structure," however, carries an appropriate ambiguity for the poem here, connoting both a plan and a physical edifice. "Structure" might also echo a certain philosophical predisposition to structures of human history.

اما
برای آزادی
و ،
پس ، با شادی.

ما نیز سرنوشتی داریم ،
آری ،
اما
پاک ،
یعنی
پالوده از دروغ های فراخاکی
که خود
به دست آزادی
آن را می سازیم.

ما نیز هم بهشتی داریم ،
آری ،
اما
بر خاک ،
یعنی
دنیایی از عناصر زیبایی و درستی و پاکی ،
وقتی که با شادی
و رو به آبادی
این جهان را می سازیم
در راستای دلکش معماری ی بزرگ.

Yes
we
have signed a pact with living
in the great Current.

آری ،
ما
با زیستن پیمان بسته ایم
در جاری ی بزرگ.

And we accept death
which is a facet of being
only for what lies on this side of death
with a great *Yes*.

و مرگ را ، که چهره ای از هستن است ،
تنها برای آنچه اینسوی مرگ است
می پذیریم
با «آری» ی بزرگ.

We die as well
yes
but...

ما نیز می میریم ،
آری
اما...

hay, hây, âhây
Gypsies of the jolliest rising, *ây*²⁷
dancing tulips
on a marvelously woven springtide rug!

هی ، های ، آهای
لولی و شان سنگ ترین بر دمیدن ، آی
رقصندگان لاله
بر قالی ی شگرف بفت بهاران!

I want all of you
in the name of water²⁸
or sun
or soil

می خواهم از شما
که برای رضای آب
یا آفتاب
یا خاک

²⁷ These interjections mark the beginning of the long and direct address to a “you.” *ahây* is a common (though not very polite) interjection for calling someone’s attention in Iran. *hay, hây* and *ây* all poetic interjections and invocations that occur in classical Persian poetry. The retention of the Persian phonetics (instead of *O!* or *hey you!*) might serve to locate the origins of the English text in the classical Persian milieu.

²⁸ Khoi’s *barâyeh rezâ-ye âb* (lit. for the sake of pleasing water) echoes the common expression *barâyeh rezâ-ye khodâh* (“for the sake of pleasing God”). “In the name of water” may likewise conjure the common translation of the Islamic invocation “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.”

into the great current
from this great Contempt.

I want you
to say on our behalf
to anyone who grows
in the spirit of this world's spring:
we positively dislike the fall
because we too
in our own budding spirits
are from the realm of youth
meaning
from the essence of blossoming
and the lineage of leaves and spring
and
therefore undoubtedly
we despise anything decrepit
and from departed days.

I want you
to tell them to tell
of all these things
on behalf of we who bear spring
of all those anythings
that flourish from your honeyed fragrance
on the other side of dread and fear
in joyous fields of great Bounty.

I want you
to tell them to say for us like spring:
we
we worshipers of living never

در جاری ی بزرگ ،
از این خواری ی بزرگ.

می خواهم از شما
کز ما بگوئید
با هر که در بهار جان و جهانش می روئید
که ما به هیچ روی خزان را دوست نمی داریم ؛
زیرا که ما نیز
در جان پر جوانه خویش
از جهان جوان بودن ،
یعنی
از گوهر شکفتن
واز نژاد برگ و بهاریم ؛
و ،
پس ، بی گمان ، همانا
کز هر چه پیر و پارین بیزاریم.

می خواهم از شما
که این همه را
از ما بهاروار بگوئید بگویند
آن هر چه ها
کز آنسوی تردید و بیم
از شمیم شما می رویند
در دشت های شادی و سرشاری ی بزرگ.

می خواهم از شما
کز ما بهاروار بگوئید بگویند :
ما ،
ما زیستن پرستان ، هرگز ،

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