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Translation as Alienation: Sufi Hermeneutics and Literary Modernism in Bijan Elahi's Translations

By Kayvan Tahmasebian and Rebecca Ruth Gould

The history of Iranian modernism is inseparable from the history of literary translation. In most accounts of Iranian literary history, the translation of European literary works played a formative role in the redefinition of poetic discourse as well as in the introduction of new literary genres, such as the short story and the novel, to modern Persian literature. In his landmark study of Iranian literary modernism, Mohammad Reza Shafi ʿi-Kadkani rejects the ascription of originality to Iranian modernism. "Whatever beauty is witnessed in Persian poetry today," Shafi ʿi-Kadkani insists, "is the result of grafting the tree of European culture onto that of Iranian culture."[1] By contrast, Iranian critic Morad Farhadpour has argued that all modern Iranian intellectual projects entail a kind of translation. Iranians' relation to modernity, Farhadpour argues, is "mediated through translation," which in turn makes possible Iranians' relationship to their tradition.[2] "Beginning with the Constitutional Revolution [1906]," Farhadpour notes, "translation in its broadest sense is the *only* true form of thought for us" (Farhadpour, *Pāra-hā - ye fekr*, 231; emphasis added). For Farhadpour, "Western history has always been modern," whereas for Iranians, modernity is a situation (*vazʿiyat*) to "step into."

This account of the translational origins of Iranian modernity has been challenged by arguments for its indigenous origins. In his *Value of Emotions in the Artist's Life* (1940), the maverick modernist poet Nima Yushij (1897-1960) noted that "European influence in our literature is received irregularly and imperfectly due to the form [*tarz*] and the style [*oslub*] of our poems."[3] Nima (as he is called in Persian) undertakes a comparative review of literatures such as

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Georgian, Tajik, Uzbek, Turkish, and Persian that modernized themselves through their encounter with Europe (Yushij, *Arzesh-e ehsāsāt*, 81). Nima argues that literary influence becomes productive only when the target literature can find common ground with the source literature. In a more recent stringent evaluation of the impact of European literature on modern Persian poetry, Mohammad Qazi, himself a translator of Flaubert, Cervantes, Boccaccio, and Gorky, maintains that with the translation of foreign poems into Persian a "modern poetry has entered our language" that "damages beautiful Persian poetry."[4] The Iranian critic Mohammad Ali Eslami-Nodushan similarly warns against the harm done by poor translations of inferior European literary texts in fostering a superficial literary modernism.[5]

These critics' different ways of describing the translated status of Iranian literary modernism register an empirical reality that is further reinforced by existing scholarship.[6] As Turkish literary critic Suna Ertuğrul writes in connection with the belatedness of Turkish literary modernity, "belatedness is the infinite 'repetition'" of the lack that is already intrinsic to modernism as such; it signals a culture's inability to turn modernity "into a project of grounding."[7] Judging by the prevailing accounts of European influence on Iranian modernism, Iranian modernity similarly lacks the ability to ground itself. At the same time, Farhadpour and Shafi ʿi-Kadkani reason according to East/West dichotomies that are increasingly coming to appear obsolete. The study of global modernism has increasingly shown that so-called belated and non-European modernities can be as fecund and generative as European ones, if in different ways. Looking beyond normative European paradigms enables us to see how a translated modernity, far from being merely derivative, can generate new possibilities from the movement across languages,

and create a situation in which (as Farhadpour recognizes), translation and original cannot easily be distinguished from each other.

Viewed from the prism of the variegated selves it generated, the alienated modernism of Iranian poet-translator Bijan Elahi (1945-2010) that is the focus of this article moves beyond the persistent centering of modernism on European modernity. In his translations as in his poems, Elahi reveals modernism as a deterritorialization that cannot claim hegemony over any geography. In its efforts to make the act of translation enrich Persian poetry, Elahi's modernism approximates more closely to a spiritual condition than the belated identity lamented by Farhadpour and Shafi ʿi-Kadkani. Elahi's alienated translational aesthetics forged from Iran's much-lamented belatedness a unique way of seeing and of being. If, as Ertuğrul argues, the "radical experience of belatedness is at the same time an experience of the limits of the modern project," then our engagement with Elahi shows how his translational modernity exposes these limits as illusions ("Belated Modernity," 630). Elahi achieved this hermeneutic shift, in many cases while lacking full access to the original versions of the texts he was translating, and while working, concertedly and creatively, across countless layers of cultural, linguistic, and historical mediation.

With reference to belated modernity, Ertuğrul asks what it means to inhabit a negative condition, wherein the value of whatever one produces is automatically reduced by its perceived derivation from an external source, a modernity that is imitative. According to Ertuğrul, in a belated modernity, "[w]hat we call modern is essentially an experience of the loss of origin, the loss of the transcendental structures that guarantees the meaning of the human sojourn on earth. The

modern epoch is opened up simultaneously as the absence of origin and an attempt to ground it on the level of subjectivity" (630). "In this sense," Ertuğrul argues, "modernity is always belated vis-à-vis itself" (630). Belated modernity differs in this respect from Elahi's translational modernity, which involves a constant return to the origin and its recapitulation in recycled form. However, this return should not be understood as part of a project of "grounding." Perpetually engaged with crisis and discontinuity, modernity cannot be "grounded" in the Iranian, the Turkish, or indeed in any context. As Ertuğrul points out, "[t]he experience of belatedness is not being late to a historically determined essence; it is the recurrence of the essential lack of ground that defines the modern project. In its most radical expression, the experience of belatedness is the infinite 'repetition' of this lack/loss without being able to turn it into a project of grounding" (630). Analogously, Elahi's notion of modernity proceeds by persistently interrogating and revising its origin. Translation as interpretation is theorized by Elahi as a movement toward the most distant layers of one's being in language and alienating oneself through translation. Elahi's translational method is directed by the principle of self-interpretation contained in the aphorism of the renowned Sufi Abulhasan Kharaqani (963-1033), which Elahi used as an epigraph to his Hallaj translations: "I have seen those who interpreted the Quran. Noble men (*javānmardān*) interpreted themselves."[8]

Countering the contemporary association between the modern and the European, recent scholarship on global modernism has witnessed the reclaiming of "vernacular counter-memories . . . generative of a global modernity born of crisscrossings and interactions between Europe and its colonies."[9] Such crisscrossings heavily inflect modernism's temporalities at the global scale. They require further inquiries into the structure of modernist time from outside European centers.

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As a region layered by histories that extend from early antiquity to the present, Iran's literary modernity both parallels and diverges from the more thoroughly excavated postcolonial trajectories of Francophone Africa and the Caribbean, which have to date stimulated some of the most noteworthy contributions to the study of modernist time.[10]

By linking the study of modernist time and its relation to vernacular pasts with the practice of translation and with translation theory, this essay develops ongoing efforts to decolonize our understanding of modernism's trajectories. Engaging in close readings of Elahi as he experiments with a variety of translation styles and authorial selves, we show how he used translation to pluralize his authorial selves. We further show how, drawing simultaneously on non-Iranian modernism and Sufi hermeneutics, Elahi shapes Iranian literary modernism. Finally, by shining new light on Elahi's translational legacy, we complicate still-prevalent perceptions of modernism as an exclusively forward-looking literary movement that severs literature's links to the past. Given his bold and prolific experimentation as a modernist poet-translator of European poetry, Elahi is ideally suited for our agenda of reconfiguring global literary modernism. Elahi's distinct poetic idiom in modern Persian poetry is inseparable from his translations. More specifically, as we demonstrate, Elahi transposes premodern mystical hermeneutics into a modern theory and practice of translation that estranges the Persian language from itself while appropriating foreign poetic structures. Familiar dichotomies such as original/translation and fidelity/infidelity come undone through Elahi's theory and practice of poetry translation.

Theorizing Iranian Literary Modernism

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The recent translational turn in the modernist studies has been stimulated in part by global efforts to foreground the importance of translation in the humanities and social sciences.[11] Yet the impact of translation on modernist Iranian poetry remains neglected. Most studies that systematically consider Iranian literary modernism within a specifically translational framework have adopted sociological approaches. Esmaeil Haddadian-Moghaddam has documented the active role translators of the novel have played in the formation of modern Iranian literary system.[12] He considers the extra-textual forces that restrict individual and institutional agency, such as exile, lack of capital, and censorship, and concludes with an account of literary translation as an original and non-derivative activity within the modern Iranian literary system.

Omid Azadibougar challenges what he terms the "constructivist" narrative of the role of translation in transforming the modern Persian literary system by reconsidering the translational environment between 1851 and 1921.[13] He casts doubt on prior claims for the modernizing influence of translation in early twentieth-century Iran. While Haddadian-Moghaddam considers the status of literary translation from the perspective of its producers, Azadibougar argues that ignoring the role of the reader leads to false assumptions concerning the actual impact of translation. He criticizes the mechanical impact model by emphasizing the instability of the reception context and by pointing to the conceptual incongruity between the source and the receiver.

Kamran Rastegar has studied the development of literary modernity in Arabic, Persian, and English literatures through the central role of textual transaction during the nineteenth century. Going beyond center-periphery models, Rastegar asks "to what extent the defining

transformations . . . emerged as a result of textual transactions."[14] Rastegar argues that these textual transactions resulted "in the creation of texts engendered through and emergent from translation, appropriation and circulation of textual materials across cultural boundaries" (6). Poetry translation has no place in Rastegar's study, which is engaged with the circulation of texts across the Middle East and Europe at a time when poetry translation from European languages into Persian was still uncommon.

As this brief overview suggests, systematic studies of modern Iranian poetry are rare. Exceptionally, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin and Yuri Lotman, Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak has proposed what he calls "the semiotic model of poetic change" to explain the early twentieth century Iranian poetic renewal.[15] Karimi-Hakkak conceptualizes modernity in terms not of discontinuity but of continuity between the old and new. He regards Nima as the culmination of a modernist phase of Persian literature, and "European poetry" as an imaginary cultural construct, which had to be devised in order for modernism to take effect. In Karimi-Hakkak's account, "European poetry" is an extra-systemic element devised to revise dominant views concerning the nature and function of poetry. He therefore considers the early twentieth century practice of literary borrowing, known as *eqterāh*, as a major force in bringing about poetic renewal.

While these approaches offer new ways of understanding a translation's reception, as well as (with the exception of Karimi-Hakkak) prose translation, we focus here on a specific aspect of Iran's translational modernity: its formation by translations of modern European poetry. We pursue this goal by examining the translations undertaken by a single poet-translator. Elahi's

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widely varying translational methods enable us to trace the specific contributions translation has made to the concept of modernity as an encounter with an other. Our focus on the poetic dimensions of Iranian modernism is distinctive for two reasons. First, scholarship on the role of translation within the Persian poetic system is thin relative to the research on modern Persian fiction as imported narrative forms. Second, the examination of poetry translation fruitfully elucidates the role of the foreign in the transformation of the Persian poetic system.

Drawing on Itamar Even-Zohar's theory of the position of translated literature within a literary system, Christophe Balaÿ argues that Iranian fiction lent itself more readily to translation than poetry. In Balaÿ's account, the novel was a peripheral genre in comparison with poetry, which resisted modification by virtue of its location at the center of literary production and consumption.[16] More than prose, poetry exposes the challenges of untranslatability. In contrast to prose texts that continue to be regarded as prose after being translated in a new language, poems are believed to lose their poeticity after translation. As the Iranian poet Shams Langrudi states: "in a country where poetry was the only art form for more than a millennium, its sacred order dominated minds like a taboo [*tābu*]" (*Tārikh-e tahlili-ye sheʿr-e now*, 1:35). This situation gave rise to a perception of poetry as untranslatable. "How could it be possible to translate from European languages . . . [into] the sacred Persian poetic tradition?" (1:35). Langrudi asks. The remainder of this article addresses Langrudi's question through the translational output of Bijan Elahi.

Bijan Elahi's Translational Poetics

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For generations of readers and critics, Elahi has been regarded as the hermit-poet of Iranian modernism, in part due to his fortuitous conjuncture of his own avant-garde poetry with the translation of world literature, and his ability to draw these two domains together in his creative practice. Any attempt to produce a consistent chronology for Elahi's translations will be confounded by his habit of constantly revising his work. Like his poems, Elahi's translational method causes time to appear out of joint. This chronology is continually disrupted by revisions and retranslations of his past translations and projections for future revisions. As a result, Elahi's poetics is, like his conception of translation, fundamentally procedural in its methodology. It recognizes the intrinsic incompleteness of the translated text, and is perpetually subject to revision. Additionally, the variety of pseudonyms Elahi chose for himself as a translator sustains this perception of a poetics that is subject to constant erasure and revision.

Alongside his translations of Frederico Garcia Lorca, Henri Michaux, and T. S. Eliot, Elahi's three most significant translations are arguably of Friedrich Hölderlin (1973), Mansur Hallaj (1975), and Arthur Rimbaud (1983) (figs 1-3). Each of these are discussed below as contributions to Elahi's ambitious project of transforming Persian poetics through the resources afforded by translations of foreign texts. Elahi also translated Pablo Neruda under the penname of Forud Khosravani. In addition, he produced sporadic translations of a wide range of modernists including Yannis Ritsos, Fernando Pessoa, Osip Mandelstam, and Constantine Cavafy. Elahi himself insisted that his translations "belong to different categories and must not be evaluated according to a single standard."[17] We discuss in what follows each different translational method in terms of its aesthetic vision, its relationship to the original, its concept of creation, and its role in shaping Iranian literary modernity.

Elahi is unique in terms of both the method and the means through which he introduces foreign poetry into Iranian literary modernism. His approach alienates the translation from its target language and foregrounds those aspects that appear to resist translation. While he experiments with different poetic forms, including many that are alien to his own poetic style, Elahi also goes further in his theorization of translation and translatability than any of his contemporaries. His preface to his translation of Rimbaud offers the most developed account of his approach to translation. The range of languages, poets, and styles Elahi translated from reveal the heterogeneity of his approach to translation. Elahi's endogenous modernism suggests the agency of the translator in establishing translation as authorship (a form of creativity he terms *tarjoma ta'lif*).

Elahi's translational involvement with modern European poetry is also significant in terms of the sociohistorical context of his literary production during the 1960s and 1970s, when the Marxist-inspired notion of literary engagement (*taʿahod-e adabi*) dominated literary production. The dominance of ideological discourse in modern Iranian poetry during this period marginalized the aesthetic approaches to poetic creation cultivated by a large number of younger poets. Elahi's work is an outstanding representative of this aesthetic trend, known as New Wave *(mowj-e now*), more specifically Other Poetry *(sheʿr-e digar*), after two poetry collections published by young New Wave poets during the 1960s and 1970s.[18] The purely symbolic language of New Wave poems and the absence of direct links to their immediate socio-political environment was later stigmatized as a sign of their fixation on European and North American cultural trends.

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The concept of weststruckness (*gharbzadagi*) was popularized by the leading fiction writer of the time, Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923-1969).[19] Al-e Ahmad developed the term to describe the alienation that afflicted Iranian culture in the name of modernization and which was closely associated with European influence. Elahi's approach to translation calls into question received understandings of the relation of the original to its translation by adapting premodern hermeneutics to the modern translation methods that he encountered as a reader of European poetry. In his Sufi-inspired reconceptualization of modern translation, Elahi discovers the alien core at the heart of all poetic texts. Elahi's translations reflect the text's intrinsic foreignness through a dual transformation of the original and its translation. Having set forth Elahi's theoretical premises, the next section investigates the relationship between Elahi's hermeneutics and his conception of creation, tracing its trajectory across his many decades of work as a translator.

A Persian *Duende*

Elahi's initial involvement with poetry translation was in an editorial capacity. His lengthy *Selected Poems of Federico Garcia Lorca* (*Gozida-ye ashʿār-e Federiko Garsiyā Lorkā*, 1969) is the product of a collaborative project in which he edited and rewrote translations of Lorca's poems rendered either by himself, under the pseudonym of Farhad Aram, or by several others from a variety of languages. Elahi describes these translations, most of which were done from languages other than Spanish, alternately as *negāresh*, meaning "writing," and as *gozāresh*, (literally, "interpretation"), which in context refers to an interlinear crib, or what was called *podstrochnik* (line-by-line rendering) in Soviet literature.[20] The French and English versions of Lorca's Spanish poems are Elahi's most common sources. Elahi's preface to his Lorca selection describes a complicated interlingual process whereby he compared different translations of the

same poem by Lorca, including in some cases the Italian versions.[21] In the *eshāra* (as Elahi calls his prefaces, using a term that literally translates as "brief note" or "suggestion"), he describes his methodology: "After *gozārish* [interlinear crib], all poems were rewritten [*negāshta*], standardized [*ba-hanjār*] and formed [*motashakkel*] by Bijan Elahi" (7). This translation method entails an involvement with the text on two distinct levels: writing and rewriting.

Elahi implies that a simple *gozāresh* that consists of disassembling the syntax of the original poem ("*bargardān-e khām-e vāja-ba-vāja*" [a raw word-for-word translation]) is insufficient to render a poem in the target language. A crib (*negāresh*) is needed to reconstruct the translated poem in order to standardize the translated poems through reordering the words according to the syntax of the receiving language and to form a poem in Persian. Elahi in his capacity as editor-rewriter of Lorca's poems confirms that the translated poems have been reviewed with reference to the original Spanish with a selective word-for-word attention to "the material form of the words, their rhythms, their sequence, the rhymes and versification" (*Selected Poems,* 8). He admits that occasional barbarisms breaching "definite borders of Persian grammar" have been used so that "the real flesh [*gusht-e vāqeʿi*] of poetry" would not be exposed (*Selected Poems,* 9). Elahi's translator, like Flaubert's concept of the author, is "everywhere present, and visible nowhere."[22] In keeping with Flaubert's ideal, the translator is visible as a *craftsman,* a master technician, rather than as a poetic persona.

Although Elahi does not elaborate on this idea, the preface to his translation of Lorca includes a brief, yet important, allusion to the relation of these two levels of rewriting a poem in translation. "As regards the rewriting of these poems," Elahi writes, "the steps taken beyond the definite

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borders of the Persian syntax have aimed to get closer to the real flesh [*gusht-e vāqeʿi*] of the poem. Where there was the danger of suffocating the poem within a strictly grammatical framework, we preferred to break down the framework instead of suffocating the poem" (Elahi, *Lorca*, 9). Such translational transgressions occur in Elahi's rendering of Lorca's "Romance de la Luna, Luna, Luna" (1928), where the violated grammatical principle is the antecedence of the verb in respect to both subject and object in a declarative Persian sentence.

Relying on the metaphor of a poem's flesh, Elahi implies that rewriting involves piercing through a skin to get to a poetic core lurking behind the skin. No further explanation is given as to the nature of this poetic core and its relation to poetic form. However, in one of the texts Elahi appended to his translation, a translation of Lorca's famous lecture, "Theory and Play of the Duende" (1933), one can find clues to this mysterious constituent of poetry. *Duende* in Spanish denotes the passion that originates within an artist immersed in the act of creation. It is the poetic principle that makes manifest the profound emotional impact of the work of art—song, dance or poem—on the audience.

Lorca develops a definition of *duende* from Goethe's description of Paganini: "A mysterious force which everyone senses and no philosopher explains."[23] "*Duende*," Lorca adds, "is a power, not a work. It is a struggle, not a thought. I have heard an old maestro of the guitar say, 'The *duende* is not in the throat; the *duende* climbs up inside you, from the soles of the feet.' Meaning this: it is not a question of ability, but of true, living style, of blood, of the most ancient culture, of spontaneous creation" (Lorca, "Theory and Play of the Duende," 49). Associating *duende* with the "secret," Lorca goes on to mystify the term further: "There are no maps nor disciplines to

help us find the *duende*. We only know that he burns the blood like a poultice of broken glass, that he exhausts, that he rejects all the sweet geometry we have learned" (*Selected Poems*, 52).

Elahi's Persian term for *duende* reveals new dimensions of the translated text. In his search for an equivalent, Elahi alights on the indeterminate yet resonant Persian Sufi concept *ān*, as used by Iran's most famous poet, Hafez (1315-1390). In Persian, *ān* functions as the demonstrative "that": it points to an object at a distance from the speaker. As a deictic when used alone, *ān* references an unnamed presence. Elahi cites Hafez in this regard: "Beautiful is not the one [*ān*] who has beautiful hair and waist / Desire the meeting of the one [*ān*] who has an *ān*."[24] As pure reference, *ān* is associated with the notion of *ishāra* (implicit reference) in Sufi thought. The tenth-century Sufi mystic Abu Nasr as-Sarraj Tusi in *Book of Light Flashes in Sufism* (*Kitāb al-lumaʿ fi'l-taṣawwuf*) defined *ishāra* as that which "cannot be discovered through articulation [*ʿibāra*], because it is too rarefied in its meaning."[25]

Transfusing *duende* into *ān* through his translation, Elahi reveals how the center of the poetic text resists definition. Assuming a mysterious constituent of poetic meaning puts the translator in a position with respect to the text that goes beyond mere untranslatability. In untranslatable situations, the translator faces a defined meaning that lacks an equivalent in the target language for reasons of cultural difference or the translator's inadequacy. In this situation by contrast, the translator must translate an object that is unnamed and unspecified in the source text. This should be distinguished from the challenges posed by connotations, implicit meanings and polysemy, most of which can be surmounted in the end. While all these categories are characterized by some kind of referentiality, *ān*—the essence of poetry according to Elahi—does not attach itself

to words and does not derive from language. As if anticipating Elahi's discovery of the translational aspect of *duende*, Lorca maintains that the translator's agency restores this aesthetic essence. "Often," he states, "the duende of the composer passes into the duende of the interpreter (*intérprete* in Spanish, translated by Elahi as *tarjomān*), and at other times, when a composer or poet is no such thing, the interpreter's *duende* . . . creates a new marvel that looks like, but is not, primitive form" (*In Search of Duende*, 54).

Allegories of Interpretation

Translating under various names, Elahi allegorizes the act of translation. He uses terminology borrowed from other disciplines such as art, film, and Sufism in conceptualizing translation. An instance of this borrowed terminology is Elahi's notion of *pardākht* and *bāzpardākht* (in his translation of Cavafy, for example). In the context of visual art, these terms mean "retouch" and "making something already complete better," respectively. They differ from Derrida's notion of *parergon* in that they refer to "betterment" as a method of elimination and reduction rather than a form of supplementation.[26] A related allegory of translation is found in Elahi's preface to Rimbaud's *Illuminations* (completed in 1980; published in 1983) which contains his most extended foray into the theory of translation.[27] Here, Elahi distinguishes between two types of translator, the performer (*ʿāmel*) and the reporter or teller (*nāqel*). Elahi argues that these two types of translators conceptualize the translator's freedom in different ways. The source text dictates which type of translation is most appropriate. A performer-translator can be a reporter-translator, but their tasks are distinct. As a reporter (*khabarnegār*), the *nāqel* is concerned with *telling*; as a performer (*mojri*) the *ʿāmel* is concerned with *doing*. Elahi writes that while "a good *nāqel* 'reports' the exact event on its exterior [*zāher*] level, the *ʿāmel* translator must 'perform'

the exact event simultaneously on both the level of surface [*zāher*] and depth [*bāten*]" (*Owrāq-e mosavvar-e ārtur rambow*, 21).

The performer's relation to the text can be compared to that of "a director in relation to a play, a filmmaker in relation to a script, and a singer in relation to a song . . . composed by another in order to be 'voiced' by the singer. Or, as with artists of the old times who worked together on the same canvas, one sketched [*raqam*], the other finished [*ʿamal*]" (21). This distinction between the two types of translators conceptualizes translation as an event, with a performative aspect, which is independent from the merely communicative function that is commonly ascribed to translation. The concept of translation-as-doing assumes agency for the translator, who acts on the text at hand. Elahi ties this concept to the translator's freedom, and to the translator's interventions in the text's two different levels of Sufi hermeneutics, *zāher* and *bāten*. In order to more fully appreciation this dyad, we must examine it in relation to Elahi's translational poetics.

The dichotomy of *zāher* (literally, "outer," "visible") and *bāten* (literally, "inner," "hidden") is essential to Shiʿi (and Ismaʿili) and Sufi ways of interpreting the Qur'an. According to the doctrine of the believers in interpretation (*ahl-e tafsir*), there is, beyond the sensible meaning of Qur'anic words (*alfāz*) a superior meaning that, although contained in the verbal structure of the holy text, cannot be derived from the lexical, semantic, syntactic and rhetorical rules of Arabic language. Unlike the exterior meaning of the Qur'an, which is open to public interpretation, this layer of meaning is accessible only to a chosen elite. The primary source for distinguishing between these levels of meaning is a *hadith* (oral tradition) quoted from the Prophet, which states: "for the Qur'an, there is appearance [*ẓahr*] and depth [*baṭn*]. And for its *baṭn,* there are

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other *baṭns* amounting to seven *baṭn*s."[28] While the Shiʿa believe in exclusive access of God, the Prophet, and the Imams to the inner meaning of the Qur'an, Sufis regard this higher knowledge as open to be acquired by anyone through divine inspiration (*elhām*) and strict self-discipline. In this Sufi sense, while the outer meaning is graspable and communicable, the inner meaning of the Qur'an is only accessible through experience. Although accessing the *zāher* level of meaning is necessary to access the *bāten* of the Quran, its inner meaning has nothing to do with the referential function of the holy text. In Sufi interpretations of the Qur'an, discord between the outer and inner levels of the text is inevitable.

In his treatise *Traveler's Provisions* (*Zād al-musāfir*), the eleventh century Ismaʿili Persian poet Naser Khosrow of Qubadian distinguishes two types of language, *qowl* (speech) and *ketābat* (writing).[29] Naser Khosrow prioritizes the former according to a metaphysics of presence in which speech is posited as the "knowledge of those who are present [*ʿelm-e hāzerān*]" in contrast to writing, which is the "knowledge of those that are absent [*ʿelm-e ghāyebān*]." According to Naser Khosrow, the meaning embedded in speech and writing is not attainable through the outer senses (*havās-e zāher*) alone. These five senses are necessary to perceive the sensible aspects of spoken and written words (*alfāz*), but insufficient for apprehending the meaning (*maʿni*) which is apprehended by the inner senses (*havās-e bāten*) alone (23). The senses entailed in *bāten*, according to him, include imagination (*takhayyol*), illusion (*vahm*), thought (*fekr*), memory (*hefz*) and invocation (*zekr*).

The belief in the two levels of the Qur'anic meaning has generated two interpretive tendencies with respect to the Qur'an: exegesis (*tafsir*) and interpretation (*ta'wil*). On the one hand,

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traditionalists (*ahl al-sunna*) follow a strict orthodox interpretation of the holy text based on the authority of that which is handed over to Muslims through the authorized words of the Prophet and his early companions (*ṣahāba*). For traditionalists, there is no place for personal interpretations of the rationalist Muʿtazila and the irrationalist Sufi. Although traditionalists reject the free interpretation (*ta'wil*) of the Qur'an through a *hadith* quoted in which the Prophet states that "he who interprets the Qur'an according to his own opinion [*ra'y*], has prepared a place for himself in Hell," they reject heterodox readings according to personal opinion (*tafsir ba ra'y*). As noted by the Egyptian thinker Nasr Abu Zayd (d. 2010), traditionalists criticized the *ta'wil* approach to interpretation on the basis that the "Muʿtazila interpreted the Qur'an's words [*alfāẓ*] by attaching them to wrong meanings and signifieds, thus making mistakes in both the meanings and the attachment of wrong meanings to the words of the Qur'an. Sufis attached the Qur'an's words to meanings that were correct in themselves, but those words did not signify those meanings."[30]

Ta'wil was practiced and defended by Shi'i and Sufi exegetes as an authentic return to the origins of the text. Etymologically, the term means "to restore to the origin [*awwal*]." In relation to the doctrine of *zāher/bāten*, it connotes an act of unveiling, as Aziz Esmail points out: "The term *ta'wil*, commonly translated as "interpretation," is associated with the dualism of the outer and the inner . . . The relation between *ta'wil* and the dualism of the apparent and the real is one of mutual implication. The dualism of appearance and reality implies, as its corollary, a process of uncovering or penetration."[31] In Sufism, the discovery of the inner meaning of the Qur'an is accomplished through a subtractive process in which the core is accessed by removing the veils of the surface meaning. In other words, in the Sufi dialectic of *zāher* and *bāten*, the former is

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considered necessary for attaining the latter only because without removing the veils (*hejāb*) of appearance, depth cannot be attained. Interpreting the hidden meaning becomes an act of unveiling itself.

The subtractive process entailed in the path to hidden knowledge is described by the renowned theologian Mohammad Ghazali as the polishing (*taṣqīl*), refining (*taṣfiya*), and purification (*taṭhīr*) of the heart.[32] The eleventh-century Sufi ʿAli Hujwiri explains the title of his treatise, *Revelation of the Veiled* (*Kashf al-maḥjūb*) through an allegory of subtraction and polishing. "I have composed this book," he writes, "to polish the hearts caught by the veil of clouding which contain the substance of the light of the Truth so that the veil may be lifted through the blessing of reading it and they may find the truth of meaning."[33] In a meta-interpretive gesture, the Quranic verse *la yamassuhu ill al-muṭahharūn* ("None touch it [the Quran] except the purified") is interpreted such that *mass* (touch) signifies *ta'wil* while also denoting an actual prohibition on touching the Qur'an by unclean people (56:79).[34]

Two aspects of the Sufi theory of reading for exoteric meaning must be born in mind in order to understand Elahi's hermeneutics. First, it is animated by the concept of the unfinished text. In Sufi thought, the inner level of language (*bāten*) acts as a surplus to the lexical and syntactic layer of language (*zāher*) which lack depth and is only an unfinished fragment. In the domain of hermeneutics, classical Sufism holds that "common people understand *zāher* only, while the knowledge of *bāten* is reserved for Sufis."[35] The assumption of an esoteric meaning exiles the text from itself. *Ta'wil*, as an act of return to radical origins, is supposed to bring the text back home. Second, the esoteric meaning does not name a thing in language. It is defined as a

perpetual uncovering (*kashf al-maḥjūb*), not toward another exoteric meaning but rather as the very exigency of interpretation itself. Exegesis is possible only when the text is treated as if it were different from itself. Esoteric interpretation targets the interpretability of the text. "In *ta'wil*," Esmail argues, "what is really important is to interpret the drive to interpret; to note the spirit of the very idea of seeking the spirit beneath the letter. By doing this, we keep the metaphorical domain alive; whereas when the symbol is definitively translated into a concept, the metaphor dies" (53).

At this point, the notion of interpretation as the uncovering of the alienated text becomes tied to a different conception of the relation between the interpreter and textual meaning. The esoteric interpretation involves an inner experience on the part of the interpreter. In order to attain to the true meaning of a text, the interpreter must suppress any desire to attach the text to any apparent meaning that refers to anything other than the intrinsic foreignness of the text. Whatever meaning is produced by the interpreter's subjective preferences must be eliminated. This is a truly ecstatic experience in the literal sense of "ecstasy": standing beside oneself and perceiving oneself as other. The subtractive process of *ta'wil* accords with the basic principle of the disinterestedness of *bāten*. In order to reveal the esoteric meaning, the interpreter must question her assumptions and referential framework and submit to an incessant de-subjectification.

Having established the foundations of Sufi hermeneutics in the terms Elahi encountered them, the remainder of this article demonstrates how Elahi contributes to the modern theory and practice of translation by drawing on Sufi hermeneutic notions of *zāher* and *bāten*. We will consider how this contribution reframes the idea of the modern in its relation to the concept of

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translation as a confrontation with the foreign. As noted above, Elahi distinguished two types of translators: the reporter (*nāqel*) and the performer (*ʿāmel*). Elahi maintained that "a good *naqel* 'reports' the exact event on its exterior [*zāher*] level" while "the *ʿamel* translator must 'perform' the exact event simultaneously on both the level of surface [*zāher*] and depth [*bāten*]" (*Owrāq-e musavvar-i ārtur rambow*, 21). The ability to balance the inner and outer levels of meaning while remaining faithful to both characterizes the type of translator Elahi denominates as *ʿāmel* ("doer"), a role he regards as superior to the translator as *nāqel*. When the translator-as-doer cannot balance the two levels, Elahi decides in favor of the translator who gives "presence" (*hozur*) to the text in its new life, that is, in the target language.

Typically of Elahi, the contextual meanings of the key terms in his lexicon—*hozur*, *zāher* and *bāten*—remain mysterious and unaccounted for. Elahi's translation theory develops through axiomatic and aphoristic reasoning, as when he suggests that "if poetry has no 'presence [*hozur*],' it will be undoubtedly devoid of 'meaning,' for meaning is but one of the requirements of presence" (21). "Presence" in the context of Elahi's translation theory signifies integration into or appropriation (*taʿalloq*) by Persian poetic culture, and hence the capacity to exist autonomously, as a Persian poem. By 'presence,' Elahi also means poetic essence (*sheʿriyāt*) (19). Literary translation inevitably gives rise to junctures when, although the meaning of words is precisely transmitted, the final product fails to resemble "poetry" in the target language. The problem originates in the dichotomy of *zāher* and *bāten* underlying poetic discourse, an originally alienated language in which every word carries a surplus value. Thus, for Elahi, poetry translation is unique: this activity creates a self-differential effect, an original alterity, in the target language. As poetic discourse is not evaluated in terms of communicability, the essence of

poetic translation is independent from the faithful transmission of information that Walter Benjamin regards as "inessential."[36] The fidelity of a poetry translation, then, is defined with respect to the surplus value added to the words (*alfāz*) and its meanings (*maʿāni*).

When applied to the poetic text, the dichotomy of *zāher* and *bāten* implies that, in theoretical terms, a poem is considered a poem so long as it is alienated from its origin. Thus, the translator's task consists in enacting this tension within the translated text. This insight echoes Blanchot's reading of Benjamin, where he remarks with regard to literary works that "in the original language itself they are always as if retranslated and redirected toward what is most specific to them: toward their foreignness of origin."[37] According to Blanchot, the task of the translator consists in using this differential origin "to awaken in his own language, through the violent or subtle changes he brings to it, a presence of what is different, originally, in the original" (60) and in "making visible, in their foreignness, what makes this work such that it will always be *other*" (60; emphasis in original).

As noted above, Elahi's poetry is associated with the Other Poetry movement in modern Iranian literature. However, as we have shown, Elahi's inclination toward an alien other also has origins in Persian mysticism. Elahi's translational aesthetic evokes a poetics of continuity with the Persian tradition, while also disrupting this tradition from within. His poetics of estrangement speaks to and aims at the intrinsic foreignness of the source poem as well as its transformation through translation into its new language, which becomes estranged through this process. The intrinsic incompleteness of translation, a process whereby elements can be subtracted or added at

any given moment, mirrors the intermediary nature of poetic creation and therefore of re-creation (*bāzāfarini*) through translation in Elahi's view.

Translation as Creation (*khalq*)

Elahi's translation of Pablo Neruda's *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* (*Bist sheʿr-e ʿāsheqāna va yek sorud-e nowmidi*) was published in 1974 under the pseudonym Forud Khosravani. In the same year, Elahi's translation of Gustave Flaubert's *La légende de Saint-Julien l'hospitalier* was published under his own name. Elahi's translations of James Joyce's love poem *Giacomo Joyce* and the first paragraphs of Marcel Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann*, published the following year, signal his brief turn to literary prose.[38] As with many of Elahi's translations, these works underwent revisions (*bāz-negari*) and retranslations (*dobāra-kāri*). "Re-creative translation" (*tarjoma-ye khallāqa*) is the name Elahi gave to his rendering of Proust (136). As a result of his tendency to revise his own work, Elahi developed a distinctive concept of translation as creation, discussed in this section.

Given Elahi's conception of translation as a transformative act, with respect to both the original text and the target language, it is unsurprising that he defines different modes of translation by specifying different degrees of the translator's freedom to (re)create a poem in the target language. In another translational typology, Elahi distinguishes two types of translation—bound (*moqayyad*) and free (*mokhtār*)—and introduces the latter as "rewriter." While bound translation is done "according to imposed rules [*qavāʿed-e eʿmāli*]," free translation operates "according to chosen rules [*qavāʿed-e ekhtiyāri*]."[39] When done appropriately, "both types of translation are faithful, except that the former is faithful to the rules the writer imposes, the latter

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to the rules the rewriter chooses to the extent that the rewriter's chosen rules entirely or partly correspond to the writer's imposed rules in one way or another" (49). Further, Elahi divides so-called free translation into *khalq* (creation) and *dakhl* (alteration and appropriation). While he describes the latter as "aimless wandering [*āzād-ravi*]," he defines the former with reference to Sufi notions of "secret [*serr*]" along with the already mentioned notions of *zāher* and *bāten*: "One, as we call it, is a confidant [*ham-rāzi*] translation that goes beyond intimacy [*damsāzi*] and may suggest a shared secret [*ser*], form [*lawn*, originally meaning color] and structure [*sākht*], corresponding to depth [*bāten*], surface [*zāher*], and what links them. The purpose of this type of translation is creation [*khalq*] on different levels and for different purposes" (49).

The idea of language as creation (*khalq*) itself has a Qur'anic origin. As the Qur'an states, When God intends something, he creates it simply by uttering the command *kun* (be!): "He only says to it 'be' and it 'becomes' [*kun fayakūn*]" (Q. 19:35; also, Q. 2:117, 3:47, 3:59, 6:73, 16:40, 36:82 and 40:68). This formula, *kun fayakūn*, has entered vernacular Persian, in which context it refers to the work of miracles, and signifies a unique model of divine creation in which the declarative and performative aspects of language converge. In his *Seals of Wisdom* (*Fuṣuṣ al-ḥikam*), translated by Elahi in the 1980s, the thirteen-century mystic Ibn ʿArabi compares divine creation to Jesus's power to raise the dead according to Qur'anic tradition. Ibn ʿArabi introduces Jesus, who is called the "Word of Allah" (*kalimatullāh*) in the Islamic tradition, as being transmitted by the angel Gabriel to Mary "just as the prophet transmitted "the discourse of Allah [*kalāmullāh*]" to his people."[40] Ibn ʿArabi then applies the *zāher/bāten* duality to Jesus's body as the Word of God "created out of an actual liquid [*āb-e tahaqoqi*] and an illusory liquid [*āb-e tavahhomi*]" ("Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi," 35).

In the preface to his translations of Hölderlin (posthumously published as *Good Faith* [*Niyyat-e khayr*]), Elahi maintains that "a translation [*tarjomān*] of Hölderlin has to perceive language in its divinity."[41] For Elahi, divine language is expressed in "the infinite possibilities for conjoining and disjoining words in a German which, like Persian, is estranged by what it receives through the poet (Hölderlin) from ancient Greek, thus creating a sacred space as immense and appalling as the untouchable, the impenetrable" (*Niyyat-e khayr*, 13). Elahi's linguistic alienation is manifested in his linguistic purisms and word-for-word renderings of Hölderlin's poems. For example, he uses the Avestan word, *yasht-hā*, to denominate Hölderlin's "hymn-fragments" (*Hymnische Bruchstücke*), thus again bringing Persian to a new horizon of estrangement.

In a note (*eshāra*) later added to his Hölderlin translations, Elahi contrasts them to his translations of the poems of the Sufi mystic Abu Mansur Hallaj (858-922), published that same year (1975). While Elahi describes the Hölderlin translations to his readers as scholarly (*daneshgāhi*), he presented the Hallaj translations as "non-academic and even anti-academic" and "not usable for scholarly purposes" (*Hallāj al-asrār*, 11). In the preface to his bilingual translation of Hallaj's poems from Arabic, Elahi describes his translations as personal (*shakhsi*) and prefers the term *taʿbir* (literally "interpretation") to translation (*tarjoma*).[42] By labelling his renderings of Hallaj personal and anti-academic, and thereby freeing them from the constraints of literal fidelity, the translator evades the accusation of distortion and alteration of meaning (*qalb-e maʿnā*). Elahi's inclusion of the original Arabic in his renderings of Hallaj—something he did not do for his translations from European languages—also functions as a kind of commentary on the accusation of infidelity.

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Elahi insists that even the most scholarly versions of Hallaj rely on the methodology appropriate to *taʿbir* (interpretation). Here again, we see Elahi voicing an insight elsewhere explored by Benjamin, in this instance a fragment from 1935, in which he developed his concept of translation as a type of commentary.[43] In a later edition of his Hallaj translations, *Hallāj al-asrār* ("Hallaj of secrets"), Elahi distinguishes another type of translation, namely adaptation (*taʿbiya*). Elahi regards this type of translation as based on constructive misreading (*kazh-khāni-hā-ye sāzanda*) (9). In contrast to his renderings of Hallaj, Elahi's translations of Hölderlin have a literalist orientation to the original. They reflect the syntactic sequence of words (*namā-bandi*) in the original German. Unlike his interpretive rendering of Hallaj, Elahi pursues a literalist concept of fidelity in relationship to Hölderlin. This fidelity is especially manifest in the abundant word-for-word correspondences between the source and target texts.

In adopting a literalist strategy for reproducing what he calls "language in its divinity," Elahi echoes the approach to translating the holy scripture influentially advocated by Saint Jerome, for whom "even the syntax contains a mystery" that the translator should seek to capture.[44] Interestingly, Jerome proposed a different methodology for the translation of non-scriptural texts, which were to be translated "not word-for-word but sense-for-sense." Jerome's strategy for secular translation more closely approximates the method adopted by Elahi for rendering Hallaj: word order is inverted, even when it requires assigning different priority to the ideas and images of the original, by rendering them according to a different order of exposition. The contrast between Elahi's "personal" Hallaj and his "scholarly" Hölderlin translations emerges from a dynamic aesthetics of translation, or, more precisely, a unique understanding of the role of

fidelity in the process of translation. Elahi's dynamic aesthetics of translation rejects the long-established dichotomy between accurate versus beautiful in favor of a formulation that regards the most literal translations as the most beautiful. Elahi agrees with "those who consider translation as a re-creation [*bāz-āfarinesh*] even more difficult than the original" (*Niyyat-e khayr*, 196). In a striking metaphor, Elahi writes that if "creation [*āfarinesh*] is viewed as a dance, translation is a dance in chains" (196).

With respect to his ordering of translation in relation to original creation, and his understanding of the relation between fidelity and literary felicity, and of the role of untranslatability, Elahi's translational aesthetics resonates with Benjamin's understanding of the task of the translator.[45] The distinction that he absorbed between surface and depth (*zāher/bāten*) refers not simply to "a hermeneutic mode but [to] a total *mentalité*, a way of observing the world and of constructing it" that characterized the Sufi approach to aesthetics and ethics.[46] Analogously to Benjamin's affinity for Jewish mysticism, Elahi incorporated Sufi metaphysics into his translational method and adapted it for his aesthetic purposes.[47] The affinities to Benjamin's remarks on translation are striking, especially with regard to Benjamin's characterization of a bad translation according to its communicative function. Like Elahi, Benjamin perceives in literary texts an "unfathomable mysterious, poetic" substance which is incommunicable. Benjamin's ideal translation, which does not serve the reader, is exemplified by Elahi's translations that are difficult to read and marked by artifice. Elahi's concern with formalist interventions in his translation echo the translator's concern, according to Benjamin, not with what the words mean but with *how* they are meant. Both thinkers also reject the traditional conception of fidelity in translation and favor

the translator whose language is, in Benjamin's words, "powerfully affected by the foreign tongue" ("Task of the Translator," 262).

Elahi's Work of Alienation

For Elahi, the translator's strategy involves a simultaneous domestication *and* alienation, confounding the polarity between domestication and foreignization famously—and polemically—proposed by Lawrence Venuti.[48] Through word-for-word renderings, Elahi's translation turns to foreign syntax while selecting rare and unfamiliar Persian words and phrases to instigate an exigency of explication. Unconventional spelling is another aspect of Elahi's translational technique that endeavors to alienate the Persian script from itself. Further, Elahi incorporates the Persian vernacular into his formal written Persian in strange and unexpected ways. One example is Elahi's rendering of a phrase by Cavafy as *agarash rā de nagofti* ("you might add *if* they talk about things like that down there").[49] The particle *de*, which is transcribed in the Persian text, commonly features in spoken Farsi, but never appears in writing. As a colloquialism, *de* is commonly understood and everywhere used, but rarely transcribed. Elahi's inclusion of this word in a written text confounds the distinction between spoken and written, and can be considered an act of modernization, given the tendency within Iranian modernism to make the literary language approximate the vernacular.

The same concern with recreating poetry out of translation is evident in Elahi's addenda to his translation of Michaux's *L'espace du dedans* (*Sāhat-e javvāni*, 1974).[50] Elahi characterizes these translations as "Persian poems," meaning that he considers them new creations in Persian. Rejecting the notion that their purpose is to "introduce a poet who has composed originally in

French" (151), Elahi writes of how the reader of his translations "faces a new language experiment–how to compose *comédie* in Persian poetry, in its serious critical sense, not of libels or satires" (151). Elahi's renderings are notable for mixing formal and informal linguistic registers and for the comedic effects that such mixing produces in the Persian language. The alienation occurs within Persian, independently of the French original.

Elahi's translational modernism enables him to estrange Persian through the use of rare words and rare syntactic structures. As poet-translator, Elahi gives written form to discursive registers that resist transcription because they reveal the most intimate aspects of speech. Through a method that might seem elitist, or at least esoteric, at first glance, Elahi develops the modernist mandate to engage with the vernacular. Modernism's relationship to vernacularity has long been interrogated by scholars while critically examining modernism's political agendas.[51] In Elahi's translations, the rhetorical duality between the formal register of written Persian and the vernacular register of spoken Farsi recapitulates the critical tension at the heart of the modernist project. While the Poundian mandate to "make it new" is affirmed throughout Elahi's work, it is given structure and substance in his translations. As the testing ground for his modernist poetics, translation for Elahi goes beyond the word-for-word reproduction of a poem's manifest content. Instead, Elahi activates the target language's latent potential to say new things in new ways through radical acts of estrangement. Only a confrontation in, of, and through translation could activate this distinctively heteroglossic dimension of Persian poetics.

In his translation of Eliot's *Ash Wednesday* (*Chārshanba khākestar*, 1970), first published under the pseudonym Farhad Saman in the avant-garde magazine *Andisha va honar* (Thought and Art)

and in book form three years later in his own name, Elahi claims to present "the Persian reader with the first . . . tolerable translation of an Eliot's poem" (5). Elahi describes his translation as a *gozāresh*, a term he glosses as "an imperfect pseudo-guideline for rereading the original text" (5). In this rendering, Elahi introduces rare Persian words and in unconventional spellings. Detailed endnotes explicate the biblical and classical allusions of Eliot's poem. Elahi's translation of Eliot presents a greater challenge to the Iranian reader than the original poem does for the English reader. The complicated Persian register that Elahi develops in these translations derives from the same double alienation evident in his translation of Lorca. Elahi's double estrangement leads him to reproduce in full the English text of Eliot's verse in his translation: "No place of grace for those who avoid the face / No time to rejoice for those who walk among noise and deny the voice." Elahi's Persian rendering is given in an endnote that notes the impossibility of reproducing the echoing effect in the original.

Both in his poems and translations, Elahi blurs distinctions between formal and informal registers. Such blurring is constitutive of his literary modernism. The estrangement he generates for the Iranian reader originates in this translational strategy. Beyond a simple combination of high and low registers, *lafz-e qalam* ("written language") and *shekasta* ("broken speech"), Elahi formalizes linguistic registers that hitherto were regarded as informal. His translations de-familiarize, or deconstruct, written Persian by giving written form to a register that was at the time of his writing considered inappropriate for written texts. This vernacularizing agenda is reflected in Elahi's translations of Cavafy. In a prefatory note to the translation composed in 1974, Elahi places his translations of Cavafy and Michaux in the same category (*Sāhat-e javvāni*, 141). Completed over a span of 12 years (1974-1986), Elahi's translations of Cavafy also reflect

the original poet's interest in mixing different registers of Greek, namely *katharevousa* (refined) and demotic (spoken) Greek.[52] Elahi's modernist aesthetic formalizes the spoken language and records the most minute details of modern Farsi, to a degree never seen before in Persian. Both in his poems and translations, Elahi blurs distinctions between formal and informal language in ways that are constitutive of his literary modernism. The estrangement his poetry produces for the Iranian reader originates in this translational method.

By using multiple pseudonyms and leaving his prefaces unsigned, Elahi absents his authorial persona from his translations. While living in London between 1970 and 1972, Elahi curated the world poetry section of *Tamasha* magazine. He translated poems under three pseudonyms: Forud Khosravani, Tahir Alafi, and Tina Shahristani. Most of these translations were collected in a posthumously published volume, *Valley of the Many-Colored Grass* (*Darra-ye ʿalaf-e hezār-rang*, 2016). Elahi's translations range widely across European poetry, including Swedish poet Gunnar Ekelöf, Italian poets Cesare Pavese, Giuseppe Ungaretti, and Salvatore Quasimodo, Spanish poet Rafael Alberti, German poets Johannes Bobrowski and Christoph Meckel, and Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert. Most of these translations are rendered from an intermediate English translation.

Giorgio Agamben's comments on the nexus of poetry and the authorial subject clarify the function of Elahi's pseudonyms. In European poetics, Agamben argues, "the act of poetic creation and, indeed, perhaps every act of speech implies something like de-subjectification."[53] Agamben's examples of de-subjectification through poetic language include Fernando Pessoa's abundant use of heteronyms, wherein the poet is transformed into a pure "experimentation

ground" (117). Alongside several of Elahi's poems (for instance "Dove," composed in 1972) that present poetic creation as a form of glossolalia, the hybrid Persian that Elahi creates in his translations, suspended between the archaic and the modern, and the domestic and foreign, appears alien, like a way of speaking in tongues.[54] Elahi's estranged, alienated Persian is a direct result of the heteronyms that he cultivated in his translations. By estranging his poetic self from his translated text, Elahi the translator generates an alienated poetics for and from Iranian literary modernism. He thereby reframes the relation between poetry and translation, and shows how the act of translation can also become a mode of original poetic creation.

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[1] Shafiʿi-Kadkani, *Bā cherāq va āyena* [With the Lamp and the Mirror] (Tehran: Sokhan Publishers, 2011), 139; all translations by authors unless otherwise noted.

[2] Morad Farhadpour, *Parahā-ye fekr: falsafa va siyāsat* [Fragments of Thought: Philosophy and Politics] (Tehran: Tarh-e Now, 2009), 239. For an English translation, see Kayvan Tahmasebian and Rebecca Ruth Gould, "Farhadpour, Prismatically Translated: Philosophical Prose and the Activist Agenda" in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*, eds. Kayvan Tahmasebian and Rebecca Ruth Gould (London: Routledge, 2020).

[3] Nima Yushij, *Arzesh-e ehsāsāt va panj maqāla dar sheʿr va namāyesh* [The Value of Emotions and Five Essays in Poetry and Drama] (Tehran: Gutenberg Publishers, 1976), 81. The work was first published in book form in 1956, and in serial form in 1940 in *Musiqi* magazine.

[4] Mohammad Qazi, "Tarjoma be sheʿr-e Fārsi latma zada ast" [Translation has Damaged Persian Poetry], *Payam-e ketabkhaneh* 1, no. 1 (1370; 1991): 70–75.

[5] Mohammad Ali Eslami Nodushan, "Ta'sir-e orupā dar tajaddod-e adabi-ye Irān" [European Influence on Iranian Literary Modernism], in *Jam-e jahān-bin* (Tehran: Ketabkhaneh iranmehr, 1967), 210-222, 218.

[6] Histories of modernism in Iranian poetry abound, including Shams Langrudi, *Tārikh-e tahlili-ye sheʿr-e now* [An Analytic History of Modern Persian Poetry] 4 vols. (Tehran: Markaz Publishing House, 1998), 1:29–31; Mohammad Reza Shafiʿi Kadkani, *Bā cherāq va āyena*, 139–319; Reza Baraheni, *Kimiyā va khāk* [Elixir and Dust] (Tehran: Morq-e Amin Publishing House,

1985), 85–109; 156–67; Yahya Arianpour, *Az Sabā ta Nimā* [From Saba to Nima] (Tehran: Zavvar Publishers, 1985).
[7] Suna Ertugrul, "Belated Modernity and Modernity as Belatedness in *Tutunamayanlar*," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2/3 (2003): 629–45; 630.
[8] Bijan Elahi, *Hallāj al-asrār (akhbar va ashʿar)* [Hallaj of secrets] (Tehran: Bidgol, 2014), 19.
[9] Edwige Tamalet Talbayev, "Berber Poetry and the Issue of Derivation: Alternate Symbolist Trajectories," *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 81–108, 82.
[10] See Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Antonio Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James E. Maraniss (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989).
[11] See Susan Bassnett, "From Cultural Turn to Translational Turn: A Transnational Journey," in *Literature, Geography, Translation: Studies in World Writing*, ed. Cecilia Alvstad, Stefan Helgesson, and David Watson (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 67–80.
[12] See Esmaeil Haddian-Moghaddam, *Literary Translation in Modern Iran: A Sociological Study* (Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014).
[13] See Omid Azadibougar, "Translation historiography in the modern world: Modernization and translation into Persian," *Target* 22, no. 2 (2010): 298–329.
[14] Kamran Rastegar, *Literary Modernity between the Middle East and Europe: Textual Transactions in Nineteenth-Century Arabic, English and Persian Literature* (London: Routledge, 2007), 6.
[15] See Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), 11.
[16] See Christophe Balaÿ, *Peydāyesh-e romān-e fārsi* [*La genèse du roman persan modern*], translated into Persian by Mahvash Ghavimi and Nasrin Khattat (Tehran: Institut Francais de Recherche en Iran and Editions Moʿin, 2006), 16–19.
[17] *Bahāna-hā-ye maʾnus (Flaubert, Proust, Joyce, Nabokov)* [Familiar Excuses (Flaubert, Proust, Joyce, Nabokov)], ed. Bijan Elahi, (Tehran: Bidgol, 2014), 145.
[18] See *Sheʿr-e digar* [Other Poetry], vol. 1 (Tehran: Ashrafi Publishing House, 1968), vol. 2 (Tehran: Publisher unidentified, 1970).
[19] For a recent discussion of this concept, see Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, "Gharbzadegi, Colonial Capitalism and the Racial State in Iran," *Postcolonial Studies* (forthcoming).
[20] The translator's reliance on the interlinear crib is discussed in detail in Susanna Witt, "Between the lines: Totalitarianism and translation in the USSR," *Contexts, Subtexts and Pretexts*, ed. Brian James Baer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011), 149–70; Susanna Witt, "The Shorthand of Empire: *Podstrochnik* Practices and the Making of Soviet Literature," in *Ab Imperio: Studies of New Imperial History and Nationalism in the Post-Soviet Space* 3 (2013): 155–90; and in Maurice Friedberg, *Literary Translation in Russia: A Cultural History* (College Park: Penn State University Press, 2010), 173.
[21] See *Gozida-ye ashʿār-e Federiko Garsiyā Lorkā* [Selected Poems of Federico Garcia Lorca], ed. Bijan Elahi, (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1969).
[22] Gustave Flaubert to Louise Colet, December 9, 1852, in *Correspondance*, ed. Jean Bruneau (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), 2:204. Elahi's abundant use of explicatory footnotes and endnotes in his translations also suggests a kind of visibility, but it is the visibility of a scholarly technician rather than an authorial persona.

[23] Federico Garcia Lorca, "Play and Theory of the Duende," in *In Search of Duende*, ed. Christopher Maurer and Norman Thomas Di Giovanni, trans. Christopher Maurer, (New York: New Directions, 1998), 48–62, 49.
[24] شاهد آن نیست که مویی و میانی دارد/ بنده طلعت آن باش که آنی دارد
"Ghazal 121" in *Divān-e Hāfez*, ed. Parviz Natel Khanlari (Tehran: Kharazmi, 1983), 1:258.
[25] Abu Nasr al-Sarrāj Tusi, *Kitāb al-lumaʿ fi'l-taṣawwuf*, ed. R. A. Nicholson (Leiden: Brill, 1914), 337.
[26] See Jacques Derrida, "The Parergon," trans. Craig Owens, *October* 9 (1979): 3–41.
[27] Bijan Elahi, *Owrāq-e mosavvar-e ārtur rambow* [Lightened Pages from Arthur Rimbaud] (Tehran: Fariab, 1983).
[28] ʿAllameh Tabataba'i, *Al-mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Mu'assisat al-aʿlami li'l-matbuʿat, 1973), vol. 3: 72.
[29] Nāṣer-e Khusraw, *Zād al-musafir*, ed. Sayyid Muhammad Emadi Haeri (Tehran: Miras-e Maktub, 2005).
[30] See Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Mafhūm al-naṣṣ: Dirāsah fī ʿulūm al-Qur'ān* [The Concept of the Text: A Study of the Qur'anic Sciences], (Beirut: Al-markaz ath-thaqāfī, 1990), 220.
[31] Aziz Esmail, *The Poetics of Religious Experience: The Islamic Context* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co, 1998), 51.
[32] Muhammad b. Muhammad Ghazali, *Iḥya'i ʿulūm al-dīn* [The Revival of the Theological Sciences] (Beirut: Dar al-maʿrifa, n.d.), 20.
[33] ʿAli b. Usman Hujwiri, *Kitab kashf al-maḥjūb*, ed. Valentine Zhukovskii (Leningrad: Matbaʿa-ye dar al-ʿulum-i ettehad-i jamahir-i showravi, 1926), 5.
[34] See, for instance, Ahmad b. Ali Tabarsi, *Al-iḥtijāj*, ed. Muhammad Baqer Musavi (Mashad: Nashr al-murtaza, 1983).
[35] Ali Suleiman Ali, "*Al-tafsīr bi al-maʾthūr*: the Qurʾānic exegeses of the prophet Muḥammad, his companions, and successors" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1996), 24.
[36] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Selected Writings, Vol.1, 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 253–63, 253.
[37] Maurice Blanchot, "*Translating*," in *Friendship*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 57–61, 59.
[38] These translations are posthumously collected and published in *Bahāna-hā-ye ma'nus (Flaubert, Proust, Joyce, Nabokov)* [Familiar Excuses (Flaubert, Proust, Joyce, Nabokov)].
[39] Bijan Elahi, "On Translation (*Dar bab-i tarjumeh*)," in *In Shomāra bā ta'khir*, ed. M. Taher Nokandeh (Tehran: Avanevesht, 2011), 46–57, translated into English by Rebecca Ruth Gould and Kayvan Tahmasebian in "Dancing in Chains: Bijan Elahi on the Art of Translation," *Wasafiri Magazine* 34, no. 3 (2019): 64–68.
[40] Bijan Elahi, "Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi" in *In Shomara bā ta'khir*, ed. M. Taher Nokandeh (Tehran: Avanevesht, 2011), 34–40, 35.
[41] Friedrich Hölderlin, *Niyyat-e khayr* [Good Faith] (Tehran: Bidgol, 2015), 13.
[42] Bijan Elahi, *Ashʾār-e Hallāj* [The Poetry of Hallaj] (Tehran: Entesharat-e anjoman-e shahanshahi-ye iran, 1975), 4.
[43] Walter Benjamin, "La Traduction—Le Pour et le Contre," *Gesammelte Schriften*, bd. VI, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991): 157–60, 159.

[44] Saint Jerome, *Epistulae*, Letter to Pammachius, #57, trans. Paul Carroll, in *Western Translation Theory from Herodotus to Nietzsche*, ed. Douglas Robinson, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 23–30, 25.
[45] Walter Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," *Gesammelte Schriften*, bd. IV-1, ed. Tillman Rexroth (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972), 9–21. This essay is linked to Persian translation theory and practice in Rebecca Ruth Gould's "Form Without a Home: On Translating the Indo-Persian Radīf," *Translation Review* 90 (2015): 15–28 and "Inimitability versus Translatability: The Structure of Literary Meaning in Arabo-Persian Poetics," *The Translator* 19, no. 1 (2014): 81–104, as well as "Hard Translation: Persian Poetry and Post-National Literary Form," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 54, no. 2 (2018): 191–206.
[46] Joel L. Kraemer, *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 375.
[47] For Benjamin's engagement with Jewish mysticism, see in particular in Eric Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane: The Political Theology of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 106–108; Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 31–47; and Winfried Menninghaus, *Walter Benjamins Theorie der Sprachmagie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995).
[48] Other translation theorists have challenged Venuti's polarity, most notably, Anthony Pym in "Venuti's Visibility," *Target* 8 (1996): 165–77. The limitations of Venuti's paradigm from the point of view of Persian literature are discussed in Laetitia Nanquette, "Translations of Modern Persian Literature in the United States: 1979–2011," *The Translator* 23, no. 1 (2017): 49–66, 57.
[49] Bijan Elahi, *Sobh-e ravān* (Tehran: Bidgol, 2017), 9; C. P. Cavafy, "The Rest I Will Tell to Those Down in Hades," trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, in *C. P. Cavafy: Collected Poems*, ed. George Savidis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 197; emphasis in original.
[50] In the preface, Elahi explains that the word *javvāni*, literally meaning "interiority" has been borrowed from a *hadith* by Salman Farsi, "for everything has an interiority [*jawwāniyan*] and an exteriority [*barrāniyan*]" (*Sāhat-e javvāni* [Tehran: 59, 1974], 149).
[51] See Chika Okeke-Agulu, *Postcolonial Modernism: Art and Decolonization in Twentieth-Century Nigeria* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), and Matthew Hart, *Nations of Nothing but Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[52] C. P. Cavafy, *Collected Poems*, trans. Daniel Mendelsohn (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), xlii.
[53] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 113.
[54] Elahi, *Didan* (Tehran: Bidgol, 2013), 147. Two examples of Elahi's style in Persian will clarify its distance from all prior Persian registers. First, his spelling of the word "sister" (خاهر ; standard spelling: خواهر), which removes the unpronounced v [و] sound that inflects all written forms of this word, even though it is not pronounced in modern Farsi. A second example is his spelling of "dream" (خاب ; standard spelling: خواب), which similarly removes the unpronounced و from the middle of the word, generating a form that has no written existence, although it closely reflects contemporary pronunciation.