

**The Formation of Modern Persian Literature: A Comparative Investigation into the
Writings of Taqī Raf‘at**

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“The Human History Is Terrible.” José Aramburu¹

¹ During writing this dissertation, I always had in my mind that I would choose the famous verse “از قیل و قال “مدرسه حالی دلم گرفت” by Hafiz as the epigraph. Why did I change my mind? Miraculously, I ended up for a couple of days in Donostia by the Kantauri Itsasoa in Euskadi meeting my friend Natalya Okuneva (Наталья Окунева) and her partner Erik Dominguez Jimenez. They used to spend their weekends with their +50 gang in a bar that had two names. It was called *La Consentida* and *Bergarakua*. The bar was named so because the bar owner was from Bergara in Euskadi. There, I had the chance to meet Ion Alberdi, the owner of the bar, and José Aramburu, his assistant. Fortunately for them, they knew little English, and shamefully for me, I knew no Euskara or Spanish. As a result, we usually communicated with the help of our friends Natalya and Erik(son). However, there were moments when we communicated without any translation involved. In some cases, we had our very petite pidgin, which we had developed and contained a dozen vocabulary and no complete sentences. More importantly, there were moments when we communicated even without the need for that language. Those moments were the time that the eyes and the hearts talk. It is the spirit of a self, talking and presenting itself as a whole before the other self. That is the most profound human relationship since one can get deeper only by being a spirit before God. Those people were precious because of their own merits and virtues and indeed because they belonged to the previous generation whose values and virtues had melted into air less than in our time. In those moments, I felt the insignificance of our selfish and soulless life where we seek personal benefit and turn our back on anything revered, precious, transcendental, spiritual, and pertaining to the faith. Those people seemed to have faith or at least have an idea of faith, unlike our generation. The last night, José, who is more emotional than me, finally came to utter a complete English sentence while dropping some tears from his eyes, and shockingly that sentence was: “the human history is terrible.” I was stunned by his utterance. I knew that those people did not appreciate the situation in which they were caught. And I knew they had an idea of faith and dedicating yourself to something you find as a virtue. I also knew that there is always something sinful in human beings rendering its history as a fall. And pretentiously enough, I knew many other insignificant ideas around this which I had read in books. But I was miraculously delighted and simultaneously stunned when José made his utterance in English (the language we have to tolerate for economic reasons). His sentence was an indication of the disastrous time we are caught in and the essential fall in the history of human beings. Right at that moment, I made up my mind about the epigraph. No other sentence or story could better depict my feelings and thoughts toward the condition I am in. José made it possible. Coming back from that trip, other than the great souls we had the chance to meet and keep in our hearts forever, we took José’s sentence and Ion’s precious memorable artua with us. When history is left without faith, it is not before God; what it can be is only terrible. It can be the pile of dead in front of Angelus Novus.

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Introduction

I have a long history with Taqi Raf'at and studying his oeuvre. I began to study Raf'at when I was a bachelor's student. Since then, I have done an extensive textual, historical, and philological study on Raf'at's oeuvre, which has resulted in a comprehensive volume of his writings, unique in scientific exactitude and inclusiveness, which I hope I will be able to publish in the near future. This study includes a reproduction of Raf'at's oeuvre alongside a detailed historical and philological study of its reference points. Moreover, that study is completed with a reading of his oeuvre. This is an attempt to take the mere philological and historiographical study to a point where one can render it meaningful once again and shed light on some parts of history, including our time and Raf'at's time, namely modern Iran in general.

The historical philological study is excluded in this dissertation for the sake of form and volume. As a result, one can find a reading of some parts of Raf'at's oeuvre in this writing, yet using the philological tool when needed. A reading of Raf'at's oeuvre, any literary modernism in Iran, and even traditional literature produced in modern Iran are entangled with the question of the West. Every instance and moment in modern Iran is an encounter with the West since the modern economy is the expansion of capitalism, smashing various geographies, economies, and cultures into each other within the vortex of capitalization. Therefore, it is no surprise that a reading of Raf'at's oeuvre turns out to be a comparative study since the encounter between the superstructure and the substructure of different lands is inevitable within the capitalist economy. It is valid to turn our attention toward other cultures and compare the emergence of this vortex in each of them. Furthermore, the forms and internal logic of Raf'at's oeuvre itself boldly suggest a turn of attention toward the West, legitimizing a comparative study of his oeuvre.

1. What does it mean to compare? Why to compare? What to compare?

Rudolf Hilferding provided an account of the dynamics of the emergence of capitalism in the so-called backward countries. What is significant is that being "swept into the capitalist maelstrom" brings about tensions and clashes, which could be traced even in the forms of the superstructure in each nation.² In such a scheme, where different societies are forced to encounter in the maelstrom rendering them as intertwined systems that must surrender to the capital, then it is meaningful to consider a comparison. Obviously, the first level is the comparison between the substructures and their relationship and how they impact each other, or better to say, how they exploit and get exploited. This could be a political-economical study. On the other hand, as Hilferding points out, in such a dynamic, particular forms in the superstructure may appear that can affect the whole dynamic as the substructure has. As a result, one can indulge in comparing these forms of the superstructure as far as they seem to play a role in this dynamic, and be sure that such comparison is not merely a comparison for its own sake, rather it can have a meaningful influence on the dynamic in which one is involved. This means that a comparative literary study could be possible within this scheme as long as it notably establishes itself within the economic scheme and does not indulge in studying art for art's sake. This is what we aim to do in this dissertation. To some extent, this means that the

² Rudolf Hilferding, *Finance Capital: A Study of the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 322.

forms of the superstructure, here the literary forms, could have certain autonomy to play their role in the larger economic and political scheme. There have been some studies like *The World Republic of Letters*,³ which particularly use the economic jargon to talk about literature. However, one must pay attention that this does not really fit into our discussed scheme. For the mere usage of economic jargon does not establish a reading's relation to the economy and particularly the emergence of capitalism. Rather, the relationship among entities that are all rendered as mere commodities with exchange values is the focal point of this scheme. A reading must reflect such a dynamic and establish its relation to it to be a valid reading within our discussed scheme.

Interestingly, the same argument could be found in Raf'at's writing, where he compares the thoughts and sensations in the Iranian atmosphere to a train that has reached Iran's borders, and people are obliged to find a way for that train in the country.⁴ The new mode of production is entering the country, and no one can stop it. The only way seems to be finding a strategy to settle it in favour of people. In the same writing and within the same argument, he overtly mentions some sources by which he had been influenced in the literary sense. He overtly mentions that accusing him of being under the influence of the Ottomans is meaningless, and he has well read classical, Romantic, and contemporary French literature. He mentions that he always had intended to improve that knowledge with his own understanding of the condition and settle a new literary paradigm fit for Iran's condition. Interestingly, he mentions that if such ideas were found in Ethiopia, he would have considered them seriously.⁵ Surprisingly, one can see the idea of autonomous forms of the superstructure that result from the substructure, but work their own way even if one had to meet them in the void and in another context. In this sense, one can easily see that the encounter with the West or, better to say, the obligation to be part of the capitalist economy also seriously affects and gets affected by the forms of the superstructure, namely the literary forms.

This point was well understood later by the literary critic, Jalal, where he wrote about translation and the impact of other literatures on the Iranian one. He asks a critical question: "suppose we walk exactly in the footsteps of others' work, then what is the contemporary Persian literature at all?"⁶ The pivotal point is that literature cannot be detached from its political and economic context. Furthermore, this takes a serious form of criticism within the framework of westoxification in Jalal's writing which he defines as the condition where the writer is influenced by the viewpoint and language of western writers rather than his own language and condition. In more detail, we will later see Jalal's idea of westoxification on different occasions. Now, we can observe that our scheme seems valid enough to be established as a reading framework.

When writing on the poet, Nima Yushij, Jalal brilliantly describes this scheme. He points out that the economic dominance of the westerners is followed by their cultural dominance, which he defines as Nima's main struggle. He asks, in such a condition, whether one has to exclude himself from the condition and only turn toward the past.⁷ Nima's strategy is not like that.

³ Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, translated by M. B. DeBevoise, (Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁴ Taqi Raf'at, "Tajaddud dar Adabīyāt" (Modernism in Literature), *Āzādīyistān*, No. 3, 12 August 1920, 31.

⁵ Raf'at, "Tajaddud dar Adabīyāt," 32.

⁶ Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Arzyābī-yi Shitābzadah (Hurried Investigations)* (Tabriz: Ebne Sina, 1344 [1965]), 64.

⁷ Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Haft Maqālah (Seven Essays)* (Tehran: AmirKabir, 1357 [1979]), 31.

Thus, one can see that Jalal precisely captures the pivotal role of the material condition in which a work of art is produced. Therefore, we can accept our scheme as valid for our reading. Because it is grounded on the material basis and, at the same time, considers that a serious literary study can even be built on that, as Jalal did in his reading of modern Persian literature.

In studying any literary/historical figure, one always faces the problematic procedure of encountering a figure. Because we never meet a figure. There is always a barrier, as if one can perceive the noumenon through the phenomenon. Jalal, within the framework of his reading of modern Persian literature, also defines this when talking about Sadeq Hedayat. Jalal points out that we can move beyond this problem by considering the extant writings as the possibility we face, for if Hedayat was alive, we still had to discover him through those writings.⁸ This is critical to our study because we try to grasp in this dissertation the vague image of Raf'at, which seems to haunt the literary atmosphere of modern Iran to some extent. A nice image exists in Dostoevsky's writing to sum up this scheme. When describing Alyosha and his memory of his mother, he describes the memory as: "they only emerge throughout one's life as specks of light, as it were, against the darkness, as a corner torn from a huge picture, which has all faded and disappeared except for that little corner."⁹ Then a comparison is to find the spirit of the whole picture and find out how it was materially cut to be able to juxtapose the torn corner with the other ones to establish a new response to the immediate material condition.

Before diving into our reading, we may need to turn our attention toward the historical background of our case study. The historical period covering Raf'at's emergence on the literary scene and his act of suicide is preceded by the constitutional revolution and the events after that. Therefore we may look at those events to grasp the condition and to be able to situate Raf'at in a historical context. This is also useful for I would keep referring to the immediate material condition of Raf'at's life and the peasants' lives. So this can serve the readers understand what I mean by the material condition.

2. The historical background of the Constitutional Revolution

With the emergence of the capitalist economy and its arrival at the Iranian borders, as the train that Raf'at described, drastic changes began to occur in Iran. The emergence of capitalism and a capitalist economy in Iran was an inevitable doomed destiny because the imperialist powers struggled over their benefits in Iran which caused Iran to enter this maelstrom, as Hilferding described. As a result of the economic changes that were meant to happen inevitably, political and cultural changes occurred, culminating in the Constitutional Revolution.

Prior to the emergence of capitalism, land and water belonged to the king, who was considered to be God's shadow on the earth, and they were regulated and judged according to sharia.¹⁰ According to the law, in 1848, three entities could own lands: the king, landowner, and peasants. However, in reality, there were three types of lands: those belonging to the king, those

⁸ Jalal, *Haft Maqālah*, 4.

⁹ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. (Everyman's Library, 1992), 14.

¹⁰ S. Iransky, Pavlovich M. and V. Triya, *Si Maqālah darbāriyi Inqilāb-i Mashrūṭīyyat-i Iran (Three Essays on Iran's Constitutional Revolution)*. Translated by M. Hushyar. (Tehran: Sherkate Sahami Ketabhaye Jibi, 1357 [1979]), 9.

endowed to religious authorities, and those belonging to lords.¹¹ On the other hand, since the monarchs needed money, they started selling their lands to those owning free capital and finances. Later on, the clergy and bourgeoisie also started to buy lands.¹² As a result, the share of the newly emerged landowners and lords became more.¹³ Finally, this newly emerged cruel class owned 94% of the lands, and ten million peasants only owned 6% of it.¹⁴ But, with the emergence of Imperialists' struggle in Iran over their benefits and their wish to append Iran to their market the old rules and conditions did not work anymore to the point that finally in 1906 the Constitutional Revolution succeeded and the new constitution limiting king's authority and establishing the parliament was announced. It is essential to pay attention to the fact that this was not merely the result of freedom-seeking ideas or the king's lusty desires, but it was the causal consequence of the condition that itself brought up problems that the king could not solve anymore. Thus, a new system to treat the problems was needed. These problems resulted from the destruction of the natural economy and the emergence of the commodity-finance relationship, which was impossible to solve by previous feudalist regulations symbolized by the monarch.¹⁵ Here one must pay attention to the fact that all the later crisis and the phase difference between Iran and the West concerning the emergence of capitalism is due to the forms and tools of production. The industrial West seemed to have a phase difference with feudal Iran yet engaged in local craftsmanship. Nevertheless, Iran had to get on those rails and be part of this new mode of the economy to survive as an oil supplier and an open market for western commodities. Besides, the geopolitical condition of Iran was a key point for the Imperialist powers of the time (England and Russia) to fight over their benefits.

The revolutionary movement of Iran actually started long before the Constitutional Revolution, when the Russian dominance was not questionable, and Britain was struggling to fit in the atmosphere. While we are concerned with the impact of the changes in the substructure in the shape of the political arrangements, we must consider to some extent, the autonomy of superstructural forms, as was mentioned by Iransky: "Iran's uprising was not a spontaneous event. It started in the form of sanctioning [tobacco]."¹⁶ This refers to the Tobacco Protest when people in an organized way sanctioned using tobacco since the tobacco concession was given to an English company.¹⁷ This protest manifested unity and the power of people's organization in their uprising. People's belief in their power was a sort of autonomous form of the superstructure that later played a significant role. It could be understood as the beginning of the long struggle of the liberal bourgeoisie of Iran against the despotism of the monarchs.¹⁸

However, the emergence of capitalism and Iran's economic development was rapid to the point that Iran became the clash point of two imperialist powers: Russia and Britain, which led to the so-called sharing of the country between themselves in the 1907 treaty. These imperialist powers, alongside the Iranian bourgeoisie and clergy, played different roles through the years

¹¹ Iransky, 11.

¹² Iransky, 12.

¹³ 66% of the farming lands were owned by 2500 to 3000 lords and 4% by the government. Avetis Sultanzadeh, *Inkishāf-i Iqtisādiyi Iran va Amperiyālizm-i Ingilistān (The Economic Development of Iran and English Imperialism)*. Translated and edited by F. Keshavarz and Kh. Shakeri. (Florence: Mazdak, 1388 (2009)), 103.

¹⁴ Sultanzadeh, 104.

¹⁵ Sultanzadeh, 8.

¹⁶ Iransky, 124.

¹⁷ Browne, *Persian Revolution*, 31-58.

¹⁸ Iransky, 125.

and changed the direction of their support from the despots and lords to the liberals and revolutionaries, many times according to their benefits.

1890	The Persian Tobacco Protest
1900-1905	Stringent administration of the customs and merchants' reaction
1904	Conditions worsened by Russo-Japanese war
1905	Merchants' funded opposition in Tehran led by Seyyed Abdullah Behbahani
23 Nov 1905	Behbahani's collaboration with Seyyed Mohammad Tabataba'i (a reformist <i>mujtahed</i>)
12 Dec 1905	Two merchants bastinadoed by the government resulting in <i>bast</i> in Shah Abdul Azim
10 Jan 1906	Shah granted <i>Edalat Khane</i> (judiciary institution)
15 Jul 1906	Taking refuge (<i>bast</i>) in British embassy
29 Jul 1906	Eynuddulah's resignation
5 Aug 1906	King grants a <i>majles</i> of representatives - declaration of the new Constitution by Muzaffar al-Din Shah
14 Aug 1906	<i>Ulamas'</i> return from Qom
7 Oct 1906	Assembly of the first parliament
30 Dec 1906	Drafting and ratification of the constitution
21 Jan 1907	Mohammad Ali Shah's enthronement
7 Sep 1907	Notifying Iran about 1907 pact between Russia and Britain
17 Oct 1907	Ratification of constitutional amendments
17 Dec 1907	Detention of the cabinet members by King as a result of opposing the 1907 pact
23 Jun 1908	Bombardment of the parliament – termination of first <i>majles</i>
17 Feb 1909	Capturing Rasht by freedom fighting forces
22 Apr 1909	The uprising of Tabriz freedom fighters led by Sattar Khan
22 Jun 1909	Bakhtiari forces led by Sardar As'ad reach Qom
8 Jul 1909	Bakhtiari forces take over Qom
12 Jul 1909	Arrival of Russian forces to Qazvin in order to warn Gilan freedom fighters not to come to Tehran
16 Jul 1909	Complete control of Tehran by freedom fighters
17 Jul 1909	Mohammad Ali Shah takes refuge in Russian embassy
17 Jul 1909	Emergency session of the National Consultative Assembly to replace Mohammad Ali Shah with his 13 year old son Ahmad Shah
10 Sep 1909	Mohammad Ali Shah went in exile to Russia
15 Nov 1909 to 24 Dec 1911	Second National Consultative Assembly (<i>majles</i>)
6 Dec 1914 to 14 to 1915	Third <i>majles</i>
21 Jun 1921	Start of fourth <i>majles</i>

Table 1. Timeline of the Constitutional Revolution

The changes started to gradually happen in the economic structure. One of them was the introduction of new taxes. Previously the poor peasant had to give away about 20 percent of their product to the king and the landowners. However, there was no taxation on inheritance and income. With the new system, the whole burden of taxation fell on the peasants, who had to pay taxes for the inheritance, which was not regulated by Sharia, and also pay between 35 to 85 percent of their income depending on their access to tools and seeds for farming.¹⁹ The

¹⁹ Iransky, 13.

government was forced to do so because of different economic reasons, one of which was the fall of the price of the Iranian currency, the Qiran to one-third due to the fall of the silver price.²⁰



Figure 1. *Bast* in the British embassy in Tehran.



Figure 2. Haj Muhammad Taqi Bunakdar in charge of provisioning the people in embassy

²⁰ Iransky, 14.

Many clergies who were not related to the government and monarchy also lived difficult lives, so they opposed the government. Moreover, the establishment of a new judiciary system made them lose their authority in judging people's conflicts. Also, the government substituted them for its own delegations as the custodian of the holy shrines. This limited their power, and with their difficult life, they joined the peasants and liberal bourgeoisie to oppose the government.²¹ There was one tradition related to clergies and holy shrines, which was called *bast*. *Bast* was the act of seeking sanctuary in a holy place till one's demands were satisfied. Those in the sanctuary were under the protection of religion, and nobody could harm them while they resided in the holy place. It played an effective role in the uprisings of Iranians, which even threatened the Imperialists to the point that they constantly pressured the Iranian government to abolish it.²² Even finally, the Constitutional Revolution succeeded with a huge *bast*. However, interestingly, *bast* could only function while religion was not established as a modern institution. After that, religion itself became an institution from which people needed to seek sanctuary. *Bast* was a great help in defeating despotism and the emergence of capitalism, however, with the emergence of capitalism, it was soon nullified.

Moreover, *bast*, like any other aspect of Iranian society, was not left uncontaminated by capitalism and the imperialist struggles over their benefits in Iran. Since 1848 a new heresy was established due to the emergence of imperialist powers in Iran and their struggle over their benefits. In that year, some people sought sanctuary in the British and Russian embassy because they demanded a change of a minister.²³ From that time, the contamination of religion and *bast* tradition began and culminated in the establishment of religion as a modern institution in the period of capitalism. In this middle period, the contamination was evident in the fact that the two embassies became rivals of holy shrines. The example of *bast* is excellent for understanding the doomed and disastrous modernity, which we will meet later in this dissertation. The peasants, with that possibility in their possession, played their radical revolutionary role, which led to the victory of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois revolution and, finally, the establishment of capitalism. Simultaneously, this process nullified the possibility of *bast* as a weapon in peasants' hands. The doomed disastrous modernity is precisely present in this image. There is no possibility of retreating or turning one's back on the condition. However, the way to proceed and involve in the condition, even rebelliously, is disastrous, for it even nullifies the weapons already possessed. The only point which can keep one (one who is not the victor or part of the ruling class) to go on is the very tiny light of hope that maybe a messianic future awaits one which can redeem him. This hope is as shaky as one can imagine. This is exactly the case with Raf'at's representation of Dehqan, which is discussed in chapter 3 (p. 83).

In different phases of Iranians' uprisings and the emergence of capitalism in Iran, Britain played different roles. While Russians supported the monarch and despotic feudal laws, the British tried to represent themselves as supporters of freedom, which led to seeking sanctuary in their embassy. However, with the change in the condition, this kind supporter soon changed

²¹ Iransky, 37-36.

²² Iransky, 47.

²³ Iransky, 47.

into a dreadful enemy and left the Iranians in the hands of Russian Liakhov and his bloodshed, which not only resulted in the bombardment of parliament, it also nullified *bast*.²⁴

Amid the emergence of capitalism in Iran and the British-Russian struggle over their imperial benefits in Iran, these two powers and different classes of Iranian society played different roles. Avetis Sultanzadeh points out that Russian and British Imperialism were significant obstacles to the development of capitalism in Iran before the 1917 revolution. He mentions that all the factories in Iran, established until 1913-1914, were paralyzed by these two powers.²⁵ During the nineteenth century, Russia and Britain did not intervene to support the Persian government, and this was done by German, French, Austrian, Swedish, and American supervisors. In this period, Russia and Britain tried to destroy the government and append Iran to their sovereignty.²⁶ In this period, Russia tended to have the upper hand in Iran. It had a significant influence on Iran through the Cossack forces, and a big share of Iran's economy was dependent on Russia and the goods transferred via Russian lands. In this period, the British government, in order to decrease the influence of Russia in Iran, was in a somehow secret contract with the Iranian masses for freedom-seeking and constitutionalist aims, which could give Britain their best piece of benefit, which was the influence over northern parts of Iran usually under the influence of the Russians.²⁷ After some time, the emergence and development of capitalism in Iran were not avoidable, which led to the flow of Russian and British capital, which was to dominate the country and expand their influence. The part of the bourgeoisie, mostly related to the court, whose benefit was dependent on foreign capital, was seeking normalization of relations even with the cost of selling the country. On the other hand, the petite bourgeoisie trading the domestically produced commodities pursued national ideas and national independence against any foreign power, for they did not have benefits from foreign capital.²⁸

After the Russo-Japan war, Russia's share in Iran's economy grew apparently for its turn of attention toward Iran. Comparing 1895 and 1905, Britain's export to Iran decreased by 27.5%, while Russia's share grew by 39.5%. Before the start of World War I, 49% of whole Iran's import was from Russia.²⁹ In such a scheme, it is possible to see that British attempts to support freedom movements for some time were to change this economic balance in their favour, in which they later succeeded. Britain that even opened its embassy for the constitutionalists, as soon as they felt that these uprisings were about to affect India, they changed their policy which led to the notorious 1907 convention. By this, the British left the Iranians and the first national assembly at the mercy of Russians, which led to the bombardment of the parliament by the Russian Liakhov. This same policy from both Russians and British also occurred in 1912 in a particular case of bombardment of Mashhad, which can be seen in subchapter 2.4 (p. 61).

With the emergence of the new economic relations and the fact that the agricultural production system was untouched, the new class of landowners started to exploit the peasants even more.³⁰ Considering the condition of peasants (*Dehqan*), which we can meet in chapter 3 (p. 83), even if the peasants did not face the massacre, as one can see in that chapter, these new landowners

²⁴ Iransky, 48-49.

²⁵ Sultanzadeh, 62.

²⁶ Sultanzadeh, 24.

²⁷ Sultanzadeh, 79-80.

²⁸ Sultanzadeh, 20.

²⁹ Iransky, 29.

³⁰ Sultanzadeh, 18.

were as disastrous as the massacre. “The emergence of capitalism in European countries, by producing local industries, separated the peasants from lands and moved them into factories. In Iran, importing cheap commodities was the biggest obstacle to the emergence of capitalism and made the peasants and craftsmen poor, so they had to migrate from their homeland.”³¹ Tsarist Russia, not content with the development of capitalism in Iran, based on their previous policies, was spreading discontent among peasants toward the landowners.³² By this, it is possible to judge the more decisive influence that Russia had before the Constitutional Revolution in Iran.

In such conditions, finally, the Constitutional Revolution succeeded, and the new constitution and the establishment of the parliament were declared in the summer of 1906. The first parliament was assembled soon. The first parliament started approving the laws about the possession of the lands and taxes. This caused a big part of previous revolutionaries, including the land-owning clergies and part of the bourgeoisie, to turn their back on the revolution and get themselves armed with the help of Russia and try to abolish the parliament in which they succeeded. On 23 June 1908, Cossack forces led by Vladimir Liakhov, who was in complete control of the new king, bombarded the parliament and caused a period of suppression and despotism known as Minor Despotism (*istibdād-i ṣaghīr*). However, this horrific time ended on 13 July 1909 with the entrance of the pro-constitutionalist forces into Tehran, which led the king to flee away to Russia. Again this was partly supported by the British government to decrease the Russian influence since there are documents proving British intervention and incite of Bakhtiari forces to invade Tehran. Nevertheless, the Russian influence was never eradicated, though it decreased significantly after the start of the first war and the 1917 revolution. Nevertheless, for Iranians, the problem was not totally solved, and it can be seen in the fact that from 1909 till 1921, twenty cabinets were formed, and they all had significant problems with taming these two imperialist forces if they intended to do so.

3. The revolt of Sheykh Mohammad Khiyabani

Now, we must pay attention to the character of Sheykh Mohammad khiyabani, who played a pivotal role in Tabriz after the declaration of the constitution prior to his death in 1920. He also was the reason for Taqi Raf‘at to be able to emerge on the political scene of Iran. The similarities between Khiyabani’s ideas and Raf‘at’s are to the extent that an individual comprehensive study is required for that. However, for the sake of volume and form, we will dismiss that unless certain occasions need to be pointed out separately. To know Khiyabani and the condition in which he played his part, we must take a look at one of the most important parties in the history of Iran.

Prior to the declaration of the constitution in 1906 and in the course of struggles and revolutionary actions, the Social Democratic Party known as *ijtimā‘īyūn-i ‘āmiyūn* was established, which played a decisive role in the Constitutional Revolution and the years after that. In 1908, as soon as the news of the revolt in Tehran reached the committee of the party in Tabriz, they published a statement in 10000 copies all over Iran.³³ The statement starts with the phrase “workers of the world, unite!” and has a somehow religious tone, probably not to

³¹ Iransky, 116

³² Iransky, 19.

³³ The text of the statement could also be found in: iransky, 38.

repel the religious peasants and revolutionaries. The party actually played the most radical role in implementing the ideas of the Constitutional Revolution in the years 1906 to 1920 and was an independent radical party not surrendering from its principles. Khiyabani could be understood as the inheritor of this party or as someone with close connections with it, which can, to some extent, depict his ideas and plans. Even in the manifest/statement published in 1920, the party still insisted on the previous principles. The manifest/statement was published in Persian and French and concluded with two concrete goals: “maintaining the public safety and order, and realisation of the Constitutional regime.”³⁴

Ali Azari, in his book about Khiyabani, mentions that amid the struggles for the Constitutional Revolution, Ali Musyo, who was the head of the Tabriz branch of the party, recognized Khiyabani’s competencies and virtues and chose him as a member of the Provincial Assembly of Azarbayejan (*anjuman-i iyālatī*).³⁵ This is the point that Khiyabani, with 480 other members of the Provincial Assembly, establish Azarbayejan’s Democrat Party.³⁶ This is the party where most of Raf’at’s political activities happen. *Tajddud* was the official newspaper of this party to promote their ideas. Khiyabani became popular on the political scene of Tabriz to the point that he was elected as the deputy from Tabriz in the second parliament.

One of his most influential acts was his severe opposition to the Russian Ultimatum. On 29 November 1911 (7 Azar 1290), he made a speech against the Russian Ultimatum and claimed that if this means sacrificing our lives, it is a virtuous death that one must choose over such life.³⁷ After that speech, he participated in the famous meeting of *Sabzi Miydān*, where he gave a long speech. At the end of the meeting, the gendarmes led by Yeprem Khan, ordered by the Minister of foreign affairs, came to arrest him, but Khiyabani fled away. After about two months, he travelled to Mashhad and stayed there for about three months. Then due to the risk of dangerous conditions, he travelled to Tabriz via Kaakhka, Krasnovodsk, Tbilisi, and Baku. After arriving in Jolfa, since Samad Khan Shoja’ al-dowlah, an anti-constitutionalist, was the governor of Tabriz, the family went to Tabriz, and Khiyabani went to Petrovsky. However, after some time, without any notice, he returned to Tabriz and lived stealthy for some time. After a month, some negotiations were initiated that he could be in the city if he only dealt with his business and scholarly activities and did not engage in politics.³⁸

After this period, his overt political actions were limited. However, after couple of years, there was a chance to overtly play his political role. This culminated around the emergence of the Russian Revolution, which to some extent influenced Iranians and opened up the condition for the freedom fighters. In late April 1917, he published “What is to be done” in *Tajddud*, which was the official paper of the Democrat Party (*firqiy-i dimukrāt*). In September 1917, he was chosen as the head of the party. This is the beginning of a period of political activity that was not yet radicalized. April 1920 was the climax of his political activity due to different causes such as the 1919 treaty and sending spies from Vothuq al-Dowlah etc. Khiyabani and more than 20000 people of Tabriz stand against Vothuq al-Dowlah and Tehran’s government. “Today I officially pronounce that we have revolted against the horrific treaty [of 1919]

³⁴ Ali Azari, *Qiyām-i Shiykh Muhammad Khīyābānī dar Tabrīz (Sheykh Mohammad Khiyabani’s Upraising in Tabriz)*. Introduction by Saeid Nafisi. (Tabriz: Safi Ali Shah, 1362 [1984]), 263-264.

³⁵ Azari, 11.

³⁶ Not to be mistaken with *Azarbayejan dimokrat firqasi*.

³⁷ Azari, 23-24.

³⁸ Azari, 37-38.

between Vothuq al-Dowlah's government and Britain. We may call Azarbayejan as Azadiyestan."³⁹ Tehran supposed that their problem was with Vothuq al-Dowlah, so they replaced him with Mushīr al-Dowlah, who was a deceitful politician trying to disguise himself as a reformist. In late June, he pronounced that all the offices would be under the party's control. As a result, the central office of governance would be moved to *Ālī Qāpū*, and *Tajaddud* building will serve activities related to the party.⁴⁰ At this point, Azadiyestan was established independent of the party as the power ruling the city. However, this story came to a tragic end with Khiyabani's murder in a treasonous way on the 4 of September. Mushīr al-Dowlah, with the help of the Russian council Mishtich, planned a coup d'état against Khiyabani on 13 September 1920 and murdered him the next day. This was the point that Raf'at also committed suicide when he got the news of Khiyabani's murder.

4. Depiction of the constitutional literature

In the turbulent material and political condition of Iran on the verge of the emergence of capitalism, i.e., from the pre-Constitutional period afterward, one element played a vital role in linking all the events and conditions. This was the Persian language and literature. This not only represented the changes and chaos in the condition, but it also extensively affected the condition for the literary forms to a great extent, proving themselves autonomous of the substructure and relevant economic condition. Therefore, a study of the literature and the so-called modernism in literature is a beneficial tool to go deep into the condition. Here, we may see a summary of the literature during and after the Constitutional Revolution. However, in the next chapter, we will see how modern literature was shaped and based on the material condition and also affected the material condition symbolised in the famous dispute over literary modernism (*tajaddud-i adabī*).

Defining the Constitutional Revolution itself has been problematic, for it is not easy to define a time period for that literature. Though the main works are easy to determine and situate historically, long before and after the period, the works related to the constitutional literature existed to a great extent. However, one can aim for the core of this literature, so then the reader can relate other writings to that. In defining constitutional literature, Baqer Momeni writes: "perhaps one could call the literature which emerged in the late nineteenth century as the new literature as opposed to the traditional old one. However, one can never claim that this literature in its entirety was progressive, or all classes welcomed it in the same manner, or it served all classes."⁴¹

As we already observed, in the middle of the nineteenth century, with the emergence and development of the new material condition, new configurations and tendencies occurred in Iran, some of which, according to Momeni, "in the context of international relations took a foreign and unconventional form."⁴² Some of the consequences of these changes in the material condition reflected in the cultural atmosphere are the publication of newspapers, translation of

³⁹ Azari, 281-282.

⁴⁰ Azari, 411.

⁴¹ Bagher Momeni, *Adabīyāt-i Mashrūṭah (Constitutional Literature)*. (Tehran: Golshaei, 1354 [1976]), 7-8.

⁴² Momeni, 13.

European literary works, publication of Iranian literary works in new genres like novel, drama, essay, and publication of scientific textbooks.

As a result of radical changes in the condition, the real constitutional literature has specific characteristics. Momeni considers the essential feature of constitutional literature as being severely political. “And political literature means the one which attacks government and aristocracy and criticizes all their cultural intimations and heritage.”⁴³ Momeni defines constitutional literature in this way in order to distinguish between the pile of publications of the time which were extremely divergent and had their own roots. He categorizes the literature of this period into scientific textbooks, recreational literature, and social-political literature.⁴⁴ The third is what he considers constitutional literature. These were all produced as the result of extreme changes in material conditions.

With the establishment of Dar ul-Funun (Polytechnic College) in 1851, the need for textbooks increased and resulted in an increase in their publication. It is essential to pay attention that the scientific literature was subject to the same process that any social element in this period was. The scientific literature was imported and promoted by the government itself. However, after a while, it became a tool in the hands of the reformists who had come to this understanding that some changes in the principles were also required besides the changes in the appearance.⁴⁵ At the same time, the newly emerged bourgeoisie of Iran could also use this in its favour because such literature was basically a bourgeois product. As a result, at some points, it turned into a revolutionary tool in the hands of the Iranian bourgeoisie, which at that time was revolutionary.⁴⁶ Interestingly, one can see an intimation of the vagueness of the borders in this subject as well, which we will discuss in chapter 1: how different classes were using the same tool and the unformulated tool could have been left vague.

The recreational literature was needed to fill the people’s free time in a way that matched their new tendencies. It included some original Farsi writings like *Amir Arsalan*, or a pile of translations mostly from French like *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* (*Le Médecin malgré lui*), *A Life of Napoleon* (*Vie de Napoléon*), *The Three Musketeers* (*Les Trois Mousquetaires*), etc. As Momeni pointed out, this literature, although it had its roots in the European bourgeoisie, could not be revolutionary literature at this time.⁴⁷ It only kept its function as a recreational tool to entertain the masses.

The political literature, as could be suggested by its title, had a counterpart that was reactionary. Interestingly, this reactionary literature and the newspapers in which they were published were in the minority considering the number. “Of all these newspapers only three openly championed the cause of autocracy, namely the *Uqyanus*, *Ay Mulla Amu*, and the *Fikr* (“Thought”),” writes Tarbiat.⁴⁸ This is actually due to the fact that a big part of the aristocracy was turned to be reformists, and those who were reactionarily supporting the status quo also disguised themselves with the mask of modern ideas and did not overtly claim their reactionary

⁴³ Momeni, 27.

⁴⁴ Momeni, 15.

⁴⁵ Momeni, 16.

⁴⁶ Momeni, 17.

⁴⁷ Momeni, 29.

⁴⁸ Edward Granville Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia* (Cambridge University Press, 1914), 24.

positions. Thus the significant share of the literature in this period was political literature which was either revolutionary or reformist.

The political literature in this period was very aggressive in its criticisms and tone since it had to find its way among all the literary heritage and paradigm. It was usually satirical to influence its readers. It was severely realistic, for it represented the wishes and hopes of the masses who read it. Since it was primarily struggling with despotism, it tended to be democratic. It was nationalist, for it encountered many foreign powers amid its development. Since it wished to change the relations and conditions, it was either reformist or revolutionary.⁴⁹

This age is the age of bourgeois revolution, and some sort of violence seems to be a common characteristic of a revolution and its literature. "The content of this literature is anything which has a significance for the revolutionary bourgeoisie: the social-political formations, humane morals and philosophy, patriot and nationalism, progress, believe in science, equality, fraternity, the rule of law, freedom, and democracy."⁵⁰ The significant share of the literature in this period was published in the newspapers. As a result, the readership of Persian literature was widened to the point that it included the masses. Consequently, the language of the literature in this period tended to be simple and void of ornament. This writing is usually referred to as *sādah nivīsī*, meaning plain, unornamented, fluent, natural writing: "plain writing (*sādah nivīsī*) is the requisite of our time."⁵¹

Around 1816 in the reign of Fath Ali Shah, when Abbas Mirza was the Crowned Prince, the printing-press emerged in Iran. However, here one must pay attention that Iranian's to some point, refused typography and favoured lithography (invented in 1796), for, with lithography, they could preserve the art of calligraphy, while in type printing, the art of calligraphy must have been dismissed. The lithography apparatuses were owned by the government and later used by other classes. Thus among the first lithographed books in Iran were canonized literary oeuvres like *Kullīyāt-i Sa'dī*, printed in 1848, and *Shāhnāmah* in 1858.⁵² Interestingly, these two books of the canon are the ones at the centre of the canonized dispute, which made modern Persian literature (see chapter 1). Typography became popular after the enthronement of Mozaffar ad-Din Shah in 1896.⁵³ This is very interesting since not only was this the time that constitutional revolution came to a successful point of declaration of the constitution, but this also was the point that the revolutionary forces had developed and established themselves to the point that they no more cared for the formal art of calligraphy which could have been considered the tool for the aristocracy. They wanted to convey their ideas in plain writing in the quickest way possible. Thus the turn of attention from lithography toward typewriting happened.

The first newspaper of the common form was founded after 1848 during the reign of Naser ad-Din Shah. The first paper circulated in Tehran was *Vaqāyi 'Ittifiqīya*.⁵⁴ This was a government-owned paper and used to publish the news of the court and government. In 1860, *Rūznāmiyi Dowlat-i Illīyah Īrān* (Gazette of the Sublime State of Persia) was established under the

⁴⁹ Momeni, 30-31.

⁵⁰ Momeni, 59.

⁵¹ Zīn al-Ābidīn Marāghī'ī, *Sīyāhat Nāmiyi Ibrāhīm Biy* (Tehran: Sadaf, 1344), 257.

⁵² Browne, *Poetry and Press*, 9.

⁵³ Browne, *Poetry and Press*, 9.

⁵⁴ Browne, *Poetry and Press*, 10.

superintendence of Sani al-Mulk, which was the first illustrated newspaper.⁵⁵ The production of the first newspapers in Iran coincided with the foundation of Dar ul-Funun (Ecole Polytechnique), the establishment of Post in Azarbayejan and Fars, and the institution of Passports for the Persian subjects. These were all the prerequisites of a capitalist state imported by the government itself. But they could not block the consequences, which were the establishment of the capitalist economy and termination of the autocracy.⁵⁶

In 1866 a newspaper titled *Rūznāmiyi Millatī* (the National Gazette), which was meant to distinguish itself from *Rūznāmiyi Dowlati* was published in Tehran. Gradually, the newspapers were not limited to the government, and the reformists and revolutionaries also took advantage of this new medium. The freedom of the press did not exist until the end of the reign of Naser ad-Din shah (1896).⁵⁷ As a result, there were many newspapers that were published in Calcutta, Istanbul, Cairo, London, and other places and were imported to Iran. Among these newspapers, *Akhtar* (Star) was the most famous and influential. The newspapers then started to promote criticism of the autocracy and the constitutional cause. Certain papers and manuscripts circulated in Iran and influenced the constitutional revolution. Among these were the *Epistles of Kamal al-Dowle (Maktubat)* and *Rowzat al-Safaye Naseri* by Akhundzade, writings of Malkam Khan, tracts and writings by Mirza Agha Khan Kermani like *Sad Khetabe*, writings of Mirza Yusef Khan Mustashar al-Dowle. Among the newspapers published outside Iran, *Qanun* (law) was very influential and was published in London by Malkam Khan. Tarbiat, interestingly, mentions some instances of “jellygraph” in Tabriz titled *Shabname* (night books) published by Ali Quli Khan, editor of *Ehtiyaj*.⁵⁸ The circulation and the number of copies of newspapers increased drastically in the constitutional period and again decreased with Minor Despotism (*istibdād-i ṣaghīr*) and rose again in the second parliament.⁵⁹

Among all these works published under the category of constitutional literature, the question of the change still remained of great importance. However, it was not well formulated in that period. The fact that it was left unformulated had one obvious consequence. This can be found in Momeni’s observance of that literature, where he wrote: “if a new form and method keeps promoting the old content, it will not have any constitutional aspect. If it offers the new content with the old form, it either will not have an impact on the revolutionary movement or will have a limited impact.”⁶⁰ Though the relation between the content and form in poetry and the new poetic forms was not formulated at that time, the consequences of such a relationship were

⁵⁵ Browne, *Poetry and Press*, 11.

⁵⁶ For a more detailed account of newspapers published in this period, see Tarbiat’s account in Browne, *Poetry and Press*, 12-19.

⁵⁷ Browne, *Poetry and Press*, 17.

⁵⁸ Browne, *Poetry and Press*, 21.

⁵⁹ “Before the Constitution the circulation of newspapers in Persia and the number of those who read them were very restricted. Those which enjoyed the largest circulation at that time were perhaps the *Thurayya*, *Hablu’l-Matin* and *Nasiri*, of which the last had a circulation of something over a thousand.

During the Constitutional Period the circulation of the newspapers went up, each of them enjoying a circulation of from two to three thousand copies. Thus the *Musawat* had a circulation of 3000, the *Sur-i-Israfil* from 5000 to 5500; the *Majlis* gradually rose from 7000 to 10,000, the *Anjuman* in Tabriz 5000. During the Second Period of the Constitution (July 1909-latter part of 1911), when the daily newspapers increased in size, their circulation diminished. Thus the *Istiqlal-i-Iran* (“Independence of Persia”) had a circulation of from 800 to 1000 copies, and the *Iran-i-Naw* (“New Persia”), which enjoyed the largest circulation, from 2000 to 2500, very rarely reaching 3000. This diminution in the number of readers is chiefly to be ascribed to the general increase of poverty resulting from the disturbances, in consequence of which it often happened that several readers combined to buy and share one copy” Browne, *Poetry and Press*, 25.

⁶⁰ Momeni, 31.

evident to everyone. Thus, almost all revolutionary writers had to come up with some sort of novelty in the form of their writings. Nevertheless, this topic later got better formulated and developed by figures like Raf'at, Nima, and others.

5. Taqi Raf'at: his oeuvre and his biography

At this point, it is worth turning our attention to the historical facts of Raf'at's life and studying his biography to be able to situate him in this historical background and see where and how his writings were published and how they could be related to the constitutional literature and its heritage. The biographical information on Raf'at's life is scarce. Yahya Ariyanpour, who was his student and could have probably considerable information, provides a short account of his life:

He was the son of Agha Mohammad Tabrizi and did his education in Istanbul. He was in charge of the Naseri school in Trabzon for a couple of years. During the First World War, around 1916, he returned to Tabriz and worked as a French language teacher. He was writing the newspaper *Tajaddud* which was under Khiyabani's management. When the upraise of the Democrats happened, he published *Azadiyestan*, which just continued for four volumes. He knew Farsi, French, and Turkish and used to write poems in all three. He published his Farsi poems in *Tajaddud* and *Azadiyestan*. Raf'at was one of the pioneers of the national movement in Azarbayejan, and after Khiyabanis's murder, he committed suicide in his refuge in Qezel Dizaj on 15 September 1920.⁶¹

Since he was about 31 years old when he committed suicide, he must have been born in 1889 (1268). Apparently, He had spent most of his life outside Iran until he was about twenty years old. When he returned, he joined Khiyabani, and with the culmination of Khiyabani's upraise in 1920, he overtly fought the government alongside Khiyabani, to whom he was an assistant.

Ahmad Kasravi famously had animosity toward Raf'at. He mentioned something that has never been mentioned anywhere else: the publication of a newspaper titled *Azarabadegan* by Raf'at, which allegedly supported the Ottomans. Kasravi mentioned that this was the reason that people were sad when Khiyabani showed such trust in Raf'at.⁶² This is really problematic, and one cannot be sure about the reality. For a reading of this paradoxical rare biographic information, see subchapter 4.1 (p. 105). However, one can imagine that even if it had been the case, it could have been due to the nativity of Raf'at at his young age, and indeed, Khiyabani knew that it was not the case anymore that chose him as his right hand in the party. Kasravi even mentions that Raf'at was the one who used to transcribe Khiyabani's speeches and publish them in *Tajaddud*. However, Kasravi mocks his writings as vague and unintelligible.⁶³ Nevertheless, this shows the significance of Raf'at to Khiyabani. Kasravi also does not mention clearly whether he was killed or committed suicide.⁶⁴

In another very short writing, there is some biographical information which here we can see the parts which were not already included in Ariyanpour's passage: "he had a normal height, a

⁶¹ Yahya Ariyanpour, *Az Šabā tā Nīmā*. Vol. 1, (Tehran: Ketabhaye Jibi (Franklin), 1350 [1972]), 427.

⁶² Ahmad Kasravi, *Tārīkh-i Hijdah Sāliyi Āzarbāyijān (Eighteen Years History of Azarbayejan)*. (Tehran: Negah, 1386 (2007)), 678.

⁶³ Kasravi, *Eighteen Years*, 701-702.

⁶⁴ Kasravi, *Eighteen Years*, 718.

harmonious face, black eyes and eyebrows, attractive looks, pale skin, a heart more tender than petals and a sensitive soul full of passion and love.”⁶⁵ As one can see it does not add anything to our knowledge of Raf‘at and his lifetime. Actually, almost any writing about Raf‘at is just a mere repetition of Ariyanpour’s writing.

Apparently, Raf‘at soon became favoured by Khiyabani. He became the editor-in-chief of *Tajaddud*, which was established to promote the ideas of the Democrat Party. According to the newspapers and his writings, he had been very active in the political scene and party’s activities. In 1920, when the party declared its revolt, he was Khiyabani’s aid in every matter, including the publication of the newspaper of the new establishment: *Azadiyestan*.

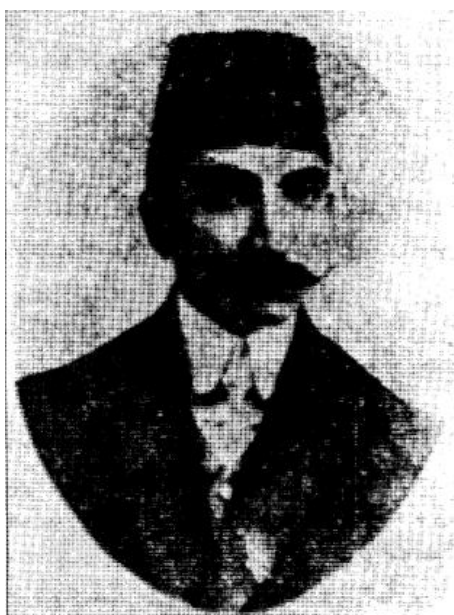


Figure 3. Portrait of Taqi Raf‘at

After the Constitutional Revolution, the imperialist powers did not favour the progressive nationalistic configurations. This resulted in the bombardment of parliament by Russian forces and Mohammad Ali Shah. This was followed by a two-year period of despotism, which came to an end with the Iranian’s fight over freedom and finally capturing Tehran. From this time until the emergence of Reza Shah, the imperialist powers understood they could not change the condition in their favour back to despotism, so they tried hampering and creating chaos in the country. At this time, Iran was about to establish itself as a modern nation-state while it was a boiling pot of different tendencies and ideas. Nothing was established entirely, and everyone struggled for their ideas and benefits. This was the time when Raf‘at emerged on the scene.

Iransky well describes this chaotic transitional period. In this period, the industrial finance bourgeoisie lost its high hand, and feudalism started to some extent to gain power, causing a chaotic situation.⁶⁶ Economy-wise, this is the period of struggle between the industrial finance

⁶⁵ H. Mehrdad, “Zindigānīyi Jāvīd: Chihriyi Malāl” (The Eternal Life: The Face of Dejection). *Iranshahr*, No. 1 and 2, Dey 1303 (December 1924), 124.

⁶⁶ Iransky, 142.

bourgeoisie and the feudal aristocrats, which was vehemently under the influence of imperialist interventions to cause chaos and hamper economic development. The extent of this chaos was to the point that between 1909 and 1921, twenty cabinets came into power.

This is the condition in which we meet Raf'at. Reading and judging his acts and oeuvre must be situated within this context. Apart from the few sources we observed about Raf'at, most of our information comes from his own writings published in *Tajaddud* and *Azadiyestan*. This dissertation is dependent on those writings in providing a reading of his oeuvre. His writings in *Tajaddud* cover a wide range of forms and genres. He had a regular satirical column that dealt with modern topics of the concern of the day in a critical language with a satirical tone titled "Unspeakable Hearables." Many of the main essays of the paper were written by him. He had also published many other essays on different literary and political topics. Plenty of his poems could also be found in *Tajaddud*. In fact, a significant share of *Tajaddud* was written only by Raf'at himself, to the point that some of the foreign news was also written by him. It is essential to pay attention to the fact that not all the writings published in *Tajaddud* were signed so we can be sure of their authorship. A substantial share was not signed due to the political reasons of the time. What we reported here is based on the signed writings. However, close, careful reading can make a hunch that Raf'at wrote even more. More importantly, one can guess that Khyababnai's speeches, if not written by Raf'at, were to a great extent influenced by him.

The writings in *Azadiyestan* were, to some extent, more radical because the publication of *Azadiyestan* was in the climax of the struggle and revolt. It included a series of essays and discussions on different literary and social topics. It also included some intimations of the new poetry and the new poetic paradigm. Moreover, some writings like "A Literary Rebellion," which seemed of great importance to Raf'at, were also republished there.

6. The chapters' overview

The first chapter tries to depict the canonized dispute over modernity and modernism in Persian literature that greatly influenced and formed contemporary Persian literature. This chapter will provide a reading of the whole canonized dispute so Raf'at can be situated in that. Thus, the reader would be able to situate Raf'at and his oeuvre within the historical and paradigmatic context.

Chapter two tries to dive into a particular image manifested in Raf'at's writing, which is the shipwreck of the Titanic. Through the image of the Titanic, it is possible to grasp Raf'at's perception of modernity and the modern moment. In this scheme, the reader can see that the modern moment was perceived as a disastrous one by Raf'at. This proves his critical distance toward the material condition of his time, which can be used to depict and analyse his ideas on this solid ground.

The third chapter deals with the image of Dehqan and its manifestation in Raf'at's poetry and other poetical productions, alongside a look at the material condition of Dehqan. This links the disastrous perception of modernity to the immediate material condition of peasants and masses. Simultaneously, it provides a more metaphysical basis for the rebellion, which is Raf'at's strategy toward the modern disastrous moment.

Chapter four focuses on reading Raftat's oeuvre as an absence that could have been saved in a moment of recognition in the Benjaminian sense. The image of a flying flare is used to historically describe Raftat's emergence and his consequent fade into oblivion in a meaningful historical sense that simultaneously is material and theological. This links it to the metaphysical ground of rebellion observed in its previous chapter and also links it with the material rebellion, which is based on a materialist perception of history, which perceives modernity as disastrous.

The last chapter tries to grasp the internal form and structure of Raftat's oeuvre concerning the disastrous modernity and his shaky presence in his rebellious stance and struggle in the modern condition. This is reflected in the concept of anxiety which could be observed in his formulation of the modern disastrous condition and also the internal structure of his writings, which is anxious fragmentary writing.

1. The canonized dispute over modern Persian literature

As we observed earlier, the emergence of the constitutional literature was a reaction to the already existing literature. Due to the changes in the substructure, the constitutional literature established itself and its suitable form and content. However, with this new literature being introduced, a dispute began to form about what literature is and how this new literature must be. This dispute itself got so extensive and overwhelming that it not only affected the literature and was manifested in almost every writing, but even the dispute itself started to become canonized.

We need to look at the emergence of the question of modernity and modernism in literature and see how it was formed and later canonized to the point that we can talk about a canonized dispute with certain poles and their arguments for their stances. To do this, we need to look at the condition where Iranians encountered modernity and the background in which this happened. Then, we can see the canonized dispute over modernism in literature which, although still open to controversy, has somehow settled itself as part of the canon.

This canonized dispute, to some extent, was and still is a meaningless dispute. Because at its face, it is a dispute between those supporting modernity and modernism in literature (which surprisingly seem to appear as the same) and those opposing it. However, this is meaningless because none of the camps are what they pretend to be and what they are perceived to be. To observe this, one can look at the fact that those supporting literary modernism or literary *tajaddud*, which seems to be the revolutionary camp in this dichotomy, many of them are supporters of the status quo and the established material condition.

On the other hand, not all those opposing literary *tajaddud* were supporters of the status quo. It seemed that both camps had a distorted relationship with reality, and they seemed to be occupied with literature while they did not understand that the literature was the result of the newly established condition. It was as if they had forgotten their immediate material condition and were struggling over an accidental appendix of the condition. This was well formulated by Baqer Momeni, where he wrote: “[different] classes had different relations to the production and economy, while distinguishing the borders between them was difficult... Each of them claimed to own many different literary works which, in fact, were supporting the other class.”¹ Thus, there is a vague border between the classes and their consequent struggle over their benefits that, to some extent, cause the vagueness in the literary dispute and its futility. However, since there is an actual class distinction, the dispute could have some profound meaning which occurs in some particular cases like Raf‘at, Nima, etc.

What actually happened in the nineteenth century in Iran is that with the emergence of capitalism, since the old economy and its pillars (aristocrats, feudalists, etc.) resisted the new economic order, the newly emerged bourgeoisie was the revolutionary class. As a result, as Momeni mentions, anything related to this newly emerged class in the late nineteenth century is progressive and revolutionary. The same is true about literature. Anything related to the aristocracy, even if it was new in its form, was reactionary and anything reflecting the benefits of the bourgeoisie was progressive.² Nevertheless, the time passes, and with the establishment

¹ Momeni, 6-7.

² Momeni, 24.

of capitalism and the bourgeoisie's settlement as the class in power, it soon becomes a reactionary force and produces and supports the reactionary literature while defending the status quo. Moreover, during the emergence of capitalism, some reactionary forces like aristocrats and feudalists joined the bourgeois cause because of political reasons. Therefore, the canonized dispute over literature and modern literature was just as indistinguishable as the borders between these classes. This made the whole canonized dispute seem like a fuss over an appendix of the condition rather than being concerned about the condition itself.

Though this dispute seems to be vague, it serves well for representation. Thus, we will adhere to this controversy and its different poles and try to represent the atmosphere while illuminating some aspects of it. Moreover, there are instances in each camp that those involved have a certain clear relationship with reality and seriously posit themselves both in the social and literary sense, like Nima. Raf'at seems to be another example. His idea that the literary revolution is needed to complete the social revolution seems to be a ground to settle his relation to reality. Literature is not an accidental appendix of condition to him. We will look at this later.

Historically talking, this canonized dispute had different material causes. At first, it was a dispute between the revolutionary bourgeoisie on one side and the aristocrats and feudalists on the other. However, later with the establishment of capitalism, the canonized dispute took different tracks. Generally, it became a dispute between the reactionary nationalist bourgeoisie on one side and those supporting radical ideas about form and content on the other. In the first phase of this dispute, many subjects were vague and unformulated so that they could later become the point of controversy. But in the second phase, the serious dispute was between the reactionary bourgeoisie and those concerned with the radical content of literature which was to some extent under the influence of leftist ideas. And the other camp was those of the middle class and the progressive bourgeoisie in favour of radical art forms and art for art's sake ideas.

Retrospectively, the constitutional literature was mainly concerned with the content since the revolutionary bourgeoisie was implementing revolutionary content in it. The literary forms remained to a great extent, untouched and still reminded one of the feudal forms. The subsequent disputes are mostly over this untouched form and how to change it. However, that dispute also soon becomes meaningless because, this time, the established bourgeoisie and non-revolutionary middle class focus on the form and leave the content in oblivion.

In fact, the revolutionary bourgeoisie of the constitutional literature did not know much of the essence of literature, as was the case with philosophy. This resulted in some simplified prescriptions for literature regarding its content which was a revolutionary phenomenon in its time. However, later when the focus was turned toward form, the real revolutionaries like Nima, with their anti-capitalist attitude, revolutionized the literature. The rest of the disputes over form were simple controversies among different sects of the bourgeoisie and the middle class with no radical meaning. As a result, this canonized dispute again became meaningless and a fuss over nothing.

This chapter is intended to reread this canonized dispute to shed light on some dark aspects of it and finally situate Raf'at in it. This has never been an easy task. Because the sources are rare, and one has a difficult time accessing the material and analysing them. However, as Momeni mentioned, there has been a trend of falling in love with the Constitutional Revolution and its literature which had resulted in the extravagant publication of banal Qajar writings, among

which all the serious resources could be lost.³ However, here we will start to observe different poles of this canonized dispute in more detail and see how they were related to the reality and the idea of literature simultaneously. So we may be able to find Raf'at's position in this vortex of social and cultural change.

1.1. First camp: The orientalist understanding of contemporary literature alongside conservative defence of Old Persian literature

This subchapter is intended to study the details of the conservative camp of modern Persian literature with a focus on its most progressive members. First, this will let us not be absorbed in the repeated arguments in defence of old literary heritage and rather takes us a step further to see why it has been essential to stand by the side of literary traditions. It also allows us to see how much this conservative camp has been affected by the revolutionary one, which is reflected in the wide use of ideas and jargon made by the other camp.

Indeed, Edward Granville Browne does not possess the best literary taste or perception of the Iranian condition. However, he can represent the extreme side of the conservative camp, at least when literary modernism is concerned. It is also an excellent point of focus because he somehow encapsulates the phase delay of European modernity and the Iranian one. Moreover, although he has represented himself as a supporter of the constitutional cause in Iran, Browne belongs to the established bourgeoisie of Imperialist Britain, which makes it noteworthy to see how the ideas of the cultural atmosphere get twisted in the hands of different classes.

Among Browne's writings, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia* deals with providing an account of modern Persian literature. As the title suggests and Browne also mentions in his introduction, the volume treats press and poetry equivalent to some extent.⁴ As we already observed in the introduction, the emergence of the press and journalism greatly affected constitutional literature. This is important because it shows that modern Persian literature is actually the result of the new economy and technology. However, interestingly, in Browne's reading, this is dismissed because he is still looking for some richness of modern Persian literature in the sense that he advertises as an orientalist. He looks for what had fascinated him in canonized classic literature.

He overtly mentions that his book is aimed to supply the students (future orientalists) with materials for their studies so they would not come short in their studies and be limited to the sources before the fifteenth century.⁵ This means that those students and even Browne himself are surprised by the very existence of modernity somewhere out of Europe. Thus, they either neglect any other geography in the modern world except for colonial intentions or get perplexed when they see that modernity lurking there. Browne, in a nice-looking gesture, shows to "devote some attention to the refutation of a pernicious error chiefly attributable to the rarity of intimate relations between the literary worlds of Europe and Asia, but fostered and encouraged to some extent by those who desire for political reasons to represent such Asiatic peoples as the Persians as entirely decadent and degenerate."⁶ However, this seemingly

³ Momeni, 5-6.

⁴ Edward Granville Browne. *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*. (Cambridge University Press, 1914), ix.

⁵ Browne, *Press and Poetry*, xv.

⁶ Browne, *Press and Poetry*, xv.

benevolent devotion is distorted when reality is considered. Because any cultural relation has its ground in material relations. Basically, two cultures at least need a material way to exchange information and cultural heritage. In the modern condition, this relation only happens through the economy. A European nation must be in some kind of relationship with an Asian one (colonization, war, exploitation, rivalry, cooperation, etc.). If it is neglected or the other party is considered degenerate, it is only due to the economic factor. This distortion is evident in Browne's problematic statement about Iranians that "they have during the last eight years shown a vitality which, under happier circumstances, had it been unimpeded by malignant external forces entirely beyond the control of the Persian people, would, I am firmly convinced, have ultimately effected the moral and material regeneration of the country."⁷ One can either treat this as a benevolent gullible attitude or a treasonous one (and one must always be careful with British agents) because there could have never been a happier circumstance. First, because the economic relations have been developed like that and nobody can wish or imagine them to have happened in another way. More importantly, those poems that Browne tries to present as rich modern literature of Iran are themselves the result of that unhappy circumstances. Suppose the unhappy circumstances did not exist, there were no poetries for Browne to present them as vivacious literature of modern Persia. What is important is that Browne's relation to reality is distorted either by gullible benevolence or treasonous imperialism.

Browne's strategy in shaping his writing seems paradoxical. On the one hand, he claims to "include in this volume a selection of these recent patriotic and political poems, chosen more or less at random out of a great number"⁸ and presents them in a system that exactly copies the tradition of *tazkaras* (memorandum): "arranged ... in chronological order, and have chosen specimens representative of all the principal types."⁹ This is all done based on the idea that "true literature is the mirror of contemporary thought and sentiment, and the alternating phases of hope and despair of the Persians during the last eight years (1905-1913) are well reflected in the ephemeral literature of that period."¹⁰ This simplified perception of literature was prevailing in constitutional literature, for example, in the writings of Akhundzadeh, which we will see in the following subchapter. Thus, one can see an amalgam of traditional views and attitudes toward literature alongside those developed by the revolutionary bourgeoisie simultaneously in Browne's writing.

In his introduction, Browne goes on a meaningless detour of a long speech on Turkish and Arabic literature and again presents his simplified perception of literature via a quotation from Shaykh Shawish that poetry is "that which possesses your heart until you put it aside."¹¹ It is important here that such poetry has significance until it is held in one's hand. If it is put away, it is as if it is dead again. This is totally against the ideas of constitutionalist literature, which was looking for realistic poetry to reflect the condition and educate the people not to lose its relation to reality as soon as it is put away. One can see the inconsistencies in Browne's strategy, which are not limited to him or his camp.

One particular characteristic of this canonized dispute could be found in both camps and even later will be culminated in the reign of Reza Shah. Browne, who had dedicated his writing to

⁷ Browne, *Press and Poetry*, xv.

⁸ Browne, *Press and Poetry*, xv.

⁹ Browne, *Press and Poetry*, xvi.

¹⁰ Browne, *Press and Poetry*, xvi.

¹¹ Browne, *Press and Poetry*, xxxii.

political and patriotic poetry, traces it back to the eleventh century to Ferdowsi and his *Shahname* and finds in it the “same spirit of pride in his nation and race and that love of heroic deeds and high achievements.”¹² Probably the turn toward Ferdowsi first occurred in the other camp, but it was soon absorbed by this one as well. Due to the rise of nationalism and the fact that the nationalist bourgeoisie came into power as a result of foreign interventions, this seems to have become not the point of dispute but rather the point where everybody agreed. (We will see in subchapter 1.3 (p. 30) how Rafi stands out in this scheme). This culminated in the reign of Reza Shah when Ferdowsi became the symbol of the whole nation.

However, when Browne starts to become more prescriptive in his reading or shows his wishes for his favoured poetry, one can see that he really belongs to this camp with its reactionary features. He seems to look for a poetry fit for the “conquered and helpless nation” as the one he has happily found in Ireland, which “can only strive to maintain its spiritual life under the more or less galling yoke of the foreign invader, and must sustain its sense of nationhood by memories of a glorious past and hopes of a happier future.”¹³ It is evident that his support for the revolutionary bourgeoisie should, at some point, give its place to the original version of himself, which is an agent of the bourgeoisie of imperialist Britain.

Browne quotes Mirza Agha Khan, whose ideas we will meet in the following subchapter, and then responds to Agha Khan’s criticism of classic Persian literature and tries to defend it.¹⁴ First of all, this can show that, finally, Browne has no relation to reality and the existing condition, for Agha Khan’s criticism had a serious material cause, and even he was more familiar with classic literature than Browne. This could only be understood either that Browne’s relation to reality was distorted, or he was simply under the influence of his class benefits. Nevertheless, the reactionary element is evident.

Browne’s distorted relation to reality and his seeming ignorance of material condition gets him to the point that he is surprised that Ottoman Turks, who are “far less original and talented,” first introduced patriotic and nationalist notions to poetry. Again, he is ignorant of the material condition, which probably is the reason for his surprise because it is evident that Turks’ economic and geopolitical relations with Europe obviously differed from Iranians’.

Browne is a good example of the complexities of the condition and the canonized dispute because he, the benevolent reactionary bourgeois, starts to support the revolutionary bourgeois and ends up supporting, either deliberately or indeliberately, the reactionary camp of modern Persian literature. We can see that Yasemi and other orthodox literature agents based their reading on Browne’s. This wandering British individual seems to have played his part in the game.

Another member of this camp is Rashid Yasemi, who may characteristically represent the bourgeoisie in power that has lost its revolutionary character and become reactionary. He almost functioned as Reza Shah’s agent to establish and propagandize his favoured literature. He has been a sincere agent to the point that, in retrospect, one may despise his shamelessness for having included a distorted narrative of Mirzadeh Eshghi in his book, who was murdered by the command of Yasemi’s entrepreneur (Reza Shah).

¹² Browne, *Press and Poetry*, xxxii.

¹³ Browne, *Press and Poetry*, xxxiii.

¹⁴ Browne, *Press and Poetry*, xxxvi.

Yasemi's book *Contemporary Literature* (1937) claimed to be and actually was the continuation of Browne's writing, focusing on 1920 to 1937. He began by praising Browne and his alleged Iranophilist attitude. He wrote that Browne was very sad about what happened to Iran and was in despair like everyone. He continued that nobody, whether inside or outside Iran, could see progress in Iran's future.¹⁵ Interestingly, in these lines, Yasemi not only brings forward Browne as his predecessor, but also suspends imagination until the new regime is established. All the hopes and despairs and the struggles of Iranians before Reza Shah are omitted, and even the imagination is suspended so he may present his big achievement, which is the new regime. The suspension of imagination gets to the point that he denies the past movements. He wrote that there was no trace of the greatness of ancient times except for memory, and in such conditions, there was no opportunity for poetry and literature. Interestingly, the period Yasemi is talking about was one of the most intense and fruitful periods of Persian poetry, and there were tons of poems in every paper. Yasemi mentions that in the works of that time, there was nothing other than mourning and curses.¹⁶ This obviously is like neglecting the whole tradition of criticism of the period in a pejorative tone. Moreover, Yasemi seems to neglect the fact that his entrepreneur was nothing less than Qajar's in suppressing authors and freedom fighters, causing them to mourn and curse.

Yasemi writes that Browne has desperately left his favourite land (Iran) and has kept silent. Then via the means of some reactionary poetry tries to prove that his entrepreneur was always expected.¹⁷ Obviously, Yasemi was trying to prove his entrepreneur as a great national figure and his era as the paradise for the Iranians. He supports this idea by referring to industries, railways, and economic progress. However, when he gets to his topic, which is literature, he finds himself empty-handed and writes: "considering verse and prose, it is not possible to present works which are fit to other progresses. The transition phases always provide the future eras."¹⁸ His praise of Reza Shah's progress ends in suspending the literature and promising it to appear in the future. However, there are certain causes that Yasemi hides and forgets. His entrepreneur had established great censorship and suppressing power that, to a great extent, hampered the publication of any serious writing. More importantly, the revolutionary bourgeoisie, which was then established and had become reactionary, yet did not have the time and resources to produce its own literature and, as a result, postponed the literature with a promise for the future. In the future, this literature gets established by its agents like Khanlari and Ra'di.

Yasemi talks about "the silence in the poetry of Iran"¹⁹ in a way that is as if there were no voices to be heard. However, this is simply Yasemi pretending to be deaf by the order of his entrepreneur because those voices went against his entrepreneur's aims and ambitions. This is due to the fact that the established nationalist bourgeoisie had not yet produced its own literature to be heard.

Yasemi tries to bridge between the literature of Reza Shah's era and the literature of the pre-constitution, and he can only do so by omitting, censoring, and suppressing the radical

¹⁵ Rashid Yasemi, *Adabīyāt-i Mu'āşir (Contemporary Literature)*. (Tehran: Chapkhane Roshanai, 1316 [1937]), 1.

¹⁶ Yasemi, 1.

¹⁷ Yasemi, 2.

¹⁸ Yasemi, 3.

¹⁹ Yasemi, 6.

constitutional literature. Since he tries to provide a history of literature and an anthology, he needs to find a way to fill the pages. The idea that he pretended to support in the first pages of his book that a new literature is needed will not work since he does not have his own literature to present. Thus, he needs to do some legerdemain to make it possible to present the old reactionary literature as new. Suddenly, he claims that all those struggling in favour of modernism knew that old classic authors had made the poetry perfect in any sense so any new topic could fit in it.²⁰ This not only goes against the very consensus over which the whole struggle of modern Persian literature began, but it also goes against Yasemi's writing a couple of pages before that line. He does so in order to substitute his favoured reactionary literature instead of literary modernism (*tajaddud*), since what he promotes is exactly what feudal aristocrats were promoting. At this time, because of its condition, the reactionary bourgeoisie is promoting the same until it can produce its own literature. This gets to the point that Yasemi overtly mentions that imitating the old classic authors is very trendy²¹ and dedicates almost all part of his anthology to that.

When Yasemi was writing and publishing his writing, many of those involved in the Constitutional Revolution and its literature were still present and had observed his entrepreneur's deceptions. So he had no choice but to include some names in his anthology, which went against his scheme. This includes Parvin E'tesami, Dehkhoda, and Mirzadeh Eshghi. All these cases are assigned a half-page censored biography with a weak apolitical writing of them. The case of Eshghi is the worst since Yasemi's entrepreneur murdered him, and Yasemi shamelessly distorts and garbles the story and introduces him as illiterate. Nima, who was not the most famous name at that time, yet was gaining his fame, is included in a table as the names which were not included due to limits of volume. Indeed, no mentions of revolutionary figures like Rafiq were made.

The reactionary bourgeoisie later produces its agents in many different disguises and colours who present themselves in different ways. They could be found overtly supporting the old paradigms or even in disguise of radical movements. One of the many, but characteristically representing such shameless stance is Mohammad Reza Shafi'i Kadkani. He has many voluminous writings on the topic which belong to the same scheme. He presents himself as a formalist critic, not caring about politics. In contrast, before 1979, he overtly presented himself as a political one and after that yet was political, although he pretended to be the other way. In one of his famous frequently referred books, he claims that he studies different aspects of literature which all seem to be dependent on economic-political conditions. However, when he gets to the point of delineating these conditions, he simply mentions that he is not gullible to talk about the condition regarding the substructure and superstructure and tries to pretend that he is abstaining from a high position.²² However, the point is that he cannot do so because then his whole scheme will be questioned.

Interestingly, in all his so-called formalist readings, at any point he gets to Eshghi, he introduces Eshghi as the illiterate. This is clear that this was suggested by the aristocrat Iraj and widely propagandized by Yasemi and other reactionary bourgeoisie. The so-called formalist

²⁰ Yasemi, 8.

²¹ Yasemi, 9.

²² Mohammad Reza Shafi'i Kadkani, *Advār-i Shi'r-i Fārsī (Periods of Persian Poetry From Constitution to Downfall of Kingdom)*. (Tehran: Sokhan, 1380 (2001)), 44.

critic emphasizes that point as a historical fact that everyone forgets the propagandist source of that so-called historical fact. Now that we have observed the conservative camp in some detail, it would be helpful to turn our attention toward the other one and study it in more detail, so we can later situate our case study in its context.

1.2. Second camp: A modern definition of poetry

The camp, which apparently sided with the change in Persian literature, began in the middle of the nineteenth century. Akhundzade could well represent this camp and the problematics and complexities pertaining to that. Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzade could represent the revolutionary bourgeoisie of Iran when it was emerging and struggling with old feudalists and aristocrats. Consequently, almost anything relating to this class at that time was revolutionary and progressive. However, not everything was well formulated so it would not fall into other categories and camps. Moreover, the bourgeoisie later becomes a reactionary element. Therefore, the inconsistency and meaninglessness of the canonized dispute yet can be found in this camp. However, a detailed study of these ideas can let us trace later ideas and their intimations in this canonized dispute.

Akhundzade, alongside Mirza Agha Khan Kermani and Mirza Malkam Khan, is the most influential intellectual of pre-constitution whose ideas had a great impact on the Constitutional Revolution. They all, to a great extent, represent the benefits and desires of the revolutionary bourgeoisie. In a letter to Malkam in 1872, Akhundzade wrote: “if our cause succeeds, we will have freedom and limited (constitutional) kingdom instead of despotism.”²³ This was particularly a correct prediction and aspiration, though Akhundzade frequently tended to exaggerate what he had in his mind. He was one of the supporters of the idea of changing the Farsi script and tried hard for that. When it failed, he turned his attention toward publishing his famous book known as *Letters (Maktūbāt)*. He considered the publication of his book a step into civilization. He wished that with its publication, his compatriots would step into the realm of wisdom and cultivation.²⁴ One can easily sense an earnest naiveté and also some sort of conformism because although education seemed a revolutionary aim for the newly emerged Iranian bourgeoisie, when considering the West with which Akhundzade was familiar, education could be considered the hard core of the status quo.

Akhundzade and many other intellectuals of the time were seculars and almost blamed Islam for the whole unhappy condition. In the case of Akhundzade, his strategy was to suggest and establish Islamic Protestantism. He favoured changing Islam in a way that would exclude any right attributed to God (ḥaq allāh) and keep people’s rights (ḥaq al-nās). He was also, to a great extent, materialist and even formulated spirit with a materialistic approach.²⁵ However, he favoured Protestantism in Islam because he did think that it would not be possible to omit Islam at once. The same was in his mind about poetry. He seemed to have a very pragmatist approach toward poetry which we will see; some kind of Protestantism in poetry as well.

²³ Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzade, *Maktūbāt (Letters)*. Edited by Baqer Momeni. (Tehran, 1350 [1972]), introduction 8.

²⁴ Akhundzade, *Letters*, introduction 20.

²⁵ Akhundzade, *Letters*, introduction 33.

In his book, which includes letters, he starts defining some non-Farsi vocabulary for he thinks they do not have any Persian equivalent. This also includes different proper nouns and some vocabulary that really have equivalent in Persian, like Newton, Copernic, Xenophon, Literature, liberal, and so on. This simply could mean he was looking for the western version and formation of those ideas and phenomena. Among these probably liberal, revolution, and patriot are important to be considered. When defining liberal, he totally excludes any economic meaning of the term and somehow confines it to freedom against religion and religious authority.²⁶ Not only in this case, but generally in his cause, he seems to reduce Iran to Islam and forgets about any other aspect and element. In defining revolution and patriot, one can see the general revolutionary bourgeois ideas of Akhundzade. The revolution is against a despot and religious authorities to settle law and constitution according to the *rational* philosophers, which in his case are mostly English philosophers. Patriotism is the revolutionary aspect of this bourgeoisie because yet it is not settled, so it requires sacrifices and struggles.²⁷

Interestingly, among these non-Farsi vocabularies, one can find *poésie*, which he defines as “a sort of writing which includes a description of emotions and morals of a person or a society as it is, or description of a subject, or description of the natural condition in verse with strong influence on the reader.”²⁸ Although the definition seems to be partly simple, one can deduce that Akhundzade is looking for poetry that he cannot find in Iran, and that could be the reason that he uses a French word instead of the Farsi one. Reading the rest of his writings, it is possible to shed light on this.

In one of his writings, he defines the conditions of poetry as “virtue of content, and virtue of words.”²⁹ This is surprising since he mentions “words,” which, in this context, is the equivalent of form that is dismissed not only by him but also by many other constitutionalist intellectuals. He defines the virtue of content in a realistic manner that everything must be according to the reality of humans, fauna, flora, and geographies. He excludes from *poésie* anything which does not accord to reality or does not actually exist. To him, such poetry had never existed in any Farsi or Arabic poetry except in Ferdowsi’s *Shahname* and Nezami’s *Makhzan al-Asrar*.³⁰ Surprisingly, he cannot define the virtue of words/form. Just as he cannot distinguish why in the case of Ferdowsi or Shakespeare, whom he favours, the imaginary unreal creatures are no harm to *poésie*, but they are considerable harm in other writings. Clearly, Akhundzade is on a quest to find a poetry that supports his political and social cause, but his definitions could be applied to many other writings. In the literary and philosophical sense, it has no accuracy. We are aware that he did not intend for such accuracy. However, the critical point is that when his quest is finished simply because he has faded away, then all these ideas can quickly lose their radicality and become reactionary, just as the revolutionary bourgeoisie soon turns to a reactionary force.

In *Letters*, he dedicated a couple of pages to a quotation from *Shahname* and wrote, “poor Iran! Eight hundred years ago, Ferdowsi could predict these days of yours via his vision.”³¹ What he quotes is a part of *Shahname* that criticizes Muslims and Arabs for their moral degeneration

²⁶ Akhundzade, *Letters*, 10.

²⁷ Akhundzade, *Letters*, 10-11.

²⁸ Akhundzade, *Letters*, 11.

²⁹ Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzade, *Maqālāt (Essays)*. Edited by Baqer Momeni. (Tehran: Ava, 1351 [1973]), 31.

³⁰ Akhundzade, *Essays*, 31.

³¹ Akhundzade, *Letters*, 23.

and, in a somehow racist manner, shows pride in the Iranian kingdom. This obviously is fit for Akhundzade, who quests for the same ideas to settle them. However, it is not only Akhundzade who seems to fall in love with Ferdowsi as the national symbol. Anyone from any camp praises Ferdowsi in this era as a consequence of nationalistic trends, and even in the reign of Reza Shah, Ferdowsi somehow officially became the symbol of nationalism.

Akhundzade's main argument about poetry, in *Letters*, precisely predicts his innovations and the inconsistencies in his ideas at the same time. His argument about poetry is capsulated between two clearly materialistic analyses of press and publication in Iran. First, he vehemently criticizes the stupidity of those engaged in the publication that they prefer lithography only for the sake of keeping the beauty of Farsi calligraphy resulting in the publication of faulty books.³² Then he goes into his argument about poetry and then closes it by referring to the technical fact that the quality of the bindings done by Iranians is not good, so that a book could be used for hundred years.³³ These are severely materialistic and earthly grounded, however, he cannot be this much grounded and clear when he tries to formulate poetry.

He starts with serious criticism of the existing literature. As is expected, he pejoratively refers to the existing religious literature and the corrupted history books. Then he claims that people do not know what *poésie* is, and they think that any writing with a meter and rhyme is a poem. He repeats his ideas about defining poetry and again claims Ferdowsi was the only one who knew how to write *poésie*. He believes that if people were informed about *poésie* and its significance, they would be enabled to write poems like Ferdowsi. Then, he mentions Homer and Shakespeare as other examples. Surprisingly, finally, he accepts Quran as the *poésie*. To formulate this, he writes that "this talent is one of the essential human capacities and sometimes randomly manifests itself in human beings, and this talent is attributed to revelation."³⁴ Interestingly, he dismisses form and material condition while his writing shows a great insistence before and after this passage on the material condition of writing. While he materialistically defined spirit, he traps himself in rendering Quran as *poésie* and then accepting revelation and muses. These inconsistencies tend to be everywhere in his writing.

Nevertheless, one of the critical points to observe these inconsistencies is in an introduction which he wrote to a collection of poems from his peers (the sort of poem he favoured). In that introduction, he clearly pays more attention to form and writes: "poetry must cause joy and sadness more than prose. If not, it is a simple verse."³⁵ He mentions that this could be done with the virtue of words, similes, allegories, etc. Apparently, when it comes to the poetry that he favours, he is aware that form has significance. But suddenly, he writes that "most of *qazals* cause no joy or passion... and they are not poetry."³⁶ This is surprising because *qazal* is a template that is usually well-elaborated in the sense of form and gets all its beauty with the formal plays in the language. The point is that when Akhundzade gets to the poetry which he favours and supports, he feels the difficulty of the task of defining poetry. Akhundzade seems to have a particular favoured form and content that he cannot formulate. It seems that anywhere the content is agreed upon by him, he accepts the form. Interestingly, in this introduction, he does not mention *poésie* and uses the Farsi words for differentiation (*nazm* and *she'r*). He even

³² Akhundzade, *Letters*, 33.

³³ Akhundzade, *Letters*, 35.

³⁴ Akhundzade, *Letters*, 33-35.

³⁵ Akhundzade, *Essays*, 28.

³⁶ Akhundzade, *Essays*, 28-29.

widens the scope of his favoured poetry and includes Hafez, Sa'di, and even Jami in it. It could be deduced that when he faces those of other camps, he unsheathes the radical sword of *poésie*.

Now that we have observed the merits and inconsistencies of Akhundzade's ideas on poetry, it is worth looking at some other intellectuals of the time who also favoured his cause. Mirza Agha Khan Kermani, in the introduction to his book *Sālār-nāmah*, discusses the condition of classic poetry and the need for the change in poetry within the same scheme of constitutionalism like Akhundzade. He vehemently criticized old authors and poets for moral degeneration but surprisingly claimed that their poetry was the reason for the despotic degenerate behaviour of the kings.³⁷ Apart from the sincerity and righteousness of Agha Khan's criticism, which comes from his dedication to the modernisation of Iran, his argument seems seriously faulty. It substitutes the cause with the effect. He does not treat the literature as the result of the condition in which it was produced, which one can be open to debate over it. But he subverts it and blames poetry for being the reason for the unhappy condition and moral degeneration. He is not the only one promoting such ideas. This was very prevailing among the intellectuals of the time, among which the most famous was Ahmad Kasravi.

Nevertheless, this can represent the meaninglessness that I attributed to this canonized dispute to the point that even notions tend to lose their border and become vague in both camps. Agha Khan was also fond of Ferdowsi, and his nationalist tendencies seemed to be his drive. However, he mentioned that Ferdowsi was the one accepted by the literates of the west, proving its importance.³⁸ Again one can see the subverted causality. In this case, it also has other significances related to westoxification, which we will see in the next subchapter. Interestingly, apart from the fact that Agha Khan's poetry is distant from classic paradigm and values, and tries to distinguish itself from the aristocrat-favoured poetry, his poem still remains in that paradigm to a great extent. For example, there is an *address while kissing the ground* (*khitābi zamīnbūs*) in his titles. One can deduce that while the content is revolutionary bourgeois content, the feudalist forms remain untouched to a great extent. Agha Khan's general idea exactly matches those of Akhundzade's in supporting realistic poetry, which supports patriotism and opposes dogmas and superstition.³⁹ Momeni also observed this inconsistency between form and content in the constitutional literature and wrote: "probably we can call [this literature] as political realism or critical realism, since one can claim that the authors of this period sacrificed the artistic aspects of literature in favour of its political aspect."⁴⁰ Later, this dispute changed its formulation and started to centralize around form and artistic aspects of poetry. In cases like Nima, where his relation to reality is seriously settled and critically posited, it results in radical artistic forms that even affect the whole history of poetry after Nima. However, in the other cases, the dispute over form becomes a meaningless bourgeois and middle-class dispute at best, resulting in the art for art's sake arguments and discussions.

Mirza Malkam Khan, another influential figure of the Constitutional Revolution, held the same beliefs about the old literature and vehemently criticized it. However, he was not a poet and consequently less engaged with defining what poetry is or must be. He also had harsh criticisms

³⁷ Nazemoleslam Kermani. *Tārīkh-i Bīdārīyi Īrānīyān (The History of Iranian's Awakening)*. Edited by Ali Akbar Saeidi Sirjani. (Tehran: Bonyade Farhang, 1357 [1979]), 222.

³⁸ Nazemoleslam 223.

³⁹ Fereydoun Adamiyat, *Andīshihāyi Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī (The Thoughts of Mirza Agha Khan Kermani)*. (Tehran: Payam, 1357 [1979]), 217.

⁴⁰ Momeni, 57.

of classic literature and aristocratic literature. While calling those old poets insane prattlers, he mentioned that the poetry of the ancestors was all about attributing false characteristics to the king and lord.⁴¹ In fact, the paradigm of classic literature was not realistic and in no way looked after veracity. There are many occasions that classic poets and critics themselves overtly formulated that the more poetry evades reality and enters falsehood, the more beautiful and virtuous it would be.⁴²

The same could be found in Zeyn al-Abedin Maraghei's writings. He criticizes the classic eulogies: "the praised one in the poetry is before the eyes of the people, like a negro and they call him beautiful Joseph... His wife even does not spit on him and slaps him on the neck, and he does not dare go to the toilet in the dark, but the poets praise his courage and resemble him to Rostam."⁴³ One can see the severe criticism of old classic poetry in these sentences. Furthermore, Maraghei, in another passage, after another criticism of word plays and formal features of classic poetry, full of curses, mentions a serious question: "is word dependent on meaning or meaning dependent on word?"⁴⁴ Although this question was never carefully formulated in constitutional literature and was later focused on in Raf'at's writings and Nima's, which is the most famous case, it refers to the critical core of this canonized dispute. This shows that although the canonized dispute was, to a great extent, meaningless and had vague class and theoretical borders, it was centred around a serious question and delivered it to the next phase, and those radically related to reality had the chance to formulate it, like Raf'at and Nima. Now that we have seen the two poles of this canonized dispute, we may turn our attention toward a third category or a third camp, which never was presented as a part of this canonized dispute. However, anytime there was a figure who could critically settle his relation to his immediate material condition, this third camp emerged.

1.3. Third camp: another scheme to perceive the encounter

Having seen this canonized dispute from different points of view, and before getting to Raf'at's position in it, it is worth paying attention that one could always observe a sort of the third camp. Some figures can only come under this category for they differ from these two camps that we observed, but they differ to the point that they themselves could not stand by each other. However, to see one of the strong points of this third camp, which characteristically can show the criticism of the whole canonized dispute, we may turn our attention to Jalal Ale Ahmad, who wrote his analysis later than this period. But his analysis can be influential in understanding the possible criticism of the canonized dispute. His ideas will also help us in later chapters, so it will be good to take the opportunity to dissect them for the reader.

In fact, Jalal's political life could also be related to some sort of thirdness. He and Khalil Maleki were famous figures who broke away from the communist Tudeh Party and established the Third Force Party (*nirūyi sivvum*). However, here, by the third camp, we do not mean to refer to the Third Force Party, rather we want to make an umbrella term to be able to categorize all

⁴¹Yahya Ariyanpour, *Az Šabā tā Nīmā*. Vol. 1. (Tehran: Ketabhaye Jibi (Franklin), 1350 [1972]), 311.

⁴² In traditional literature, the idea of the falsehood of a poem as its virtue was, to a great extent, accepted. There are famous verses like "Do not engage with poetry and its technique, for the more false a poetry is, the better it is" by Nezami.

⁴³ Ziyān al-Ābidīn Marāghī'ī, *Sīyāḥat Nāmiyi Ibrāhīm Biyg* (Tehran: Sadaf, 1344), 240.

⁴⁴ Marāghī'ī, *Sīyāḥat Nāmiyi*, 231.

the figures and arguments which parted from the canonized dispute or rendered in meaningful in other ways. In choosing Jalal, one can argue against it that it is belated considering the period we are talking about. However, it can characteristically represent the radicality found in the third camp as we defined it. Moreover, Jalal's influence could never be dismissed, whether one supports or opposes it.

Probably the most famous and notorious idea of Jalal was westoxification. Jalal tried to bring under this term the material and mental condition in which he believed Iranians had imitated the west. Westoxification for Jalal is an illness: "I talk of westoxification as like cholera... a sickness has entered from outside and developed in a condition ready for illness."⁴⁵ This illness for Jalal is directly related to the *machine*. At the very beginning, he mentions that the source of this illness is not just the west. It is any society that has developed machine. For him, the machine is the problem that modern Iranians have to face and tame; without doing so, their actions are in vain. Apart from the criticisms subjected to Jalal's westoxification, at least he clearly shows that he has a serious material understanding of the condition where he posits Iran and delineates westoxification. Referring to the dissolution of feudalism in Europe and the emergence of a national coalition state in Iran, he depicts the different paths that Iran and the west took; the material path of the west and the vague spiritual path of Iranians.⁴⁶ He clearly denounced the orientalist writings on Iran, which he found as murmurs to put Iranians to sleep. He showed how this imitation of the west had rendered everything banal and meaningless without any authenticity to build upon. His idea of a westoxified person can be enlightening: "a westoxified person is suspended like a speck of dust... he is not the connection between old and new. He is something that has lost connection with the past and has no perception of the future. He is not a point in a line. He is an imaginary point in a surface or a space, suspended like that dust."⁴⁷

In his literary writings and analysis, Jalal keeps bringing up this notion in different ways that can be used to understand our subject of study here. Firstly, considering Raf'at regarding the idea of westoxification, one can admit that there is at least a share of truth in it when considering modern Persian literature. Looking at the pro-modernism camp of this canonized dispute, except for Nima, others have very limited life experience in Iran. They travelled a lot. They all looked cosmopolite. This cannot be rendered simply as good or bad. However, it can be related to the idea of westoxification, at least in the sense that the ideas seem to have developed in space distant from the Iranian atmosphere. If considered to be westoxification, it could also be treated as some sort of illness that also has few positive side effects.

In one of his writings, Jalal formulates a great argument to posit the canonized dispute and better perceive the vagueness of the borders in it. He writes:

The most noticeable feature of modern Persian literature is lining up and confrontation. It is a confrontation between new and old, young and elder, generations, classes... It is true that these lines are mixed and vague in the political atmosphere. But literature never lies. Literature is about sincerity. It is frank. Inevitably anyone must be on one side. And there cannot be more than one side.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Jalal Ale Ahmad, *Gharbzadigī (Westoxification)*. (Qom: Khorram, 1385 (2006)), 13.

⁴⁶ Jalal, *Westoxification*, 43-44.

⁴⁷ Jalal, *Westoxification*, 117.

⁴⁸ Jalal Ale Ahmad, *Arzyābī-yi Shitābzadah (Hurried Investigations)*. (Tabriz: Ebne Sina, 1344 [1965]), 57-58.

Evidently, the canonized dispute is the root of modern Persian literature. This passage also is a certain turn of attention toward form, for the content could always be insincere. However, what makes literature to be frank and even go against the author's intentions are the literary forms that can, to some extent, autonomously function. Moreover, the disturbance of the borders could be better perceived and overcome when the form is considered. If sincerity is to be found in form, then any content and claim could be judged. No reactionary force can hide behind a mask. As we may remember, it is easy to unmask those like Yasemi.

One can see that even Jalal has to be frank and straightforward when it comes to literature. Although he vehemently criticizes the imitation of the west, he also very realistically is open to the new genres and forms since he finds them inevitable as the machine seems inevitable:

It may seem a false imitation for us, Farsi speakers. However, when we import the European hat and railway and lose tons of money per year for that, imitating free verse or European symbolistic poetry is much easier. Moreover, with the communication tools, the similarity of the lifestyle and needs of different societies is inevitable. Anywhere that machine has arrived, the European isms have also occurred. And among those who think this import must be stopped, they surely must believe that umbrella and powder must as well be banned... Everywhere it is like this. The confrontation of new and old. However, art is not something to be judged as old and new. Nevertheless, if there is any argument about the necessity of these imitations, it would be enough to take a look at the novel, which is also an imitation of European culture. Although someday it was considered to be the occupation of vulgar people in the cafes, now it has found its place among all.⁴⁹

This is a brilliant passage since it encapsulates most of the problems and complexities of the canonized dispute. First of all, it establishes the modern Persian literature and the canonized dispute within a material framework greatly influenced by westoxification. It well describes how inevitable is the imitations of the European literature while keeping its critical distance. It also, in an excellent manner, depicts the meaninglessness and vagueness of the canonized dispute that the only justified case to oppose the imitations would be the case if one opposes the railway and umbrella as well. As we have observed and later will see in the case of Daneshkade and Kave, none of them opposes technology and machine but simply opposes the new literature. That is another reason why such a stance is meaningless. Because it does not oppose the immediate material condition, but it is only against one of the intimations and consequences of such condition.⁵⁰

To see that Jalal's idea of westoxification is not irrelevant, we may remember Mirza Agha Khan, in his introduction to *Sālārnāmah*, when refuting the classic literature and its paradigm, wrote: "European poets also conduct such poems, but they bring such poetry in a framework and set their poems according to logic, so it induces enlightenment and opposes superstition..."⁵¹ One can be surprised that either this results from the author's inadequate information of European poetry, or he naively compares the best of European poetry with the worst of Iranian one. It also is based on the subverted causality that European poetry has caused

⁴⁹ Jalal Ale Ahmad, *Haft Maqālah (Seven Essays)*. (Tehran: AmirKabir, 1357[1979]), 44-45.

⁵⁰ It is also interesting to pay attention to the fact that Jalal's frank reference to *import* precedes J. Hillis Miller's idea of America's export of literary criticism. "Although literary theory may have its origin in Europe, we export it in a new form, along with other American products all over the world – as we do many of our scientific and technological inventions, for example, the atom bomb."

⁵¹ Nazemoleslam, 223.

progress, not the way around. Because indeed, any sort of banal and reactionary poetry could also be sought in Europe. Nevertheless, this shows the extent that constitutional intellectuals like Agha Khan were mesmerized by Europe.

Even when he wanted to praise Ferdowsi's poetry for containing his favoured ideals and notions, Agha Kahn started his sentence with the fact that the only author praised by the Europeans was Ferdowsi. This can clearly be an intimation of westoxification, as Jalal demonstrated. Moreover, this can also posit the fact that the emergence of Ferdowsi as the favoured poetry during and after the Constitutional Revolution is, to some extent, the result of westoxification, which culminates in the reign of Reza Shah when British and other European orientalist seemed to have a significant influence.⁵²

Although Momeni seriously criticized Jalal's ideas, in his reading, we may pay attention to some facts that can support the core idea of Jalal. About the constitutional literature, Momeni writes: "In this time, the European bourgeoisie has developed a lot, and the intellectual atmosphere of Iran feeds on that to the point that sometimes it takes over the changes in the substructure of the society."⁵³ This is precisely an excellent material formulation of Jalal's idea that the westoxified entity is suspended and does not belong to a line, rather he is an imaginary abstract point in space. More importantly, this also represents the autonomy of superstructural forms to the point that they can develop independently and even then play their role in relation to the substructure.

On another occasion, Momeni formulates the modern Persian literature in a way that encapsulates the essential part of Jalal's idea:

The primary resource for the literature of this period is translation. These translations could be more misleading than anything else because they are new to Iranian readers. Clearly, being new does not mean something is progressive. However, novelty attracts many and even can deceive progressive people. Many of the progressive people had claimed new literary works which were produced to renew the appearance of the corrupted degenerate classes. On the other hand, part of this new literature could have been progressive in its place of production, but when it entered nineteenth-century Iran, it had lost its revolutionary character, especially for the fact that these were imported mostly by the ruling class.⁵⁴

Momeni did not agree with Jalal and his idea of westoxification. However, even if we side with Momeni, we still see the summarized core of Jalal's ideas, which must be seriously dealt with. At the same time, it also sheds light on the vagueness and meaninglessness of the canonized dispute in its relation to European literature. This vagueness is due to the fact that the class borders never get distinguished, and the forms also get disturbed and not are perceived well. Moreover, the canonized dispute, although in different phases centred around form and content, it seemed to have been shaped formally in the most superficial sense. It is reflected in the fact that the very appearance of a literary work seemed to be the reason for formulation and confrontation.

⁵² This can be seen in Ferdowsi millennial celebration in 1934, when a pile of orientalist were the centre of attention in that gathering.

⁵³ Momeni, 20.

⁵⁴ Momeni, 21-22.

Furthermore, if the borders and distinctions were vague during the Constitutional Revolution to hamper Jalal's righteousness in his westoxification framework, his ideas definitely could be easily applied to the canonized dispute during and after the reign of Reza Shah. A clear intimation of this was Yasemi, as we previously observed, as a reactionary bourgeois. Yasemi, in the introduction which we previously observed, writes: "the strong scientific and industrial bonds which have occurred between Iran and European nations have caused more mixture of western and eastern culture. And there is nothing more influential than a mixture of cultures in reinforcing the roots of literature."⁵⁵ Yasemi, as we observed, was a faithful agent of his employee in propagandizing the bourgeoisie favoured literature, which was not yet produced in that time. Moreover, Yasemi's shameless narrative even does not find any active role for Iran and the east. The confrontation is just Iran's dissolution into European bourgeois ideals. Not to mention that many authors and intellectuals, including Raf'at, who is the subject of our study, were all concerned with the strategy to act upon when confronting the inevitable modernity.

Therefore, Jalal's position not only could give us the opportunity to grasp the existence and characteristics of the third camp, but it could also provide us with some critical tools to deal with Raf'at's ideas which we will see in chapter 4 (p. 105) and chapter 5 (p. 127). Suppose Jalal is to be taken seriously in its extreme. In that case, one has to define Raf'at's position in his ideas and see to what extent he could be proved to fall into the scheme of westoxification and to what extent he goes against it. As later we will see in chapter 4 (p. 105) that Raf'at proves himself to be a recognition instance of a moment of danger, then there is always room to doubt whether Raf'at himself could be the moment of danger. However, what is essential, and we will see during the following chapters, is that even if there is a certain extent of the danger of westoxification in Raf'at, due to the autonomous forms of literature, his oeuvre contains features that can aim toward the truth even if it was not intended in the first place.

Nevertheless, Jalal, when writing about Nima, brings up a critical point. When discussing the canonized dispute and how it can get meaningless, he writes: "If a poet cannot put his content in the old meter, he can put it in a new meter. If we just accept that innovation is the root of art and requisite for poetry, and the classic meter is just an old poetic logic, this long dispute over the excommunication of new literature can come to an end. Then, Nima's problem is just solved, and the process of art begins."⁵⁶ This is critical not only because Jalal resolves the dispute into a very material and pragmatic scheme and puts an end to the canonized dispute, but also because this brilliantly shows the zero point of art. The whole canonized dispute, if resolved, brings one to the very zero point of art to begin the poetry. In the case of Raf'at, it is also the same. Whether he is a good poet or not, it can be dismissed, for he was excavating the root to get to the zero point of the poetry.

Jalal's reading of Nima also has another moment, which can be very fruitful for our reading. It, to some extent, also justifies this reading here, considering the danger as it is formulated in chapter 4 (p. 105). "... Nima is read frequently. It is published a lot. More importantly, they pretend to be progressive with publishing and reading Nima. And if in this case, we remain silent, they will start obliteration, and new problems will occur."⁵⁷ This seems critical for that not any excluded moment is in danger as in the Benjaminian scheme, but the frequently read

⁵⁵ Yasemi, 4.

⁵⁶ Jalal Ale Ahmad, *Haft Maqālah (Seven Essays)*. (Tehran: AmirKabir, 1357 [1979]), 30.

⁵⁷ Jalal, *Seven Essays*, 32.

is more in danger for it can become a cultural heritage in the procession of the spoils of the victors (see chapter 4 (p. 105)), which in case of Jalal's reading is the reactionary bourgeoisie. But in the case of our reading, with the recent movements and attentions to Raf'at by the pan-Turks, this seems a legitimate act to posit Raf'at in this context.

It is time to turn our attention toward Raf'at and his position in this canonized dispute and try to situate him. Though, at first, it may seem that he must belong to the second camp, we will see that he belongs to the third because his position is unique to the point that with his death, it is forgotten like a sparkle in the darkness.

1.4. The same dispute after Constitutional Revolution: Tehran vs. Tabriz

In order to situate Raf'at within this canonized dispute, it will be helpful to observe his participation in two famous disputes between him and Daneshkade members and later between him and the authors of *Kave*. Both of these disputes can shed light on the position of Raf'at, which is unique enough to exclude him from both camps and, as a result, oblige us to include him in the third, which, as we observed earlier, could be diverse enough that its members may not have essential relation. They only come under that camp, for they stand out of the two camps of the canonized dispute.

An article in *Zabān-e Āzād* was anonymously published, which criticized Sa'di and his supporters and imitators, blaming them for the national degradation and moral corruption (see subchapter 2.1 (p. 46) and "A Literary Rebellion" in appendix (p. 175)). The article had a religious tone while widely engaged with modern ideas. The anonymous author finally prescribed the substitution of Sa'di with Ferdowsi, whom he considered including high morals and national ideas in his writing. This caused a severe reaction from the side of those supporting the tradition and classic literature and paradigm. As a result, a response was published written by one of the Daneshkade members, vehemently criticizing and insulting the anonymous author. In reaction to this, Raf'at published his essay "A Literary Rebellion," which analysed this dispute and shed light on its aspect, which we can use to perceive Raf'at's position in the canonized dispute.

Paying attention to the fact that this canonized dispute was, to a great extent, vague, one can see the importance of Raf'at's effort in reformulating the dispute. He took the opportunity of a vague dispute between the pro and contra Sa'di controversy to illuminate the vague and unformulated sides of such a dispute. It is essential to pay attention to the fact that this dispute could be perceived as a struggle between two sects of the reformist part of the aristocracy, which, because of political reasons, acted to some extent in cooperation with the revolutionary bourgeoisie but yet had their reactionary essence. Daneshkade and the anonymous author both could belong to this reformist front. Though the anonymous author tends to be more close to the bourgeoisie, their dispute is actually over the details of a certain aspect of literature which is criticizing the ossified figures, and no one goes beyond it.

Raf'at took the opportunity and firstly sided with the anonymous author to define the necessity of change and revolution. He believed that the political revolution needed a continuation, and this could have been the case, for he believed that the disputed subject is simultaneously social and literary. As was also the case with many pro-constitution intellectuals, the relationship between literature and social change had been a hot topic. Thus, in this sense, Raf'at does not

depart from the second camp. Then, he writes that this rebellion is an *occurred event* and nothing can be done about it except analyse it.⁵⁸ However, from the first steps, he manifests the intimations that he will soon depart from the second camp. In refuting Sa'di and the classic literary heritage, he gives a more formal account that better describes the role of the form and language in literature in relation to society. He wrote that the language and literature of Sa'di and his peers, with their odes and litanies, could not soothe the modern pain. This is critical for he focuses on the genre (*q̄lib*) and form, which was dismissed by the constitutional intellectuals.

However, Raf'at's departure point could be symbolised in the moment where he criticizes the anonymous author of *Zabān-e Āzād* for having betrayed his own flag (see "A Literary Rebellion" in appendix (p. 175)). The anonymous author's argument actually is an echo of Akhundzade's arguments preferring Ferdowsi over Sa'di within his scheme of defining new poetry (*poésie*). The details of Raf'at's stance could be best understood when studying his argument within a close reading which is provided to a great extent in this dissertation in the upcoming chapters. However, for the time being, we can take a look at its general structure. The fact that Raf'at criticizes the anonymous author makes him go against the whole canonized dispute and both camps. He did so at a time when there seemed to be a consensus over accepting Ferdowsi as the heritage to be imitated. Ferdowsi's emergence was due to the rise of nationalism in the bourgeoisie and the reformist aristocracy. Moreover, since the nationalist bourgeoisie gradually came into power as a result of imperialist interventions and the domestic political condition, Ferdowsi was not the point of dispute anymore, and he became the subject of consensus. Thus, Raf'at's rejection of Ferdowsi totally disturbs the borders of the canonized dispute and also proves his class affiliation to be unique enough not to fall into the bourgeoisie. Later, we will see that there possibly could have been leftist tendencies in his writing (see chapter 5 (p.127)). This, indeed, sets him apart from both camps.

For Raf'at, the rebellion is not aimed at bringing up Ferdowsi against Sa'di. Its drive is that in the modern condition, one (namely an Iranian) is left without any example to deal with problems and solve them. This is what he calls spiritual poverty. "Our spiritual poverty is the drive of this rebellion."⁵⁹ Raf'at's arguments in his essay could reveal more about his stance. In response to the articles written by the supporters of Sa'di, Raf'at insists that such articles come from the mind of naïve youth who have no idea of the joy of literary and philosophical disputes.⁶⁰ It is crucial to pay attention that Raf'at's enthusiasm in dialogue (see x) and careful formulation of the dispute is what the canonized dispute was severely in need of. Because the fight and struggle were always pragmatic, the literature was reduced to content in the constitutional writings. He seems to empower literature, not only with revolutionary content but also with radical forms and philosophical drive.

Raf'at carefully ties this dispute with the political dispute happening in the Iranian scene, a big share of which happened between Tehran and Tabriz. Tehran was the centre for the government and represented the imperialist interventions and the reactionary aristocrats ready to sell the country. On the other hand, it was the centre for the reformist aristocracy and moderate bourgeoisie who were gathered in parliament. On the other hand, historically talking, Tabriz almost took the burden of the Constitutional Revolution and reestablishment of parliament

⁵⁸ Taqi Raf'at, "A Literary Rebellion," *Tajaddod*. Nowruz 1297 [1917], 24.

⁵⁹ Raf'at, *Literary Rebellion*, 27.

⁶⁰ Raf'at, *Literary Rebellion*, 27.

when Mohammad Ali Shah and Russian forces bombarded it. At this time, Tabriz was home to a more radical party, the Democrat Party, led by Khiyabani. In this sense, Tabriz was treated as the stubborn radical element from the viewpoint of Tehran.⁶¹

I don't know why in Tehran they consider following this important topic against expediency. Were they afraid that this literary topic could cause animosity and discord? Nevertheless, it is a pity that our journalism has yet no trust in intellectual discussions so it could engage with such topics.

On the contrary, we consider this unexpected event as an opportunity to enter into a beneficial dispute. We must, at any price, get ourselves acquainted with philosophical and literary disputes which are not biased by political benefits. We must also accept that the sparkle of truth flares from the collision of adverse ideas.⁶²

As it can be seen, Raf'at cleverly links Tehran-based journals' reluctance to engage in a dispute with him to the political relationship between Tabriz and Tehran. This has two significances. First, he seriously establishes the dispute on a material ground. Second, it shows how he was standing outside the canonized dispute that even engaging in a dispute with him seemed to disturb both camps. Moreover, Raf'at insisted on the benefit of such philosophical-literary discussions for the sake of creating an open space for different ideas to emerge. This was a radical idea because, during the class struggle, each camp wished to establish itself, not to engage in dialogue. The class benefits required immediate pragmatic plans, which could go against principles in some cases. This can prove that Raf'at enters the atmosphere with certain principles in mind and stands by them even at the cost of his life.

To prove this, one can refer to another writing of Raf'at in which, one can see that he had a vivid vision of the vagueness and meaninglessness of the canonized dispute:

Modernism (tajaddudvarzī) of some people is just a claim of content. Some people consider the novelty of a literary work as its production date. Ninety percent of modernists (mutijaddidīn), while they lack any qualification and condition of modernism, with incurable incompetence, lift themselves from a point and again land at the same point. They have no clear idea of the distance between novelty and oldness. And they have no experience so they may find out their fault.⁶³

This can prove that his insistence on dialogue could be perceived as an effort to re-establish the dispute and actually re-establish the class struggles in the real political scene. More importantly, this miraculously resembles Jalal's formulation of a westoxified entity as an imaginary suspended point in space, who cannot be a connection between new and old and cannot posit himself in between. In this sense, not only Raf'at cannot be treated as the westoxified agent, but he can even be a resourceful spring for the development of the idea of westoxification. Having observed this, firstly, one can be assured that Raf'at should belong to the third camp. More importantly, one can be sure that our reading of his oeuvre, trying to

⁶¹ However, one must pay attention that the radical Tabriz soon gets suppressed, and a reactionary establishment just like Tehran enforces itself. Moreover, the reactionary Tabriz under the bourgeoisie even somehow opens itself to some racial ideas later, as one can see in the recent attention to Raf'at to represent him as a figure for their racial identity.

⁶² Raf'at, *Literary Rebellion*, 29.

⁶³ Taqi Raf'at, "Tajaddud dar Adabīyāt" (Modernism in Literature). *Āzādīyistān*, No. 3, 12 August 1920. 31.

elevate his oeuvre to a more material level while digging into its metaphysical consequences, is valid, which we will see in the following chapters.

This passage also clearly proves that Raf'at himself had a critical attitude toward the vagueness and meaninglessness of the canonized dispute. Here, one can remember Jalal's argument that if one is to deny the new poetry, he also has to deny the train and technology. The same goes with Raf'at, where he opposes Daneshkade that they know nothing of the new paradigm and condition. It means, in this case, that they do not know it in the sense that they have no critical stance toward their immediate material condition. This shows that Daneshkade could indeed be deemed as meaninglessly suspended, for it reactionarily accepts the material condition and only struggles with one of its consequences which is the modern literature. They do so only to allegedly protect the literary heritage. Interestingly, in "A Literary Rebellion," Raf'at depicts that even if one intends to protect the literary heritage and figures, the only way for the protection is the prosperity of the rebellion, and this rebellion would also create the protectors of that heritage.⁶⁴

To see this reactionary stance and its indication as not having a critical stance toward immediate reality resulting in the reactionary acceptance of the status quo, we may remember Yasemi. As we already observed, Yasemi was trying to fake his own new poetry and represent the reactionary old poetry instead. This went to the extreme that he wrote that with literary modernism, people understood that new ways were no use, and "the old poets had made poetry perfect in every sense that it could be used for any topic."⁶⁵ Firstly, it is evident that Yasemi, in doing so, tries to replace what he supports and prescribes as literary modernism with the simple act of distorting the historical narrative. Otherwise, it was clear that Yasemi's favoured poetry was as well favoured by the feudalists and aristocrats. In this sense, any argument about a change and revolution in literature is like spitting in the face of common sense. The reactionary bourgeoisie actually purported the same ideas of the aristocrats, and this was happening in Yasemi's writing because his material condition and benefit required him to do so. However, it is important to pay attention to the very fact that the whole history of constitutional literature and intellectual endeavour proves Yasemi false and distorted. Moreover, in our case of study, one can easily see that even seventeen years before Yasemi's writing, Raf'at was critically against such reactionary bourgeois/aristocrat ideas. Even in "A Literary Rebellion," a significant share of Raf'at's argument is about the fact that the new material condition has caused a new pain that is unsoothable and inexplicable by the old language and literature. His whole rebellion is based on a quest to find such a language and literature to convey that pain.⁶⁶

Here, having observed Raf'at's dispute with Daneshkade, one can be pretty sure that Raf'at's critical stance toward the canonized dispute and modernity, in general, is evident. Having mentioned the language, it will be helpful to trace the idea of language in this canonized dispute on another occasion where Raf'at's dispute with Kave seemed to be primarily a dispute over language. We will see this in the next section.

⁶⁴ For the translated essay, see appendix p. 177. For an analysis of the essay, see chapter 2 (p. 47).

⁶⁵ Yasemi, 8.

⁶⁶ See chapter 2 (p. 47), and see chapter 5 (p. 129).

1.5. A later dispute: *Kāve* and language

On 21st March 1920 and 21st May 1920, the Berlin-based journal *Kave* published two articles titled “The Progress of Farsi language during a century” (*Taraq̄q̄-yi Zabān-i Fārsī dar Yik Qarn*). These essays included two columns: one was the eloquent aristocrat language that *Kave* favoured, and the other was the modern language concerned with new topics which *Kave* found metamorphic and degenerate. Among this so-called metamorphic language was part of Raf‘at’s writing. This induced a dispute between Raf‘at and *Kave*. This dispute between Raf‘at and *Kave* is also a characteristic representation of a class struggle. *Kave* is clearly the agent of the newly established bourgeoisie, which has lost any revolutionary character it could have. As a result, this established bourgeoisie plays the role that aristocrats did in previous phases, which we will also see in the details of this dispute.

Interestingly, the ideas which Jalal developed in his framework of westoxification manifest themselves in *Kave*’s articles. In *Kave*’s article, after the two examples of their favoured writing and poetry and what they considered as degenerate and metamorphic, there is a short statement: “The contents of the right column include writings of the 13th century written in Farsi and people understand them. At that time, there were no telegraphs, posts, or electricity. Fortunately, these were imported later by Europeans. However, the Europeans did not touch our language to improve it or at least guard it against degeneration and left it to ourselves to take care, and the left column shows the manipulations of Iranians in that.”⁶⁷ First, it is interesting that once again we can see Jalal’s argument about the connection between accepting technology and new poetry here. The authors of *Kave* are clearly fond of European technology and totally embrace it, as is evident from the passage. This reminds us of Jalal’s argument about the suspension of such westoxified entities. They embrace the technology and capitalist economy and want to reject the new poetry making them a suspended point in space. Moreover, the westoxification could be observed here at full steam. In *Kave*’s opinion, the nice Europeans had obliged us by giving us electricity, and they left the language to our own cares, and these people like Raf‘at and anyone not from the first camp have ruined it. It is pretty evident that if Jalal’s argument of westoxification has any veracity to be applied, it is definitely in cases like this.

Kave refers to their favoured poetry as the intimation of the liveliness of the spirit of poetry and the other as a metamorphic of Farsi speech.⁶⁸ It is critical to pay attention that *Kave*’s favoured poetry is actually a poem belonging to the aristocratic and feudalist poetry both in form and content. It is only the date of their authorship which could render them new. The aristocratic and feudalist systems were long dead by this time, and consequently, their language and literature. Therefore, one shall wonder why *Kave*’s authors find it yet lively and vivacious. In fact, the only possible interpretation is that they plan to revive this dead entity as a zombie since they have to reproduce their own literature. One can remember that Yasemi was in great trouble since the bourgeoisie had not yet produced its literature and poetry. The established bourgeoisie obviously was in need of reviving feudalist tools because they had lost their revolutionary tools and the best loci for reactionary tools was feudalism. Interestingly enough, even Edward Browne, who was an orientalist, was not this brave in promoting such ideas of

⁶⁷ *Kave*. “Taraq̄q̄-yi Zabān-i Fārsī dar Yik Qarn.” *Kave*, No. 3, 21 March 1920, 5.

⁶⁸ *Kave*. “Taraq̄q̄-yi Zabān-i Fārsī.” *Kave*, No. 4/5, 21 May 1920, 4.

reviving the classic paradigms, and when talking about the newspapers of the time that *Kave* favoured overtly mentioned that those papers did not have much value.⁶⁹

Going through some parts of Raf'at's response to *Kave* could be useful to see his stance more clearly in this canonized dispute. Raf'at writes that what he wants is nothing less than creating a new era and replacing it with the old decadent one. Though the old is still ruling, the new is not yet in the position of the ruling, and it depends on the prosperity of him and his peers.⁷⁰ He continues that our force is in the current state of things and the help of the time, meaning that the new condition requires certain changes and revolution.⁷¹ The critical point is that Raf'at is not rejecting the movement and changes brought by modernity, although he finds it disastrous and bloody. However, he has a certain hope that a revolution would occur from within the condition itself. This not only posits him on the radical left side of the condition, but it also suggests the material perception of the inevitability of revolution, which in this case could be a revolution both against aristocrats and the reactionary bourgeoisie. This is encapsulated in his image of the locomotive that has arrived at the borders of Iran, and there is no way to turn one's back on it. One must think about a plan for the railway to benefit from it.⁷²

Then, he gets closer to *Kave*'s alleged criticism, which was the language. He defines language as a tool to convey thoughts and emotions, which is also subject to change and revolution in time, just like anything else.⁷³ He also believes, like Jalal, that nobody would take conservatism to the extreme that he would reject any change and claim that things, here the language, may stay the same forever. He mentions that anybody claims the necessity of change and modernization, however, their perception of that is totally perplexed and meaningless.⁷⁴ Here, once again, we can see Raf'at's critical stance toward the vagueness of the canonized dispute in relation to the idea of language.

Thereafter, he delineates his own stance on the literary topic and writes that he always wanted to bring what he had learned and found in other cultures' literature to his own immediate condition and establish a new paradigm in his mother tongue Farsi. He mentions that no matter where he could find such resources, even in Ethiopia, he would take them and use them in favour of his own condition. In these sentences, Raf'at's stance is clear proof that he cannot be judged as a westoxified entity and keeps his critical distance toward the act of imitation of cultural forms. This takes him to *Kave*'s writing and what he calls the principles of comparison that the journal has used. He claims that in order to compare, one has to establish a certain ground in which at least one factor is the same in the subjects so they can be compared. This is totally neglected in *Kave*'s writing. So, he proposes that if *Kave*'s authors yet insist on such comparison, they must compare his poem "Nowruz and Farmer" (Nowruz va Dehqan) with their favoured poem, so they at least have a common theme.

This is crucial for our reading because, by this, Raf'at brings forward the figure of Dehqan (farmer, peasant).⁷⁵ However, when it comes to his suggestion, what is critical is the figure of Dehqan. Because, as we have partly observed, the Constitutional Revolution was a bourgeois

⁶⁹ Browne, *Press and Poetry*, xii.

⁷⁰ Raf'at, "Modernism in Literature," 30.

⁷¹ Raf'at, "Modernism in Literature," 30.

⁷² Raf'at, "Modernism in Literature," 30.

⁷³ Raf'at, "Modernism in Literature," 30.

⁷⁴ Raf'at, "Modernism in Literature," 31.

⁷⁵ For a reading of this, see chapter 3 (p. 85).

revolution that kept Dehqans in its periphery. Dehqans only participated in the revolution when some of their immediate benefits were entangled with the prosperity of the revolutionary movements. In this sense, considering our reading in chapter 3 (p. 83), then what Raf'at did is extraordinary revolutionary. He did revolutionize the figure of Dehqan. This was something that the material condition of Iran lacked, for yet the bourgeoisie was not established, and Dehqans had no openness before them to act other than search for their very bread to survive. In this sense, what Raf'at did was even miraculously unique in the third camp. Early in the history of Iran's capitalization, he rendered the Constitutional Revolution in a class framework. He represented the whole idea of the Constitutional Revolution in the guise of class struggle. He formulated the revolutionary Dehqan, which is, to a great extent, the equivalent of the inducing peasant revolution against the bourgeoisie. This simply meant that he was taking the most radical and revolutionary stance possible in the condition. This also meant that he had a clear idea of the canonized dispute and its meaninglessness due to vague class borders and was trying to re-establish the dispute in a clear class struggle framework. This all was done while he never tried to imitate the leftist jargon, for clearly, the Iranian society was not fit or ready for such jargon. He was reinventing his local leftist rebellion.

Therefore, such a revolutionary stance was not tolerated by the aristocrats and the established bourgeoisie leading to the exclusion of Raf'at from the cultural atmosphere and even the murder of Khiyabani, which made Raf'at commit suicide. This also caused him to fade into oblivion because such a revolutionary stance was always a threat to the ruling class, regardless of their quality or root. This will take us to see Raf'at's presence and fade into oblivion in the next section and how he was literally censored.

1.6. Censoring Raf'at in the intellectual atmosphere and his fade into oblivion

Writing about the censorship of a figure and its fade into oblivion is paradoxical. Because if a figure is censored, then simply it means that there are no instances to refer to or any documents to turn our attention to prove the oblivion/censorship. In such a case, the whole history, any of its moments are a document to prove the censorship, and at the same time, it is not easy to approve them as documents for proving the censorship claim. This makes the task extremely problematic. However, here we intend to take a look at some intimations of this oblivion. Moreover, in chapter 4 (p. 105), a reading of this oblivion and its consequent meaning in reading Raf'at's oeuvre is provided.

With the bourgeoisie coming into power and becoming more reactionary, the political scene of Iran was under the control of the reactionary bourgeoisie influenced by imperialist powers and the reformist bourgeoisie with nationalist ideas. This, alongside the fact that Raf'at had established his revolutionary stance threatening all the classes and sects in power, resulted in his oblivion and censoring of his heritage. In the literary atmosphere, the same reason was valid to omit him and force him into oblivion, not to forget that his belonging to the so-called third camp also rendered him a minority. Being a minority to the point that he was uniquely himself alone with his faithful peers in the party, and the fact that all ruling classes were threatened by such ideas that he supported resulted in censoring him for a long time, and as a result, he was faded into oblivion. He could only be brought back to the literary scene after a century when everybody was sure that no one remembered his radical revolutionary heritage, and it was possible to reincarnate an apolitical version of him, which is the case with the recent attention

of pan Turks toward him. Since the Dehqans never had the chance to win the political ground, and it was the bourgeoisie and modernized Islam who won the scene, there was no chance for Raf'at or anything pertaining to Dehqans or non-orthodox bourgeoisie ideas to survive. In the case of Raf'at and almost any Dehqan upraise, not only did they fade into oblivion, but also they were forced into oblivion with the help of censorship.

One of the facts that could be surely used to prove this censorship and its extent is that after Khiyabani's murder, the government totally demolished the last volume of *Azadiyestan*. However, this is not the crucial point, for it was clear that the government would try its best to clear the presence of Raf'at and Khiyabani's movement. The critical point is that right after his suicide, everybody turned his back toward on that fact, and nobody even remembered him, while some months before that, they were engaged in disputes with him. The new intelligentsia, which had its root in the bourgeoisie and the middle class, was not open to such revolutionary ideas. As a result, at first, the government demolished the material heritage, then the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia simply behaved as if nothing was there, and this was enough for the next generation of the intellectuals of the middle class and the bourgeoisie to forget him for a long time as if he suddenly faded into oblivion.

This has been the case with Khiyabani and his movement as well, which we partly will observe in chapter 4 (p. 105). This was due to the fact that unorthodox revolutionary policies were never tolerated by any ruling class and were a threat to their very existence. Khiyabani's figure in the history of Iran has been left in a sort of obscurity because of political intentions, and his radical stance. There have been few writings on him. Azari, in his book, narrates that when the first famous pamphlet about Khiyabani was published in 1926, the police arrested the son of the funder of the publication and asked them to at least deny their sponsorship.⁷⁶ Having this in mind, we will later see that it will not be odd to claim that the political forces gathered in Tehran, revolting around the orthodox policies, were intended to omit and censor Khiyabani's movement and Raf'at's political agenda and even his literary ideas. Even those literary arguments were a threat to the orthodox policy.

This censorship which forced Raf'at into oblivion was to the extent that even though Reza Barahani shortly paid attention to him in his writings, in one of the popular established histories of modern Persian poetry by Shams Langeroudi,⁷⁷ he simply makes an excuse for not dedicating enough to Raf'at because he thought that figures like Raf'at did not have an impact on the literary atmosphere. This is true because the amount of censorship was meant to hamper the impact of those ideas. However, Langeroudi does not have a critical perspective on that fact. Rather, he is a simple believer of the fact and neglects its roots and causes. The same was true about Yasemi, who wrote his anthology less than twenty years later than Raf'at's murder, but did not mention his name in any sort. There seemed to be a consensus over forgetting and forcing Raf'at into oblivion. The only two other occasions on which there was a mention of Raf'at were in the writings of Ahmad Kasravi, an enemy of Raf'at, and Ariyanpour, his student.⁷⁸ But these two do not reveal anything more, for Ariyanpour himself was not outside the orthodox atmosphere, and Kasravi, although he was murdered by Islamists, stayed in the

⁷⁶ Azari, 7.

⁷⁷ Mohammad Shams Langeroudi, *Tārīkh-i Tahlīlīyi Shi'r-i Now (The Analytic History of New Poetry)*. Vol. 1, (Tehran: Markaz, 1370 [1991]).

⁷⁸ For a more detailed description, subchapter 4.1 (p. 107).

orthodox atmosphere as long as revolutionary ideas against the material condition are considered.

In such a condition, the task of this dissertation more and more resembles Dostoevsky's description of Alyosha's remembrance of his mother. It is a task of grasping a faded memory that is not compatible with the condition, and just a trace of it is left. It is like those memories that "only emerge throughout one's life as specks of light, as it were, against the darkness, as a corner torn from a huge picture, which has all faded and disappeared except for that little corner."⁷⁹ Our task here is to save that torn corner and then imagine the whole huge picture to reproduce its radicality. If we fail to reproduce that huge picture with its radicality, then we are just one of the piles who forget Raf'at's heritage, or even worse, force him into oblivion by making a noisy cloud around his image.

⁷⁹ Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 14.

2. “A Literary Rebellion”: An essay with the story of the Titanic

Things have come to a pretty pass!
Established usages and ancient rights
There's nothing we can count on anymore!

Faust II, Goethe

On 15th April 1912, The Royal Mail Ship (RMS) Titanic, sank after striking an iceberg. Considering the geographical distance and the fact that the only Iranian passenger even refused to travel with the Titanic, it seems far from the Iranian literature. However, the real question arises: why should one crave the Titanic in Iran? Or better to say, what is the Titanic to an Iranian? And finally, what is its relation to modernity or, living-in-the-modernity.

To see why the Titanic could be of any use to investigate modernity in general and Iranian modernity specifically, we can look at the core of modernity and modernism. Marshal Berman defines modernism:

These world-historical processes have nourished an amazing variety of visions and ideas that aim to make men and women the subjects as well as the objects of modernization, to give them the power to change the world that is changing them, to make their way through the maelstrom and make it their own. Over the past century, these visions and values have come to be loosely grouped together under the name of “modernism.”¹

As Berman points out, modernism is placed in the heart of the maelstrom, which seems to be similar to the Titanic since both of them suck the people down and drown them. The people who were once actively subjects of the process of building a society to make a gigantic ship are now the vulnerable objects in its doomed destiny. The Titanic symbolically represents modernity and different modernisms. By investigating the Titanic, we will be able to face these various modernisms and better understand them. Modernity has made it possible to face the maelstrom and the wreck everywhere, even in places where no water exists.

This chapter aims to provide a reading of Raf'at's essay “A Literary Rebellion.” In this reading, we are specifically interested in one particular motif in that essay: the Titanic. There is no particular study on the reception of the Titanic in Iran. This makes it difficult to trace the Titanic and its story in the Iranian cultural atmosphere. From 1912 when the Titanic disaster happened, until 1918, when Raf'at published his essay, there is no evidence of the Titanic's reception. So at this point, Raf'at's essay is the first known document about the Titanic in Iran. Although one can assume that there must have been other writings related to the Titanic before 1918 in the cultural scene of Iran, still the importance of this very essay is not possible to dismiss.

This subchapter will take us on a journey to observe the disastrous Titanic from different aspects. Our journey will start six years after the calamity when the picture of the Titanic sinking in the sea shows up cinematically in Raf'at's essay. This is the point where one seems to doubt whether to wish that he had experienced it or that he would never face it. Such doubt would take us back to 1912, right after the shipwreck, where we can meet a famous poet, Thomas Hardy, composing his poem about the disaster. Having read the poem, we can familiarize ourselves with the critical receptions. Having met the Titanic in the British

¹ Marshal Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 16.

atmosphere, we can get back to the Iranian scene of 1912, where a report by Sir Percy Sykes can shed light on the disastrous influence of the Titanic on Iranians, not as a shipwreck, but as a mass murder in Mashhad. Through such a journey, we can understand how Raf'at could have understood the Titanic and its meaning in his text.

2.1. A Literary Rebellion: 1918 essay

In early 1918, Taqī Raf'at published one of his essays, "A Literary Rebellion."² This essay was published after the time when another controversial paper was published in *Zabān-i Āzād* (Free Tongue (speech)). The controversial piece was titled "Sa'di's School" (Maktab-i Sa'dī) and anonymously published. It was published on 4th January 1918, and since it overtly attacked Sa'di as the reason for Iran's current misery, it caused a lot of resentment and indignation. This led Tehran-based journals to attack the essay and its anonymous author.

The anonymous author of *Zabān-i Āzād* started his article with a thought experiment. He asked about the origins and reasons for the misery of the society. He first addressed the lower class, which he referred to as the "third estate." The answer he supposed was that all of them were going to respond: "the greed and avarice of the State's agents." Then he posed the same question to those "a step higher than the previous ones," and hypothetically answered: "the plot of foreign States." Lastly, he addressed the intellectuals, and their supposed answer was: "The morals are bad, and people are corrupted."

Thereafter, the anonymous author claimed that the reason for national and social misery is "the inharmonious principles of national and social teachings from nine hundred years ago." He claimed that these teachings are found in a couple of books, among which *Kullīyāt-i Sa'dī* (Sa'di's oeuvre) is the most important one. Then he wrote:

I want to courageously call this book "kullīyāt-i tanazzulbakhsh" (degrading oeuvre), and I wouldn't be afraid of the protests of the children of Sa'di's madrasa and scholars of his school who are drowned in the sludge of poisonous thoughts.³

He also blamed all members of "Dānishkadāh" and all the poets and writers who, he believed, were following Sa'di and causing social misery. Then he blamed Sa'di's oeuvre for having a spirit of lethargy and laziness and Buddhism. To prove his claim, he focused on Persian mystic literature and its central concepts like determinism. His account included Buddha, mystic literature, Seneca, Anthony the Great, Christianity, etc. He tracked all these beliefs, which he found poisonous in mystic literature. He tracked every notion in Persian mystic literature, which he considered toxicant, in the other cultures and literatures.

His position on this topic seems like an orthodox Islamic view. After studying the relations between Persian mystic literature and some other cultures and literatures, he criticized them not only for being lazy and lethargic in their spirit but also against the Islamic spirit and teachings. But probably one of the essential parts of his writing is the very end, where he wrote:

Thus, boycott these teachings and instead go in the tribal tents or in the small dark room of the peasants and in the coffeehouses of the crowded cities, and with an epic tone, start to sing the beloved *Shāhnāme*...⁴

² Taqī Raf'at, "A Literary Rebellion," in *Tajaddud*, Nowruz 1297 [1918]. Pp 25-34. See: Appendix p. 177.

³ Anonymous, "Maktab-i Sa'dī" (Sa'di's School), in *Zabān-i Āzād*, 4 January 1918, No. 6, pp. 1-2.

⁴ Maktab-i Sa'dī" (Sa'di's School), 2.

Suddenly, at the end of this article, one can feel the presence of a previously existing idea. This argument resembles the ideas of Akhundzade,⁵ who also preferred Ferdowsi over Sa'di. Akhundzade's argument was more formal, but the anonymous author's argument is very content-based. However, one can argue that Akhundzade's argumentation was content-based, yet there was considerable attention toward form. Moreover, Akhundzade's argument was secular, while the anonymous writer seems to be partially religious. Later, we can see Raf'at's reaction to the final part of the anonymous author's article, and this way, we can study his position on this question and its relation to both the anonymous author and Akhundzade.

The anonymous author's article caused a controversy, resulting in the Dānishkadah members and other conservatives attacking him because of his blasphemous argumentation. Though he seemed to be an orthodox Muslim, at the same time attacking Sa'di and Persian mystic literature itself sounded blasphemous. Raf'at wrote his essay "A Literary Rebellion" after the publication of this article by the anonymous author. For him, this was a great opportunity to jump into the discussion and use it to discuss modernity and modern literature.

In this essay, Raf'at mentions that he considers this opportunity to be taken for good to argue over the topic, since he had previously brought up the subject of Sa'di with an ironic language in the *Tajaddud*'s column titled "Unspeakable Hearables" signed as "Tongueless."⁶ So he plans to go through the disputed article and its responses one by one. He considers the topic to be simultaneously a literary and a social one. He argues that since the matter is formed around Sa'di's name, it is a literary issue, and since it blames Sa'di for the misery and decadence of Iranians, it is a social one.

Raf'at starts his essay by praising the anonymous author of "Sa'di's School" for his courage and honest cry when he wrote that "the inharmonious principles of national and social teachings from nine hundred years ago" are the reasons for social misery and decadence. Raf'at points out that one can notice honesty in this writing while it is possible to trace an exaggeration in it. But he finds this legitimate since he believes that "anytime you try to bring forward and analyze one of the causes of one specific effect, exaggeration is inevitable."

After quoting the anonymous author's criticism of Sa'di, Raf'at writes:

We don't need to go further. Sa'di's remonstrator has expressed the essence of his opposition and ideas in these sentences. The rebellion, the revolution, or whatever it was has happened. The arrow is flung. Now there is no power in this world that could erase this predestined accident from the page of happenings. We are facing a reality. We can do nothing rather than express our thoughts and beliefs.⁷

Apart from Raf'at's general argument, the concept of facing reality has a pivotal place in his beliefs. Later, we will see while reading his poem "Nowrouz and Dehqan"⁸ that, for him, modernity is a moment of facing reality. Moreover, this reality is disastrous. Even the disastrous reality does not make Raf'at turn his back on it and look for an idealist understanding of the universe. He only finds himself able to contemplate this reality, which is resulted from the already existing premises. Those conditions couldn't be altered. As he wrote, the arrow is

⁵ See: subchapter 1.2 (p. 28).

⁶ See: Appendix "Sa'diism" p. 189.

⁷ Raf'at, "A Literary Rebellion," 25.

⁸ See: chapter 3 (p. 85).

flung; it was not dependent on his ideas. Now he can structure his ideas by studying that reality.⁹

After this, Raf'at praises the anonymous author for his courageous rebellion even though he anticipated the vehement attacks from the conservatives' side. He believes that the political revolution in Iran (the Constitutional Revolution) needed such an addition. "Now the youths can attack the castle of literary conservatism and despotism," he writes and believes that they must do so because they must be the children of their own time. For him, the conditions of modern life could never be sufficiently expressed in the language of old writers:

The sound of the cannons and the guns of the wars, in our nerves, cause sensations that could never be expressed or soothed by the harmonious moderate language of Sa'di and those in his age with their poems or litanies. We have needs that didn't exist at the time of Sa'di's life. We suffer the damages of different national and political happenings, which Sa'di could never imagine. We feel a series of corporeal and spiritual defects in ourselves and in our environment, of which Sa'di never spoke. Finally, we live in an age where the thirteen-year-old kids in modern schools have more knowledge in different sciences and techniques than Sa'di. Since the time of Sa'di, philosophy has travelled a long distance.¹⁰

Raf'at then mentions that he does not intend to follow the anonymous author anymore. He believes that the anonymous author has made a mistake and betrayed his own revolutionary banner. Raf'at deduces that the anonymous author has either not planned a complete map for his rebellion or acted impromptu since he expressed contradictory ideas. The passage to which Raf'at refers is where the anonymous author prefers Ferdowsi to Sa'di. Raf'at argues that anything stated about Sa'di is also true about Ferdowsi. He believes that Sa'di is no less than Ferdowsi, rather there is no competition between these two prominent Persian poets. He believes that one is used to trigger the nerves of nationalism and ancient heroism while the other is suitable for philosophizing and spiritual joy. Then he writes:

But when we want to renew, soothe, or fund our current pains, contemporary emotions, and new needs, we will be wandering around... In this field, we are deprived of any refuge. Our contemporary poets are nothing but faulty Sa'dis, insipid Ferdowsis, or tasteless Hafezes. They can neither conquer our hungry soul like Sa'di's verse and prose does, nor soothe its scars with sincere condolences, nor calm its emotions with appropriate expressions.

When we seek a leader for our wandering thoughts and misled steps, among all the complicated problems of our time, we find ourselves deprived and suspended... that's why we rebel.¹¹

As we see, Raf'at argues for the insufficiency of classic literature for expressing modern feelings. Interestingly a big part of these modern feelings, for him, is the pain. It is the pain and the scar for which he is trying to find a remedy, and he does not find it in classic literature.

⁹ This clearly could be related to the point where Marx defines "world-historical existence" and writes: "Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the now existing premise." Karl Marx with Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (Prometheus Books, 1998), 57.

¹⁰ Raf'at, "A Literary Rebellion," 26.

¹¹ Raf'at, "A Literary Rebellion," 26.

Raf'at tries to elaborate on the idea of rebellion using a metaphor. He depicts the picture of some hungry people who plunder and destroy anything they come across. He shows that it is useless to tell those people that such acts will not make their stomachs full. They will continue till they find the supply to feed, or they will go on destroying anything. Then he uses this metaphor to talk about himself and those rebellious people of his time. He writes:

Our spiritual poverty is the drive for this “rebellion.” Sa’di, Ferdowsi, Hafez, or any other of the past poets and literates will suffer the harm of this rebellion. Nothing will let them free. Their rescue is due to the success of this rebellion. This rebellion will produce their supporter and rescuer. Those hungry for science and technique, poetry and literature, emotion and reason will find mental purveyance. And they will complete and pervade the mental and literary revolution, the political and social revolution.

Thus, for now, do not talk to us, the anxious pensive youth of this era of awakening, about Sa’di, Ferdowsi, or Hafez. Describe to us the meaning of life.

Introduce us to the route of redemption and salvation. Let our souls open their wings and our minds to have light and charm. Take away from our eyes the nightmare of decadence and destruction.¹²

One can see in this passage that Raf'at considers himself and others like him to be in a state of “spiritual poverty,” and there is no other solution for them other than rebellion. Thus, he thinks a literary and intellectual revolution is needed, like the political one. More importantly, he refers to himself on different occasions as anxious, pensive, and having nightmares, the consequences of which we will study in chapter 5 (p. 127).

Raf'at goes through some of the responses to the anonymous author. He claims that all these responses are far from such understanding and sensation presented by the anonymous author. He starts with the response published in the journal *Nobahār* on 6th January 1918. This response, signed as “the student of Sa’di’s school” (shāgird-i maktab-i sa’dī), was followed by a short statement by *Nobahār*:

This essay is an example of the public opinion and the sensations of the Iranians on the *Zabān-i Āzād* essay. The article must have been written against the author of *Zabān-i Āzād*, and it is written. Now our readers must wait for the department of *Nobahār* to independently publish a more moderate response that will define the spirit of Sa’di and the zeitgeist of the sixth and seventh centuries and finally will depict the merits of Sa’di and his peers with scientific scrutiny for the very modern youth.¹³

Curiously enough, for *Nobahār* and those supporting the classic literature, the word modern (mutijaddid) is a pejorative term that could be used to insult someone. They never call themselves modern since they find it insulting, and they use it to address their so-called enemies. On the other hand, Raf'at insists on calling himself modern and accepting the existence of the modern condition. Interestingly, Raf'at is never satisfied with modernity. He also blames modernity for its inherent doomed disastrous nature, but he embraces the modern condition while others try standing outside the modern condition and pejoratively address those in that condition. Nevertheless, the point is that everyone is living in that condition. What Raf'at depicts as the modern condition is not limited to himself, but includes everyone living in that time. This seems to be a battle of reality and realism as well. While we expect the conservative camp to stand by the side of the reality and status quo, they refuse its existence.

¹² Raf'at, “A Literary Rebellion,” 27.

¹³ Raf'at, “A Literary Rebellion,” 29.

As a result, Raf'at needs to show them that there is an existing reality. Raf'at's understanding of this reality and his strategy towards that is another topic. The battle seems to be over proving and accepting the reality. This is worth paying attention to because here, the revolutionary side needs to define the reality and show others that such reality exists and then try to claim a revolutionary stance towards that.

Raf'at describes the author of this response as someone having the support of a majority who enters the battlefield to attack his enemy. The point is that there is always a sort of confidence on the side of the conservative ideas since conservatism stands by the status quo, which gives it the confidence that everyone is on its side since everybody is living in the status quo. But the point is that the status quo itself is disputed by the conservatives, which then makes it problematic to feel the support of the majority while rejecting the condition that the majority lives in.

Raf'at describes the faults in the mentioned article. He criticizes it for blaming the people and the atmosphere of Iran. He quotes its author when he claims that everyone will hate the anonymous author. Raf'at writes that he is a young person who has never experienced the joy of literary and philosophical disputes and has never enjoyed the freedom of thought and imagination. Raf'at takes this opportunity to insist on his idea of discussion and freedom of expression. He describes that freedom of expression and public discussions are requisites of the civilized world.

Raf'at finally sketches the strategy in *Nobahār*'s article. He points out that the article in *Nobahār* quotes parts of Sa'di's oeuvre, which go against the ones that the anonymous author of *Zabān-i Āzād* previously quoted. Raf'at claims that this is fine to show that Sa'di was a great thinker of his time, but he rejects that those ideas could be treated like the ideas of modern times or as redemptive ones. He writes:

We feel an estrangement, isolation, and solitude amid today's world that could never be soothed by the Qazals and Qasidas of the classic writers. We are ill and anxious, and our remedy couldn't be found in the poems which made our ancestors grow old.¹⁴

In the next section of this essay, Raf'at analyses another article titled "Sa'dī kīst?" (Who is Sa'di?) published in *Nobahār*. This is the article promised by *Nobahār* to be published. The famous poet-laureate Malik al-sho'arā Bahār most probably wrote this article. Hence, Raf'at's writing about this article is an essential part of "A Literary Rebellion." The essence of the dispute could be sought in this section.

First, Raf'at summarizes his stance on the topic. He is surprised why such an important topic wasn't followed or discussed in Tehran. Then he regrets the lack of confidence in intellectual thoughts that hampers such discussions. He writes that he will happily use this opportunity to step into any literary and philosophical dispute, and he will accept, just like everyone, that "the sparkle of truth is the result of the collision of adverse ideas."¹⁵

Thereafter, Raf'at explains that he is going to focus on the ideas rather than literary devices used in that writing:¹⁶

But basically, we are not going to focus on the analysis of the technical and literary delicacies of that article. As we mentioned before, everyone would read that article with

¹⁴ Raf'at, "A Literary Rebellion," 27.

¹⁵ For a more detailed study of this phrase, see subchapter 2.4 (p. 63).

¹⁶ See: subchapter 1.5 (p. 41).

dilute literary joy and delicate spiritual delight. We will try not to get away from the primary disputed topic and demonstrate those parts of that article that are against today's truth and contradictory to the ideas of our time.¹⁷

Raf'at quoted some sections of *Nobahār's* article and criticized them. Bahar, in some parts of his article, tried using witty quotations from classic Persian literature to insult the masses and also his opponents. Raf'at solemnly argued that such literary devices are no use for such a discussion. Afterwards, he criticized Bahar's claim that via classic literature, we interpret reality and enjoy it. For Raf'at doing so is the same as being nothing. He believes that people of yore interpreted and enjoyed better than us, and ultimately, for us to be the same means having nothing more to present. Next, he asks if such literature can provide the modern youths of Iran with one-hundredth of the sensations of Chatterton.¹⁸

He argued that one could be satisfied with the existing level of literary competence if it was the Middle Ages and the whole world was limited to the Iranian lands. But he believed that Iranians have lagged behind the civilization route, and this couldn't be expressed by classic literature. Then he depicted the Titanic and the scene when it sank. He claims one-hundredth of the images and sensations of that scene couldn't be provoked by classic verses like those belonging to Hafiz. We will come back to this passage in detail later.

Raf'at immediately asked himself if it was a truism on his side to prove that classic writers were geniuses but obviously couldn't see what we see today. He writes that if they haven't seen it, then we should accept that the world is constantly changing and is subject to revolution and evolution. He deduced that there is an alive vivacious modernism (*tajaddud*) that is inseparable from life. And one must follow his "observations" and believe what he has seen. He concluded that one must respect the freedom of thought, which he finds the most precious freedom.

In the next section, Raf'at criticizes one of the claims of Bahar that those beliefs which were attacked by the anonymous author were common beliefs of the time and still are. But Raf'at objects that if those beliefs could be condemned and could be disputed when an old woman claims them, the same is true with Sa'di. He believes that the old woman is less guilty since her experience was limited to her house and she was not educated.

Raf'at also criticizes Bahar's claim that any principle which is beneficial, today, to public life and morals could be found in Sa'di's oeuvre. For Raf'at, this is the worst eulogy for Sa'di since he believes that either Sa'di just gathered everything not believing in them, or he believed in all and consequently proved he doesn't believe in any of them for they contradict each other.

As we saw earlier, in a passage of this essay, Raf'at gives an interesting account of the Titanic:

Have you heard about the marine circumstance that led to the shipwreck of the huge transatlantic ship called Titanic? Imagine for a moment: the width of the surrounding ocean – an infinite dark sapphire space – formidable waves – silence... – being sure that the safe coast is a thousand kilometers away – the ship had hit something in sea – the water goes up in the ship, and the ship goes down in the sea – the people of 20th century with the help of tools, trying to prepare what is needed to survive.

Who? – Only ladies and children! – There is no place for men – a young wealthy officer who was settled in a lifeboat, leaves that safe spot and gets back to the ship about to perish (the commands of the captain are obeyed!...) – only ladies and children!! The

¹⁷ Raf'at, "A Literary Rebellion," 29.

¹⁸ See subchapter 3.8 (p. 102).

music plays... - the daunting water has gotten to the knees of musicians... - passengers are busy praying: “nearer, my God, to thee!”

Above this frightening resurrection, some invisible metal cords (Antennes) – some electric sparkles in a hidden room of the doomed ship – wireless telegraph! – and in the cloudy horizon, the fugitive shattered smoke of the ships coming to rescue Titanic from all four directions of the surrounding sea!¹⁹

After this cinematic/visual account of the Titanic, he invites his audience to compare “one-hundredth of the thoughts and sensations” caused by this image to one of the most famous verses of Hāfez about the dark night and the horror of the sea.

This account comes after his argument that the Old Persian literature could have been sufficient if one lived in the Middle Ages and there wasn’t any perfect civilization, and the world was limited to the Iranian land. But he argues that the feeling of insufficiency and being left behind experienced by Iranians could not be translated into that language. Thus maybe the Titanic is also something that couldn’t be translated into that language. Then one can possibly say that Raf’at is looking for a language capable of rendering the pains and sufferings of modern life.

Nevertheless, why does he choose the Titanic as the instance of the pain; something at least very remote from the Iranian geography? This question could be treated in two different ways, and each will raise its respective problematics. It is possible to say that Iranians had experiences as disastrous as the Titanic or comparable to the Titanic. Then, in that case, one can claim that Iranians have already gone through the Titanic disaster. This is of considerable importance, and we will examine it in detail. It is also possible to say that Raf’at is looking forward to a Titanic experience which is problematic enough itself. Why one must crave the Titanic disaster. What does it even mean to crave the Titanic disaster?

2.2. Thomas Hardy and the Titanic: *The Convergence of the Twain*

Nine days after the Titanic’s shipwreck, Thomas Hardy composed “The Convergence of the Twain.” After a month, it was published as part of the “Dramatic and Operatic Matinee in Aid of the ‘Titanic’ Disaster Fund.”²⁰ As a pragmatic poem intended to raise funds, it can lower the expectations. However, the poem turned out as one of the most important compositions of Hardy. It was published in *Satires of Circumstance* in 1914, and in almost all of the editions of his poetry. It characteristically represents Hardy’s poetry and pessimist philosophy toward nature and destiny. “It is pure Hardy in its stanza pattern and philosophical perspective (as well as philosophical machinery), while the ironic juxtaposition which forms its backbone is about as characteristic of Hardy’s poetic thought as anything we could find.”²¹ Ian Ousby finds this poem not only the best of Hardy’s occasional poetry, also “better than the most occasional poems of the last two hundred years.”²² Thus, this poem not only thematically fits our reading of Raf’at’s essay and its motif of the Titanic; it also is one of the widely read and received poems of Hardy.

¹⁹ Raf’at, “A Literary Rebellion,” 30-31.

²⁰ The Souvenir Programme of the “Dramatic and Operatic Matinee in Aid of the ‘Titanic’ Disaster Fund“ at Covent Garden, 14 May 1912, 2-3.

²¹ Richard Carpenter. *Thomas Hardy*. (London: The Macmillan Press, 1976), 173.

²² Ian Ousby, “The Convergence of the Twain: Hardy’s Alteration of Plato’s Parable,” *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 77, No. 4, Oct 1982, 780.

The poem is composed of eleven stanzas, each having three lines. This structure of lines resembles the appearance of the ship or the iceberg and, at the same time, alludes to the Trinity. Each stanza comprises two iambic trimeters and one iambic hexameter, meaning the first two lines are short, accompanied by a third longer line. In some stanzas, the iambic meter is alternatively changed to trochee or spondee.²³ The third stanza includes one of the strongest ironies of Hardy that even caused some serious moral criticism that Hardy's composition is ruthless and void of human sympathy.²⁴

The sixth stanza starts with a different voice we never heard before. It could be the narrator suddenly turning our attention to himself and then to the answer we must have been waiting for, or it can be a voice from something pertaining to the "Immanent Will." In this stanza, we meet the "Immanent Will," which is described to urge and stir everything. In the next stanza, we are informed that the "Immanent Will" has prepared a sinister mate for the ship. The ship has always been referred to as a feminine being. We are being introduced to the mate, which is now far and is being made as a "Shape of Ice." The capitalized phrase "Shape of Ice" makes one think about the allusions Hardy intended to endow this phrase with. Hardy most probably acquires this Platonic notion through his reading of Percy Bysshe Shelley. The next stanza describes both of these creatures growing separately. The smart ship is growing in "stature, grace, and hue," while in the shadowy, mysterious silence grows the "Iceberg," which is capitalized again, suggesting its relation to the "shape."

In stanzas nine and ten, we see that these two alien creatures are destined for each other while "no mortal eye could see" the welding of their history in the later occasion of time. This welding suggests the erotic relationship of these two creatures whose paths are bent so they could be "twin halves of an august event."

In the last stanza, the meeting finally happens. The "Spinner of the Years," which could be the same entity as the "Immanent Will" or its partner or even something totally separate, makes a short utterance: "Now!" This short utterance may remind us of the famous short utterance: "Let there be light."²⁵ But this short utterance is heard by both of these creatures, and the consummation of this relationship finally happens, and they become unified like two hemispheres attached together.

The early readings of this poem focus on its reference to destiny and determinism, which is a common theme in Hardy's writing. Later some other topics became the centre of attention. One of the critical milestones is Paul N. Siegel's reading of the poem, where he suggests "a kind of parody of the idea of a marriage made in heaven."²⁶ Hardy's apparent emphasis on the "twain" and depicting somewhat conjugal relation between the ship and the iceberg as a "sinister mate" supports the idea.

Siegel interestingly mentions the analysis in *An Approach to Literature*, where the writers focus on "intimate welding" as drawn from metallurgy, and "paths coincident" as drawn from mathematics. Siegel then suggests that this analysis presents the effect of inevitability and dismisses the second section of the poem that Siegel refers to as the "marriage between *Titanic* and the iceberg."²⁷ There seems to be a turn of attention in the case of the Titanic here from the

²³ Thomas Hardy. *The Variorum Edition of the Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy*. Edited by James Gibson (London: Macmillan, 1979), 306-307.

²⁴ Emerson Brown Jr, "The Ruthless Artistry of Hardy's 'Convergence of the Twain'." *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 102, No. 2, Spring 1994, 238.

²⁵ Genesis 1:3.

²⁶ Paul N. Siegel, "Hardy's Convergence of the Twain," *The Explicator*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1952, 27.

²⁷ Siegel, "Hardy's Convergence of the Twain," 27.

scientific-technological discourse toward a more philosophical understanding of history. As time passed to the Titanic and its memory, the extreme belief in modern technology and its representation in the Titanic gave place to a more pessimistic understanding of history and the Titanic.

David S. Thatcher believed that there had been two main motives in the readings of this poem, and a third one must be added. The two existing ones, as he mentions, are “an ironic distortion of Romantic ‘we were made for each other’” and “the sexual motif of *Liebestod*.” But what he proposes as the third is “the perversion of Aristophanes’ account of human love in Plato’s *Symposium*.”²⁸ Although Thatcher’s reading does not thoroughly explore the details of its own suggested possible direction as it is done later by Ian Ousby, he must be acknowledged as the one bringing up the *Symposium* and Aristophanes’ playful narrative therein. Thatcher’s argument that Hardy knew about Aristophanes’ account is based on the passage at the end of chapter five in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*.

Ian Ousby took Thatcher’s idea to the extreme. Starting with the title, he shows that the archaic “twain” doesn’t just mean two, but it suggests a pair of lovers, which he also traces in other writings of Hardy like *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, *The Well-beloved*, and *Jude the Obscure*.²⁹ Thatcher thinks that in the suggested relationship in *Convergence of the Twain* one can see something more than sexual pessimism, rather “a particular type of sexual relationship that fascinated him: a relationship that is apparently destined and inevitable, is based on deep affinity, and yet leads to destruction.”³⁰

The last line of the poem reminds Ousby of the last words of Jesus on the cross as it occurs in the Latin translation: “consummatum est.” For him, “the Immanent Will” and “the Spinner of the Years” resemble the role of God in Genesis, where he created a companion for Adam.

Ousby traces the incestuous overtone in the poem. He states that Hardy didn’t necessarily need to explore mythology to find this out, rather he just needed to have read Shelley. He quotes Shelley in one of his letters where he thought incest was “like many other *incorrect* things a very poetical circumstance.”³¹ Ousby claims that the fact that Hardy had read Shelley is well known. He bases his argument on the phrase “Shape of Ice.” He writes that “shape” is one of Shelley’s favourite words for referring to the Platonic ideal underlying material reality. He makes his argument stronger by referring to the epigraph of *The Well-Beloved*, “one shape of many names,” which is taken from *The Revolt of Islam*.

Although Emerson Brown Jr takes forward the philological study of the poem, he vehemently criticizes it for being void of any human sympathy. His analysis of this poem and its artistry and techniques is for the sake of showing how cruel it can be. Emerson Brown claims himself as one of the “not only clever readers but morally responsible ones as well.”³² Emerson points out that not all the Titanic passengers were opulent since two-thirds of the children in third class and workers, dishwashers, and others also died on that day. He points out that artistic ruthlessness can suppress all extraneous feelings in the service of vision. However, one can also oppose Emerson here since this is the characteristic of Hardy’s writing, not a particular feature limited to this composition. Since Hardy’s writing has always been like this, it is

²⁸ David Thatcher, “Hardy’s Convergence of the Twain,” *The Explicator*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 1970, 63.

²⁹ Ian Ousby, “The Convergence of the Twain: Hardy’s Alteration of Plato’s Parable,” *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 77, No. 4, Oct 1982, 780.

³⁰ Ousby, 781.

³¹ Ousby, 783.

³² Emerson Brown Jr, “The Ruthless Artistry of Hardy’s ‘Convergence of the Twain,’” 243.

difficult to blame him for treating the opulent in his poem and forgetting about the miserable on board.

This makes Emerson's writing to be like a supportive sound for the vulnerable on board. But the interesting part is that this sound proves itself worthy of consideration by the same tool that it criticizes. Emerson takes on a heavy task of philological study, which itself is ruthlessly artistic, to prove that the ruthless artistry is forgetting about the miserable on board. It is a severe attack on Hardy, but the knife that Emerson is holding is held by its blade.

There seems to be something stubborn in every historical incident that goes against its reception, whether this incident is a catastrophe or just the composition of a poem. Supposing the *Convergence of the Twain* as Hardy's subjective understanding or even reading of a historical moment, then what is it in the incident or in the reading (the poem) that could go against the poem itself and Hardy's understanding of the Titanic. If this poem is about a predestined disaster, judging by its emphasis on the "Immanent Will" and the creation of a "sinister mate," then the question is how disastrous the Titanic was. And the immediate question is how disastrous human beings are since the Titanic resulted from the modern condition that humans made. The point is that the idea of predestined disaster with all its philological allusions turns against itself. Because even if the disaster is predestined, meaning that it is inevitable, the destiny is made by the human himself. If so, then the "Immanent Will" is simply human will or free will, or to be more specific, it is the will of modern man on the scene of history who is expanding his modernization to its extreme: extreme in size, extreme in meaning.

One can now consider the iceberg as a human creation, since we observed that the "Immanent Will" is the human will. It seems quite paradoxical that the iceberg must be a human creation, for everyone knows that humans don't manufacture icebergs. But the creation here, the modern creation, is not merely material creation; it can also be subjective. It is a commonplace that with modernization also came the always expanding market for all forms of subjective innovation. The ideas became commodities as well. The iceberg is not manufactured by the human, but it is there in Hardy's composition, and therefore one can suppose it is created. It is created in the sense that Hardy creates it in retrospect as the sinister mate of the ship. One could have imagined so many other sinister mates for that ship, but it is the iceberg that is chosen because the human can recreate it in his imagination. More importantly the human can foresee the iceberg and the potential disaster it can cause. All gigantic liners like the Titanic had strict procedures and manuals for avoiding the icebergs, which failed in the case of the Titanic. The fact that human beings could foresee the iceberg as the potential disastrous object for the ship they were making, makes it evident that the iceberg is like an expansion of the commodity (the ship) they were manufacturing. In this sense, the ship and iceberg are both made by human. The sinister mate is the creation of humans as well as the ship. The "Immanent Will" of modern human renders the iceberg as his creation, as the sinister mate he makes for the Titanic. The disaster is made by the "Immanent Will" of the human as well as the gigantic splendid Titanic. Modern man makes extraordinary creations that are disastrous in themselves since he himself has created their disastrous sinister mate.

This can provide us with a precious understanding of modernity which is linked to the fact that modernity and modern creations, alongside contributing to the welfare of human beings, make them face a disastrous destiny, or better to say, a doomed modernity. Then in the atmospheres where modernity is perceived, but modernization is something people await, the doomed modernity is more a disaster than anything providing welfare. For the nations that have not experienced modernization but are thrown into the modern climate, modernity shows its

disastrous face. But the point is that no one can reject modernity even when it is just showing its disastrous face.

If this is the case that not only the Titanic is disastrous, but also the modernity is itself doomed and disastrous, why is Raf'at so much occupied with it, and what is in it that he is craving? Let us remember *The Communist Manifesto*. Interestingly, in the early parts of it, where Marx talks about the bourgeois revolutions he almost praises the bourgeoisie and its accomplishments more than any liberal pro-capitalist writer. For Marx, modernism was a two-sided phenomenon constructive in abolishing monopoly and introducing rivalry into the economy, and simultaneously destructive since it exploits humans and nature.

Thus, in the manifesto, one may feel that Marx is craving capitalism while knowing that reality is quite the opposite. However, admitting the reality and the existing condition of the time, which is the capitalistic condition, is the first step toward any revolutionary act. A revolution is based on a perception of the existing conditions. For Raf'at same could be said since the social/literary rebellion could be achieved only through admitting the immediate reality one is facing. There is no way to ignore the existing condition and establish a rebellion in the air. The rebellion needs real ground to happen. This ground is disastrous since the modern condition is disastrous, but there is no way to dismiss it because we are all caught in it with a disastrous fate waiting for us. As was the case with Marx, it seems that anything beyond modernity will eventually emerge from within the modernity itself. No idea, even a rebellious and a revolutionary one, couldn't be imposed onto reality. The rebellion and revolution must emerge out of reality itself. Later we will see how the rebellion will emerge out of an experience of modernity for Raf'at, symbolised in the image of Dehqan in his famous poem. For now, we can look at the fact that the Titanic disaster paved the way for many thinkers to perceive the disastrous modernity.

2.3. The British dispute

E. B. French provides a list of famous literary figures who wrote about the Titanic disaster.³³ The writings on the Titanic are not limited to these names. It seemed as if the Titanic was also sucking people's attention as it did with people's lives. On 14th May 1912, George Bernard Shaw published a letter, starting with a frank unsettling question:

Why is it that the effect of a sensational catastrophe on a modern nation is to cast it into transports, not of weeping, not of prayer, not of sympathy with the bereaved nor congratulation of the rescued, not of poetic expression of the soul purified by pity and terror, but of a wild defiance of inexorable Fate and undeniable Fact by an explosion of outrageous romantic lying?³⁴

Shaw aims for the reception of the catastrophe or how a story is made in the public sphere. The first layer is clear, and is about how a story diverges from reality. It is about how the narrative/literary devices/demands work autonomously and make up the final version of the literary work/story. Although he does not show direct interest in it, this can present the idea that literary devices autonomously influence the final product, no matter the reality. For Shaw, this is the opportunity to scrutinize the banality of the social sphere and the common strategies

³³ E. B. French, "The Titanic and the Literary Commentator," *The Bookman: an Illustrated Magazine of Literature and Life*. Volume XXXV, March 1912 – August 1912, New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 603-607.

³⁴ George Bernard Shaw, "Some Unmentioned Morals," *The Daily News*, 14 May 1912.

of the public culture. For him, it is the study of the symptoms of a diseased society. It is a diagnosis.

One can probably settle the question in other ways as well. Supposing that the art forms have their autonomy and play a big part in forming the final artistic work/form, one can see a true radicality in them. But there is nothing more real than the economy and a society based on a certain economic structure. This certain economic structure can render anything radical and, at the same time, enfeeble any radicality.

This could be made more interesting by paying attention to some phrases in this passage: “inexorable Fate,” and “Undeniable Fact.” Since “Fact” and “Fate” are capitalized, one can easily remember Hardy and his “Immanent Will.” Remembering our reading of Hardy’s poem and how it could demonstrate the “Immanent Will” as the human being himself or the political-economic structure he has made, everything could be understood in a new light. Then, in this sense, the whole “outrageous romantic lying” by the journalists and the public sphere is a reaction to the product of human beings. It is a reaction of the human to what he has done, and he himself is stuck in it. Interestingly Shaw rejects this reaction, for he considers it an “outrageous romantic lying.” Then one can assume that Shaw is rejecting the perception of modern life itself or the perception of what humankind has made as to the modern political-economic system. This means an endeavor to go deeper into the meaning of modern life and its understanding.

Shaw is confident that any profound observation of this phenomenon may lead to only one productive scenario: the “poetic expression of the soul purified by pity and terror.” Pity and terror are traditionally associated with any encounter with the sublime, which could be the Titanic disaster here. However, remembering the “Immanent Will,” one should be terrified not by facing the Titanic, but by facing the condition which made the Titanic: the political-economic situation that made the Titanic, or the “Immanent Will.” For Shaw, this encounter could be represented in a “poetic expression.” The rational expression seems hampered or absent. The way out of this wreckage is to find a poetic expression for it. Then it seems evident why so many “literary commentators” wrote about the Titanic, and why it only is the poetic expression that is remembered. Thus one should find a literary strategy to face this disaster, let it be the Titanic or the modern condition in general. That is what is happening in Raf’at’s oeuvre about modernity and the Titanic.

In the next step, Shaw formally analyzes this “outrageous romantic lying.” He exactly goes for a literary analysis of the Titanic, and looks for common literary devices. The significant point in Shaw’s argument is that, after declaring the possible encounter with the Titanic as a literary one with a poetic expression, he analyzes the demands and devices of the genre and the literary form. It seems as if these devices, or let us call them forms in general, autonomously build the final product. This means that the autonomous forms of art and literature not only dictate how the final artistic product must be, but they also affect reality since they present a certain representation and modify their relation to reality. This probably is the deepest point we could get since we started to embark on the Titanic.

In the closure of his writing, having proved the journalists to be “ghastly, blasphemous, inhuman, braggartly lying,” Shaw sadly states that they represent the public, churchmen, and statesmen. He is surprised that in such a moment that he believes one must speak the truth, the whole nation is doing vice versa. Then he writes:

Suppose we came into conflict with a race that had the courage to look facts in the face and the wisdom to know itself for what it was. Fortunately for us, no such race is in sight.

Our wretched consolation must be that any other nation would have behaved just as absurdly.³⁵

Shaw's last argument is a bitterly significant one, not just to the British people but to all humanity. It is like an expansion of wretchedness. The doomed modernity with its unique moral is not confined to the Titanic; it is stretched to the British shore, and finally to the whole planet. The absurdity of the doomed modernity is not limited to any particular place or phenomenon but is present everywhere that has been settled by humanity. This statement has another powerful side that seems intended to go beyond modernity, or to understand modernity from a certain perspective. Understanding the doomed modernity to be present everywhere is a criticism of modernity and could suggest that there could be possible ways of getting out of it. These possibilities remain blurred in Shaw's writing.

Shaw's letter received a moral objection from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.³⁶ Doyle accused Shaw that he had "deliberately singled out one boat; although he could not be aware that it entirely misrepresented the general situation."³⁷ Doyle blames Shaw for presenting a false argument "by his favorite method of "suggestio falsi" – the false suggestion being that the sympathy shown by the public for Capt. Smith took the shape of condoning Capt. Smith's navigation."³⁸ Doyle is too serious for such a discussion: the seriousness specifically required in the court. Remembering the phrase "suggestio falsi" itself to be a part of the legal jargon used in the court, one can see the point. Doyle advocates the case in a serene strict manner, while Shaw *reads* it. Shaw *reads* the reality of the lines of the reports and the performances of the people's reception of the Titanic. Doyle seems to be reluctant about the language playfulness and the forms working autonomously and forming the reality and the language, while Shaw embraces it.

Shaw unconsciously observed the two-sidedness of modernity. Modernity builds and destroys at the same time. Modern people as well; they make and destroy, they are made by modernity and they are destroyed by it, same as the Titanic. This is how the different modernisms occur, in the turmoil of these building and destroying. Modernisms are not developed elsewhere. They are developed right in the Titanic and the disaster.

At this point, it seems obvious why Raf'at, geographically far from the Titanic, is obsessed with such a disaster. Titanic is where modernisms occur, develop, explode, melt into air, and find new forms to go on for a seemingly infinite time. If the scene of modern Iran is where the different modernisms occur or are meant to emerge and develop, then there is no difference between this scene and the scene of the Titanic. Both are impregnated with the power to make and develop, and at the same time to destroy and cause the disaster. Raf'at seemed to know something deep in the essence of modernity, something that profound which seemed irrelevant: the Titanic.

In May 1912, Joseph Conrad published a lengthy hard-to-read essay on the Titanic.³⁹ The first thing which concerns Conrad is the journalistic atmosphere of the Titanic's reception.⁴⁰ Conrad

³⁵ Bernard Shaw, "Some Unmentioned Morals."

³⁶ Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "Mr. Shaw and the Titanic. Protest by Sir A. Conan Doyle," *The Daily News*, 20 May 1912

³⁷ Conan Doyle, "Mr. Shaw and the Titanic. Protest by Sir A. Conan Doyle."

³⁸ Conan Doyle, "Mr. Shaw and the Titanic. Protest by Sir A. Conan Doyle."

³⁹ Joseph Conrad, "Some Reflections, Seamanlike and Otherwise, on the Loss of the Titanic," *The English Review*, Vol. 11, May 1912, 304-315. It was published again as: Joseph Conrad, "Some Reflections on the Loss of the Titanic," *Notes on Life and Letters*, Garden City, N. Y., and Toronto: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1921, 213-228.

⁴⁰ Conrad, "Some Reflections on the Loss of the Titanic," 213.

finds the “big lettering of the headlines” to have “an incongruously festive air” and an effect of “exploitation of a sensational God-send.”⁴¹ This is the point that his writing joins the previous ones. “And if ever a loss at sea fell under the definition, in terms of a bill of lading, of Act of God, this one does, in its magnitude, suddenness and severity; and in the chastening influence, it should have on the self-confidence of mankind.”⁴² The disaster is now rendered as the Act of God. Previously we observed how it was caused by the “Immanent Will,” the human will, or the modern condition. It is now the Act of God.

To our surprise, it is the Act of God through the bill of lading. This is the example of the most brilliant materialization of the divine act. The Act of God is on board, and it is documented. This brings forward the relation among the Act of God as understood by Conrad and Hardy’s Immanent Will and the modern condition which makes both of them possible to exist. Consequently, the study of the Act of God evades theology and gets closer to natural understanding. Natural understanding seems to be the study of modern conditions since it is made possible by it. “I say this with all the seriousness the occasion demands, though I have neither the competence nor the wish to take a theological view of this great misfortune, sending so many souls to their last account. It is but a natural *reflection*,”⁴³ writes Conrad, evading theology and defining his “natural” stance. Here natural stance means the study of conditions of modernity since there is nothing natural in the Titanic disaster in the sense that all is man-made, even the Immanent Will. Conrad’s resistance against the theology seems problematic also in another sense. One may consider the resistance against theology as resistance against the perception of history as something with an end. In this sense, one may be persuaded that he is rejecting any final cause considering the history as opposed to Hardy, who seemed to be picturing an image that has the potential to bring on the final cause. It could be understood in another way as well. Natural could mean determined and suggest determinism; then it is more Hardian than Hardy himself. The natural stance against the theological stance seems to point toward something essential in modernity again. It points toward the fact that modernity evades contradiction though it produces it at the same time.

Conrad attacked the American senators for interrogating Ismay that one may feel he was defending Ismay; the Brute Ismay. “‘Yamsi’, I should explain, is a mere code address, and I use it here symbolically.”⁴⁴ The telegraphs sent by Ismay were signed as Yamsi, which is his name read in the opposite direction. But Yamsi, for Conrad, and our writing, symbolically seems to become a code to understand the condition. This means that no matter what Ismay is on the shore, on the Titanic, and in the literary forms, we face Yamsi.

This Yamsi is a code, a literary device that could be contrasted to the Ismay seen by the eyes. In the actual modern condition, Ismay is everywhere and understood by everyone since one can see that the eye is dominant in the modern nexus of the experience. Still, in words, Yamsi is treated as the main centre of the experience. The critical point is that reality and how it is experienced are different in the literary words with its codes and demands, with the land of graphic expression where people are stationed in the eyes of the ship.

Conrad’s natural reflection finds its way to criticize modern institutions and modernity. Naturally enough, Conrad goes beyond their apparent nature, looking for a ghost, a memory. “A Board of Trade ... A ghost. Less than that; as yet a mere memory. An office with adequate and no doubt comfortable furniture.”⁴⁵ Then he writes: “there can be no care without personal

⁴¹ Conrad, “Some Reflections on the Loss of the Titanic,” 213.

⁴² Conrad, “Some Reflections on the Loss of the Titanic,” 213.

⁴³ Conrad, “Some Reflections on the Loss of the Titanic,” 213.

⁴⁴ Conrad, “Some Reflections on the Loss of the Titanic,” 214.

⁴⁵ Conrad, “Some Reflections on the Loss of the Titanic,” 216.

responsibility – such, for instance, as the seamen have – those seamen from whose mouths this irresponsible institution can take away the bread – as a disciplinary measure.”⁴⁶ The ghostly nature of modern institutions and modernity is the impersonality of modern institutions. Mankind has made something gigantic that he is no more in control of it. The gigantic being goes away and out of control, making it void of human compassion. This gigantic being, just like the Titanic, can take the bread out of the mouths of those who are its creators and can do so in the name of disciplinary measures. Modernity, in its ghostly nature, has moved beyond the human. It seems to be void of the collective spirit that made it and, at the same time, is the result of a collective spirit. Just like a ghost, one can’t get a grasp of it. It is both in one moment.

The ghostly nature of the modern institution is that it can change shape, without a certain materiality, like the things in memory which can change their forms and sometimes evade being formed. It is like the code “Yamsi” or even a real person like Ismay. This may clarify why Yamsi has significance to Conrad in his natural reflection on the Titanic. Yamsi is the ghostly aspect of the Ismay.

Not having limbs and having just one head, the modern institution seems to be the same as the Titanic. If the modern institution is like the Titanic, then let us remember Hardy and deduce that the Immanent Will has decided to create the Board of Trade or the modern institution. If the Immanent Will is the human will, as we saw earlier in the reading of Hardy’s poem, then one can assume that humankind has created this august ghostly sinister entity which is the modern institution.

Conrad describes the new trends in seamanship. “The new seamanship: when in doubt try to ram fairly – whatever’s before you. Very simple.”⁴⁷ The trend is not making detours or going around obstacles or reality, rather it is like going straight ahead and ramming into anything you face. This is very much similar to the idea of progress, ramming into any obstacle to go further. This may remind one of the Angelus Novus as Walter Benjamin treated it. Benjamin calls the storm, caught in the wings of the angel of history, pushing it forward into the future, as progress.⁴⁸ In this picture, the storm rams but with a difference from the ramming of the new seamanship. The new seamanship rams into the reality, causing piles of wreckage, while the storm pushes the angel of history, moving it further from the pile of the wreckage it intends to make whole and awaken its dead. The new seamanship looks into the future, in the same direction as the storm, reluctant to awaken the dead or make a whole of the wreckage. This is the essence of modernity in work, and even the angel of history is unable to take any action. The storm, the progress, and the new seamanship are the result of the Immanent Will, or the human will to make the modern condition, and they turn out to be void of human affection, of concern for the wreckage, for the wounded, and for the dead.

In April 1912, Gilbert Keith Chesterton published an essay in *The Illustrated London News* under the column “Our Notebook.” It primarily focused on the analogy between the Titanic and modern society. In this sense, Chesterton not only aims for the heart of the modern condition, but he could also be well placed in our reading. He considers the analogy between “the great modern ship” and “our great modern society” as a fact that is “perhaps too large and plain for the eye easily to take in.”⁴⁹ Chesterton traces the analogy between the ship and the State to Charles Dickens *Our Mutual Friend*.⁵⁰ Everything seems to have started from

⁴⁶ Conrad, “Some Reflections on the Loss of the Titanic,” 216.

⁴⁷ Conrad, “Some Reflections on the Loss of the Titanic,” 220.

⁴⁸ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 257.

⁴⁹ G. K. Chesterton, “Our Notebook,” *The Illustrated London News*, 27 April 1912, 619.

⁵⁰ Mr. Veneering, in his electoral address, puts forward such an analogy: Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, (London: Chapman & Hall), 208.

literature. The literary intuition seems to have done far better than theory in understanding the modern disastrous moment.

Chesterton believes that “the man is governed not only by what he thinks but by what he chooses to think about: and the sights that sink into us day by day colour our minds with every tint between insolence and terror. This is one the worst evils in that extreme separation of social classes which marks the modern ship – and State.”⁵¹ The modern man, by his psychological condition, is caught between terror and insolence. Interestingly Chesterton defines this psychological condition through the actual social condition. The extreme separation of social classes, according to Chesterton, is the reason for such a condition. This evil condition is symbolised in the modern ship and the modern State. The analogy gets to its extreme:

But whether or no our unhappy fellow-creatures on the *Titanic* suffered more than they need from this unreality of original outlook, they cannot have had less instinct of actuality than we have who are left alive on land: and now that they are dead they are much more real than one. They have known what papers and politicians never know – of what man is really made, and what manner of thing is our nature at its best and worst. It is this curious, cold, flimsy incapacity to conceive what a *thing* is like that appears in so many places, even in the comments on this astounding sorrow.⁵²

Suddenly the best lamentation and eulogy for the victims of the *Titanic* shows up in one of the best literary/theoretical writings on the *Titanic*. There could be no better eulogy for the victims since the best eulogy is only possible in the framework of the best understanding of the condition in which the victims lived and perished. The dead are the most real beings. They have perceived what the essence of the man is. They have been able to grasp what a *thing* is, and this has happened in a condition that things lose their essence and turn against themselves and melt into air. For Chesterton, the only locus where one is able to hold onto things as they are, is in the wreckage, in the pile of the dead in front of the angel of history. The scheme is never understood until one has perished. That is another level of ghostliness of modern condition. One must be on the verge of life to perceive it as such. And obviously, this is not something that could be understood by the State, journals, and so many other essential parts and gears of modernity.

2.4. The Iranian encounter with the *Titanic*

The European people embarked on the luxurious *Titanic* and the luxuries of the modern condition and ultimately faced its deadly disastrous nature. For Iranians, it seemed as if they asynchronously embarked on the disaster and the deadly moment of the modern condition. Iranians, on their way to modernization after the Constitutional Revolution and before the First World War, were caught in between the rivalries of the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy) on one side and the Triple Entente (United Kingdom, Russia, and France) on the other side. However, the United Kingdom and Russia played the most influential and deadliest part. In 1907 the notorious Anglo-Russian Convention was signed between two kingdoms without any consent on the Iranian side. The Russian side ultimately renounced the convention in 1918 after the new revolutionary government was in power. The mutual interest in Leftist ideas made it possible for Soviet Russia to make new ties with Iranians. But The British insisted on their intruding policies resulting in their insistence on the later Anglo-

⁵¹ Chesterton, “Our Notebook,” 619.

⁵² Chesterton, “Our Notebook,” 619.

Persian Agreement of 1919, trying to force themselves into the economy of Iran, which caused an immense turmoil in the political atmosphere of Iran.

In 1912, the Iranians were caught amid such a disastrous moment. They were fighting with foreign kingdoms who had aimed for the independence of Iran. They were also struggling with their own condition of modernization and their inner struggles, which occurred due to modernization and modern aspirations. In that year, Russians trying to enforce and enjoy their rights of the 1907 convention, bombarded the Holy Shrine of Mashhad, resulting in the destruction of the shrine, stealing its treasures, and the loss of many lives (estimated from 69 to 800).

Sir Percy Sykes describes the bombardment of the holy shrine in Mashhad by the Russian troops. In this account, he points to the impact of the Titanic disaster on the reception of this event in the British public opinion:

The feeling excited throughout Persia and in a lesser degree throughout the Moslem world was intense, as Meshed is the centre of pilgrimage in Persia. Curiously enough, the bombardment attracted little notice in England, as it coincided with the dreadful catastrophe of the *Titanic*, and the British public was naturally absorbed in the details of that terrible disaster, which occupied the columns of the press to the exclusion of practically everything else. For me, the bombardment of the Shrine, of which I warned the Legation beforehand, of which I knew all the details, and which I witnessed, represented an outrage on an innocent people, and clearly demonstrated the sinister motives underlying Russian policy.⁵³

The romantic lying being published in journals again appears here as the noise to prevent certain events from being heard. For Sykes, the fact that the British public was absorbed in the details of the Titanic disaster seems “natural” or probably something with a causal nature. For him, as the Brigadier general or the Consul General in Mashhad, this could have been all natural since he excludes himself and his British Government from what is represented as “an outrage on an innocent people.” As a result of the 1907 convention, the northern part of Iran, including Mashhad, was under the influence of Russia, and the British government respected that since they had their influence over the south to enjoy. Thus any action taken in the northern part of Iran by Russian troops was covertly agreed upon by the British government and definitely by its Consul General in Mashhad, not to mention the documents proving the Consul General’s intervention and intrigue.⁵⁴ Then, the surprising fact is not the innocent-seeming account of Sykes rather it is when he writes:

⁵³ Sir Percy Sykes, *A History of Persia*. Second edition. 2nd Vol. (London: Macmillan, 1921), 427.

⁵⁴ Mohammad Hasan Adib Heravi, in his book about the history of the Holy Shrine in Mashhad titled *Ḥadīqat al-Raḍawīyya*, gives an account of the bombardment of Mashhad, which he himself was an eye witness and as a clergyman had close contacts with those involved. He writes about the talk between the Official Custodian of the Holy Shrine and Consul General of the United Kingdom (Sykes):

“I told that you induced the Russians so that these unfavourable events occurred, ‘us?!’ he asked, I told him yes, it was you who told the Russians that our citizens are not safe, and since your troops are in the front line and present in Khorasan we are taking no action, and if you take no action in protecting our citizens, we will be obliged to bring forces from India. Recently Russians have acquired documents from you that you have consent, and you beguiled them, and I am aware of that document.” (Mohammad Hasan Adib Heravi, *Ḥadīqat al-radāwīyya*, Mashhad: Chapkhane Khorasan, 1948, 225).

Evidently, the British government and their Consul General not only were aware of the event but also intrigued the chaotic, disastrous event.

My visit, rightly or wrongly, was considered to have been the cause of the restoration of the Treasury, Persians not being able to distinguish between *post hoc* and *propter hoc*, and I received many letters of thanks...⁵⁵

Here we are not concerned about proving or disproving Iranians' understanding of causality and logic, rather we are interested in Sykes' perception of causality. The mindset behind this passage is the one that finds it "natural" for the British public to be absorbed in the details of the Titanic disaster to the extent of forgetting anything else. But isn't this the aim of an outrageous romantic lying? As Shaw, Conrad, and Chesterton showed us, the outrageous romantic lying had its root in the modern condition of that society, and in that sense, it is "natural" for the British public to be absorbed in it. But for Sykes, the matter has no complications or "details"; there has been a disaster, and it is in newspapers without any distortions, and the process seems to be simple and obvious. Sykes' "natural" mindset seems to be as simple as the political propaganda expected from someone of his rank.

But Sykes' reference to "post hoc ergo propter hoc" could also mean that he is criticizing Iranians for mistaking the temporality with the causality. This is critical since Sykes' argument is temporally disturbed. The shipwreck of the Titanic happened on 15th April and probably became the main headline the next day or even on the evening of 15th, and the bombardment happened on 30th March and was preceded by month-long extraordinary events, an account of which could be found in different sources. Moreover, in such calamities, the reports were urgently made via telegraph, so the news of the bombardment could have arrived in London by the first of April. Having this in mind, one can seriously question the temporality of Sykes' account. The disturbed temporality of the Iranians is caught in the disturbed temporality of the modern condition, which is rendered distortedly by Sykes into a plain account. The story of modernity for Iranians seems to be asynchronous and disturbed in its very essence.

After the bombardment, which caused significant destruction to the Holy Shrine and the loss of many people's lives, the Russian troops confiscated the Treasury of the Holy Shrine and took it in the name of the Russian Bank. After some days and Sykes' visit to the Treasury, which he doesn't find relevant to the future events, the Treasury was taken back to the Holy Shrine, but the Official Custodian of the shrine was taken prisoner for one day, after which he signed a paper declaring that the Treasury is intact and no damage has been done.⁵⁶

Obviously, the declaration had been signed under the pressure of the Russian forces since the Official Custodian didn't have any orientation or compassion toward the Russians, so he may try to exonerate them. Nevertheless, what is essential for us here is that the declaration is not limited to the fact that the treasury is intact, rather it makes the author express his satisfaction. The same manner is found in the declaration made by General Radko, the commander of Russian Cossacks in Mashhad, the day after the bombardment.⁵⁷

The crucial point in this declaration is not that the Russians require Iranians to surrender, rather it is something about believing. The modernity not only embarks Iranians on its disastrous deck, but it also makes them face its ideological apparatuses but in its primitive form, based on punishment. The hegemonic apparatuses would be used some years later.

⁵⁵ Adib Heravi, *Hadiqat al-radawiyya*, 225.

⁵⁶ Seyed Masoud Seyed Bonakdar, Shahrzad Mohammadi Aein, "The causes and consequences of the Russian 1912 invasion to the Holy shrine of Imam Reza based on newly discovered documents," *History of Islam*, Autumn 1395, 97.

The document referred to is preserved in the archive of the ministry of foreign affairs and history of diplomacy (استادوخ) (214-8-24-1330).

⁵⁷ Adib Heravi, 228-229, Mohammadi Aein and Seyed Bonakdar, 102-103.

Indeed, this is one of the moments that one can admit there are new conditions established, those which need special treatment and strategy; a modern strategy. One can remember Raf'at in "A Literary Rebellion," where he is looking for something beyond classic literature to make him able to express the pain and anxiousness that modern Iranian may feel. The disastrous modern condition has nothing to do with what people of the older times like Sa'di experienced. The new modern disaster seems to require new literature, and new language. Being embarked on modernity, he seems to be developing a consciousness of the modern condition.

The modern condition, the embarkment on the Titanic, and the presence in the modern scene of the world, or so to say, the "new civilization beyond the borders of Iran," as Raf'at put it, constantly threaten to destroy. The destruction at one level is like what happens to the Titanic. It is physical destruction. It also threatens to destroy what one possesses, what one knows, and what someone is. That is why Raf'at is on a quest for a modern strategy to face modernity. He knows any classic idea and literature cannot resist the modern condition, it will be destroyed and shipwrecked. Any strategy to overcome this anxious condition must be developed from within the condition. This is where the urge for new literature and a new understanding of one's position is inevitable.

There was a particular Iranian absent on the disastrous deck of the modern condition of Mashhad and also the Titanic, and probably could have been expected in both Places: Abdu'l-Baha, son of Baha'u'llah and the last of three central figures of the Baha'i faith. On 29th August 1910, one of the American Baha'is visiting Abdu'l-Baha in Palestine wrote to his friend: "I have a very big piece of news to tell you. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has left this Holy Spot for the first time in forty-two years and has gone to Egypt.'"⁵⁸ In 1911 he made his first journey to Europe until the spring of 1912, when he traveled back to Egypt. On March 25th, he was boarded on the S. S. Cedric in Alexandria and headed towards the United States.

What does this journey have to do with the Titanic? Surprisingly it has whether a miraculous or a random banal relation to the Titanic. The master was asked to travel on the Titanic after getting to England, but he refused to do so and donated all the money, provided for that cause by his friends, to the charity. This could have possibly been seen as a mere chance or the miracle of Abdu'l-Baha.⁵⁹ In the Baha'i community, it seemed that it was not utterly decided how to treat that event. There have been some impressions that may suggest the miracle, but all are left in vain without significant insistence. Apparently, in modern condition, it is impossible to decide whether a miracle has happened or not. Everyone goes around the event craving the miracle, but ambiguous allusions are the only existing things.

⁵⁸ Eliane Lacroix-Hopson, *Abdu'l-Baha in New York: The City of the Covenant*, (New York: NewVistaDesign, 1987), 6.

⁵⁹ Mīrza Mahmud Zarqānī, *Badāyi' al-āṣār*. (Paris: 1921), 7-8, the translation into English from Mīrza Mahmud Zarqānī, *Mahmud's Diary*, (Oxford: George Roland, 1998), 10.



Fig. 4 - Abdu'l-Baha among the visitors and Kate Carew
(By Kate Carew, *New York Tribune*)

About a month after the Titanic disaster, Kate Carew⁶⁰ interviewed Abdu'l-Baha, published in *New York Tribune* alongside famous sketches of the master and his visitors by Carew. Even in this document, the Titanic finally shows up. “In a supreme moment, as in that of the Titanic disaster, should both sexes share the danger equally” asks Carew.⁶¹ The master’s response is even more bizarre than the question. He starts by admitting the fact that women are more delicate than men. Based on that, then the men must take into account that delicacy. But the master goes on with his argument and states: “If the time ever comes when the average woman is a man’s equal in physical strength there will be no need for this consideration; but not until then.”⁶² This makes it obvious that by delicacy, the master meant physical delicacy. Also, this

⁶⁰ Pseudonym for Mary Williams, the American caricaturist.

⁶¹ Kate Carew, “Abdul Baha talks to Kate Carew of things spiritual and mundane,” *New York Tribune*, 5 May 1912.

⁶² Carew, “Abdul Baha talks to Kate Carew of things spiritual and mundane.”

physical situation seems to be subject to change so that one day might be altered and change the whole balance.

The master seems to have a peculiar strategy toward modernity and modern condition. Although he seems to defend a traditional notion of physical difference between the two sexes, he stands on the side of one of the most radical modern ideas, which is to form the subjects as required by a particular material condition. The women should have been delicate in the time when it was needed to be so. However, in the modern condition, there is a need for more labour power, more consumption, and a more agile economic structure, which requires the women to appear more active and powerful on the scene. Having this in mind, one can notice that the master had perceived something crucial in the heart of modernity. This peculiar strategy appears in most cases with Abdu'l-Baha and maybe the whole Baha'i faith in some sense. In the times where the individual benefit is gaining the ultimate power and destroying all virtues in that name, he is introducing a spirituality that is concerned with the power of the heart. At the same time, he is still interested in the material power and believes it must be completed by the spiritual one. The tendency to utterly state that union of mankind and States is the goal seems to be a very radical modern idea. The master seems to be an amalgam of modern ideas but lost in them, or surprisingly/miraculously saved from its disastrous nature.

Abdu'l-Baha's peculiar strategy was with him even the first day he landed on American soil. His first speech on American soil is intended toward the modernity of New York.⁶³ One can quickly notice the peculiar strategy in this speech. Material civilization, while it is not the master's aim or intention, is praised for being a fertile ground for spirituality. The peculiar strategy works to reconcile materiality and spirituality. Moreover, the master seems to advocate progress, and this advocacy has almost no critical manner. The strategy for this advocacy, still peculiar, is to expand the scope of progress even to spirituality. Now the wind of progress is blowing even in the realm of spirit. The progress, in these words, is towards the illumination of the United States. For this progress, one must become the manifestation of the love of Baha'o'llah and the ray of blessed perfection. The perfection could be nowhere but in the United States. This is something greater than the American dream. This progress is toward perfection. Apparently, there is no pile of wreckage, or maybe such a pile of wreckage couldn't be seen under the rays of bounties of the blessed perfection. Like the miracle that couldn't be precisely observed in the modern condition, the pile of the wreckage of modern condition couldn't be seen in the rays of the blessed perfection, i.e., in the United States. The peculiar strategy turns out to be a great successful strategy of reconciliation; reconciling materiality and spirituality, wreckage and progress. One can make a hunch and propose that probably the irrelevance of Baha'i faith to the Iranian atmosphere was caused partly by this strategy which totally differed from Iranians'. Such strategy seems to be fit for a westerner living where reconciliation (and later) is possible, not in a land far from the Atlantic Ocean where people suffer the disastrous result of the Titanic modernity.

This geographical difference and the difference in the possibility of observing spiritual matters even occur in the actual scene of the master's journey in the United States. The fact that the master didn't travel with the Titanic was at least a definite opportunity to declare a miracle, but since it happened somewhere out of the American land, the peculiar strategy failed to render it as a miracle rather tried ambiguously allude to its extraordinary nature. Out of the American land, the spiritual master and his disciples cannot decide whether a miracle has happened or not. When one of the survivors of the Titanic asks the master if he knew this would happen,

⁶³ Abdu'l-Baha, "Addresses Delivered by Abdul-Baha in New York City and Vicinity," *Star of the West*, Vol. 3, 8 Sep 1912, No. 10, 4-5.

the master replies shortly: “God inspires man’s heart.”⁶⁴ It seems that the master either hasn’t made up his mind or is simply giving a humble response. In contrast to this, another event happened on American soil where it is easier to observe a miracle in the midst of material progress. While he was still in America on September 15th, the master had to travel to Kenosha to visit Dr. Nutt. They were supposed to travel via railway. Apparently, the master and his friends had to change trains after two stations, but due to some complexities, they missed the train, so they had to wait for the next one. Those around the master seemed sad, but he replied: “it matters not. There is a wisdom⁶⁵ in this.” Finally, they catch the next train. And in the middle of their way, they face the first train wrecked and some passengers injured. “This, too, was the protection of the Blessed Beauty.” Then, he narrated the story of his travel from Alexandria to America. “Some proposed that we leave via London by the S. S. Titanic, which sank on the same voyage. The Blessed Beauty guided us to come direct.”⁶⁶ This time, the miracle has happened. Finally, the American soil and its material progress make the master declare the miracle. Before this, in the case of the Titanic incident, it was at the most the inspiration of God. But this time, it is obviously a direct order from God. God directed the master this time, or maybe on the American soil, it is possible to observe such direction and miracle.

The master made his major speech on the Titanic in the house of the person, whom he intended to meet on that miraculous railway journey. That speech suddenly ends in the most cinematic manner. Again, any representation of the Titanic or anything related to that requires something cinematic. “[After a long pause, – looking reflectively out the window] I was asked to sail upon the *Titanic*, but my heart did not prompt me to do so,” writes MacNutt about the master.⁶⁷ Apparently, something in the very core of the Titanic disaster craves cinema and cinematic representation. The autonomous forms of the reality of the Titanic play their role in imposing a particular genre, form, and mode of representation. Even Raf‘at’s account of the Titanic is very cinematic, to which we will return later. Later on, we can see, in retrospect, that the Titanic is the most famous in cinema rather than any other medium. The Titanic is mostly related to the vision, the visual culture. We observed this same thing in Conrad’s account of the Titanic and the American’s reaction toward that. Conrad found the United States as the land of graphic expression in his account of the Titanic.

We may leave the master, his peculiar strategy, and his absence on the Titanic deck and pay attention to his presence in Raf‘at’s writing. The master seems to be present hideously somewhere in Raf‘at’s “A Literary Rebellion.” When defending the idea of a free discussion, Raf‘at quotes a phrase: “the sparkle of truth flares from the collision of ideas.”⁶⁸ The idea behind this phrase is not unique, but when we trace its meaning and phrasing, we get to certain points and figures. Tracing back the idea, one can get to John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty*, where he writes: “it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied.”⁶⁹ The importance of this passage, and how it possibly could relate to Raf‘at’s writing and position in modernity will be scrutinized later.⁷⁰ This phrase was distortedly quoted in one of the writings of Akhundzade titled “The English Philosopher John Stuart” which one may guess that Raf‘at had read. In fact, the whole essay by Akhundzade

⁶⁴ Mīrza Mahmud Zarqānī, *Badāyi’ al-āṣār*. (Paris: 1921), 202 and the English translation in Mīrza Mahmud Zarqānī, *Mahmud’s Diary*, (Oxford: George Roland, 1998), 218.

⁶⁵ The word in Farsi is “hekmat” (حکمت), to which there are certain semantic nuances. It has an obvious relation to the determinism prevailing in the Islamic culture.

⁶⁶ Zarqānī, *Badāyi’ al-āṣār*, 247 and the English translation in Zarqānī, *Mahmud’s Diary*, 265.

⁶⁷ Abdu’l-Baha, “I am summoning you to the world of the kingdom (Words of Abdul-Baha to Howard MacNutt, after the Titanic disaster),” *Star of the West*, Vol. 4, No. 12, 16 Oct 1913, 210.

⁶⁸ بارقه حقیقت از تصادم افکار برجهد.

⁶⁹ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1959), 95.

⁷⁰ See subchapter 4.5 (p. 122).

seems a lot distorted. Although it indirectly suggests it is a translation or a review of Mill's writing, it is almost a new writing with new ideas totally irrelevant to Mill's. The distorted phrase by Akhundzade is: "gradually by the collision of different ideas and believes the truth will find its place."⁷¹ The idea and phrasing seem to be close to the quotation by Raf'at, but far from any legitimate cause to put it in quotation marks suggesting that he is quoting the exact wording. On the quest to find the reference of the quotation, one can finally get to an important figure we already have met. The exact phrasing is located in the letters of Abdu'l-Baha on different occasions, which was even later referred to by Shoghi Effendi. This could make us sure that Raf'at's reference is most likely to the master. This is the point that the master's absence and his presence get a new meaning in the modern scene of Iran.

Again, we see the master and his peculiar strategy in a new scene. Moreover, this time we can see the master busy with material topics. Interestingly, the context in which the phrase shows up is pertaining to administrative issues of the Baha'i faith. There, the master seems to embrace reality in order to establish something, rather than making up a spiritual civilization as he did on American soil.

The first occasion when the idea is there, but the phrasing seems different, is one of the letters by Abdu'l-Baha where he is advising the believers about the proper behaviour in a divine council: "Collision of ideas and opposition of thoughts in the council results in the revelation of the ray of truth."⁷² The second occasion is on the same subject in another letter: "And the sparkle of truth is the emitted ray of the collision of ideas."⁷³

The phrasing here is the same except for two words. In this phrase by Abdu'l-Baha, he refers to the sparkle as the emitted ray (Shu'ā'-i sāṭi'ah), but Raf'at uses the verb to flare up (برجوهیدن). This is a minor but critical difference for our reading, to which we will return later.⁷⁴ For now, let us scrutinize the passage more carefully. The minor difference in the phrasing couldn't weaken the argument that the quotation's reference is Abdu'l-Baha because the same quotation with different wording appeared in another context as well.⁷⁵ This could mean that this was a famous saying by Abdu'l-Baha to the extent that no one cared for its exact phrasing.

The presence of the master in Raf'at's writing may bring up questions pertaining to Raf'at's religious beliefs and his possible affiliation with the Baha'i faith or its central figures. The documents to prove or deny such a supposition are very insufficient that one cannot make a final statement. Nevertheless, it is not our concern here to do so. What is essential is that Raf'at had been exposed to that atmosphere and context so that in an important moment of his writing, he turns his attention thereto. The crucial matter here is that Raf'at's strategy and perception of modernity go totally against the master's. For him, modernity is not the auspicious moment of material progress waiting for spiritual or intellectual progress. For him, the modern moment is

⁷¹ و فایده کرینیکا، در صورت آزادی خیال، آن خواهد شد که عاقبت رفته رفته از تصادم اقوال و آرای مختلفه حق در مرکز خود قرار خواهد کرد. "کرفت و در علم مدنیت ترقیات ظهور خواهد کرد." Mirza Fath'ali Akhundzade, *Maqālāt* (The Essays). Edited by Baqer Momeni, (Tehran: Ava, 1351 [1973]), 93-4.

⁷² Abdu'l-Baha, *Khasā'ese Ahle Bahā va Farā'eze Aṣhābe Shawr* (Characteristics of the Baha'is and Duties of the Members of Council). Edited by Dr Riyaz Ghadimi, 1972, 63.

⁷³ بارقه حقیقت شعاع ساطع از تصادم افکار است. Abdu'l-Baha, *Khasā'ese Ahle Bahā va Farā'eze Aṣhābe Shawr* (Characteristics of the Baha'is and Duties of the Members of Council). Edited by Dr Riyaz Ghadimi, 1972, 63-4.

⁷⁴ See chapter 4 (p. 107).

⁷⁵ Shoghi Effendi, in one of his letters dated 1939, refers to Abdu'l-Baha: "Through the clash of personal opinions, as Abdu'l-Baha has stated, the spark of truth is often ignited and Divine guidance revealed."

The Farsi translation is as follows:

همانگونه که حضرت عبدالبهاء بیان فرموده‌اند؛ از طریق تصادم افکار شخصی، اغلب بارقه حقیقت ساطع میشود و هدایت حضرت احدیت "لامع میگردد." Hornby, Helen (compiled by). *Lights of Guidance (A Baha'i Reference File)*. Baha'i Publication Trust. 1988, 64.

the moment of the Titanic shipwreck. For the master, it is a sort of opportunity to claim a miracle; for Raf'at, it is a disaster. The master, while he was by chance or miracle saved from the Titanic disaster, seems to be void of any significant impression of the disaster. In contrast, Raf'at, far from the Titanic and the Atlantic waters, seems to be disturbed and occupied by the Titanic disaster. The peculiar strategy of the master is no more the case here. Raf'at has his own disaster craving strategy, or so to say, the strategy to fully embrace and understand modernity, especially its disastrous side.

Now, we look at what has happened to the story of the Titanic since it happened till it reached Raf'at's writings in the Iranian atmosphere. As mentioned before, there aren't any documents or resources to trace the Titanic representations in the Iranian atmosphere. Future studies may reveal new documents that could be used to factually investigate the topic. Still, there is a tool we can use to delineate some possibilities of the subject. The tool is the Farsi orthography and the phonetic transformation of the loan words.

Generally, the loan words in Farsi, specifically those existing in both English and French, were pronounced according to the French pronunciation in the late Qajar and early Pahlavi periods. Over time this tendency changed toward the English pronunciations, and today most of the new loan words are pronounced according to the English pronunciation.

The recent pronunciation of the word "titanic" is /tāytānīk/ and is written like "تایتانیک." But one may not expect the same to have been true in the case of Raf'at and his writing. Intuitionally, one may expect a pronunciation like /tītānīk/, more similar to the French pronunciation. Till this point, the earliest writing form of the word "titanic," of which we are aware, is the one in the writings of Mirza Mahmud Zarghani, who travelled with Abdu'l-Baha to the United States. Although the book was published in 1913, one can assume that the orthography must not have changed, and the word existing in the book must be as Mirza Mahmud wrote in 1912. The word that Mirza Mahmud has written on different occasions in his book is "تیتانیک."⁷⁶ This must have been pronounced like /tītānīk/, which accords to our hunch about orthography and pronunciation.

Curiously, Raf'at's writing form of the word does not comply with this hunch. Raf'at writes the word as "تیتانیق" which must have been pronounced as /tītānīq/. The difference is the last consonant of the word "c," usually pronounced as /k/. The interchange of /k/ to /q/ happens in some dialects of Arabic and also in Turkish. This tendency of changing /k/ to /q/ was obvious in Ottoman Turkish and then in the Modern Turkish spoken in Turkey. This may lead us to the point to suppose that the form "تیتانیق" used by Raf'at is the Turkish pronunciation. There are two reasons to support this idea. First is the fact that Raf'at had lived for some time in Trabzon in Turkey, which may be the reason for using a Turkish pronunciation. Moreover, plenty of documents close to the date of the Titanic disaster show the same pronunciation and orthographic form used for the word "Titanic" in the Turkish papers. In the Turkish paper *Donanma* published in April 1912, one can find different occasions where the word titanic is written as "تیتانیق."

⁷⁶ Zarqānī, *Badāyi' al- 'āṣār*, 8, 33, 202, 247.



Fig 5. The Titanic in *Donanma* paper

Having these in mind, one may probably be convinced that the emergence of the Titanic, at least in Raf'at's writing, has happened via the Ottoman atmosphere. The disastrous modernity is mediated via the Turkish atmosphere. There seems that even the disaster is mediated. The geopolitical conditions still have their role in the modern condition and its formation, especially in a time when traveling and communication via land is the mainstream. Still, there is a century until the frenzied world of planes and the internet.

2.5. Doomed Modernity

After observing the Titanic on different occasions and having grasped it as an august sinister ghostly entity created by the Immanent Will or the historical human will, it seems a right opportunity to look back at the disastrous moment in Raf'at's "A Literary Rebellion." The passage with the disastrous Titanic is given as an example of pain (a new and modern sensation), which is not possible to express within the old literary paradigm. As we observed, the modern moment and pain are not avoidable. As was the case in Hardy's poem, the modern condition, and modern man are the twins meant for each other. There is no way to step out of this scheme. One has to encounter this pain and try sketching a strategy for this encounter. This strategy could have different forms. For the master, it was a peculiar strategy. For Raf'at, it is a literary/social rebellion.

The literary rebellion supported by Raf'at brings forward the importance of poetic expression compared to rational expression. Shaw, in his "Some Unmentioned Morals," was advocating the same idea. We observed the logic for the preference of the poetic expression over rational expression. Then we may deduce that there is a certain characteristic in the Titanic requiring poetic expression. Moreover, the cinematic/poetic representation of the Titanic in Raf'at's writing adds to this idea. Especially because Raf'at presents the Titanic as the new pain, new sensation, and new impression, all aiming at the heart of modernity.

Even the rational expression of the Titanic itself is linked with the poetic expression. The rational expression strangely points toward the heart of modernity which is the possibility of the poetic expression. Remembering that the Titanic has been strangely present in literature

long before it was present in reality, one may not be surprised anymore with Raf'at's insistence on the Titanic's poetic expression in a land far from the Atlantic Ocean. In 1898, 14 years before the Titanic disaster, Morgan Robertson published one of his novels, *Futility*, which later gained extraordinary fame and was retitled as *The Wreck of the Titan*. The extraordinary fame was due to the suggested clairvoyance power of Robertson, which he denied. *Futility* is about a steam liner that resembles the Titanic and its disastrous fate with a considerably great extent of details. The ship's name is Titan, and it hits an iceberg on the starboard side in the Atlantic Ocean around midnight in April.⁷⁷ So, one can assume that the Titanic and its disastrous fate were predicted. This prediction was made by a novelist, someone busy with literary forms. It is also possible to observe this subject from another perspective and assume that the study of human's historical progression could bring someone to such a prediction. Nevertheless, the prognosis is there, and it is the most poetic we could expect. Also, there seems to be no more possibility of reluctance for meeting the disastrous Titanic in other locations and moments of modern history.

Let us look at Robertson's clairvoyance from another perspective. What has made Robertson able of such clairvoyance? Firstly, one must pay attention that it was not only Robertson who was gifted with such an ability. William Thomas Stead published a short story in 1886 titled "How the Mail Steamer went down in Mid Atlantic by a Survivor."⁷⁸ There is a note at the end of the story: "this is exactly what *might* take place and what *will* take place if the liners are sent to sea short of boats."⁷⁹ It is a prediction of the Titanic disaster, which was hugely affected by the shortage of lifeboats. The deficiency of the regulations and companies' greed caused the disaster, which Stead carefully had observed. Thus, the prediction is actually careful observation. However, not all the facts support such a logical explanation of an extraordinary prediction, especially when one remembers Stead had always mentioned that he would die either from lynching or drowning. This makes everything more complicated.

Charles Melville Hays, the president of Grand Trunk Railway and one of the rich people aboard the Titanic, was another person to prophesy "the greatest and most appalling of all disasters at

⁷⁷ There are more similarities, including the vessel's technical characteristics. Some of them are presented in the following table: (Morgan Robertson, *The Wreck of the Titan or Futility*, (Rahway: The Guinn and Boden, 1912))

	The Titan	The Titanic
direction	New York to Great Britain	Great Britain to New York
voyage	fourth	Maiden
Date of journey	April	April
Time of collision	Around midnight	23:40
Colliding side	Starboard	Starboard
Displacement	70000 tons	52000 tons
Length	243 m	269 m
propellers	3	3
Max speed	25 knots	23 knots
Watertight compartments	19	16
Horsepower	75000	46000/51000
Lifeboat	24	20
Capacity	3000	3000
Passenger on board	2000	2000

⁷⁸ William Thomas Stead, "How the Mail Steamer went down in Mid Atlantic by a Survivor," *The Pall Mall Gazette*, March 22, 1886.

⁷⁹ Stead, "How the Mail Steamer went down in Mid Atlantic by a Survivor."

sea,”⁸⁰ a few hours before the incident. Hours before the collision, he discussed the steamship lines’ competition over winning passengers with ever-faster vessels. “The time will come soon when this trend will be checked by some appalling disaster.”⁸¹ He predicted the tragedy to come in his words: “the trend to playing fast and loose with larger and larger ships will end in tragedy.” He was not an artist or a theoretician like Stead or Robertson. He probably didn’t carefully observe the reality as Stead and Robertson. However, he had something else which made him able to predict what was to come. As the president of Grand Trunk Railway, he was part of the competition and the “trend,” not on the sea but the land. He had his careful observations on the land, in his own endeavours. He had grasped the zeitgeist of his time and the “trends” ruling it. It appears that the whole prediction is just mere observation. It is the observation of the trends in modern condition or the zeitgeist in a broader sense.

Thus, one possible explanation for Robertson’s clairvoyance is careful observation and right perception of the zeitgeist and the trends of his time, which are not inclusively his abilities. Is this enough explanation for his clairvoyance? His clairvoyance predicts not only the name and date of the vessel but also many other details. What is there which has enabled him to do so? He had enough experience in the merchant service, which made him know so many details of the vessels and was aware of the trends of what Conrad called “the new seamanship.” However, what makes everything extraordinarily surprising is definitely in the lines of his writing, not in the actual scene. There seems that the literary forms had such a power to make possible the prophecy. The literary forms autonomously form the final products that could be more powerful than their author. Robertson’s writing seems to be one of the cases to easily observe this. The forms of literature work together in a space out of reach of human control and bring forward extraordinary prophecies. This resembles the oracles at Delphi and their relation to the language/literature.

Now that we have seen the clairvoyant power of the literary forms and how the literary forms resulted in the prediction of the Titanic disaster, we can feel at ease to face Raf’at’s craving for the disastrous Titanic. We can better understand Raf’at’s insistence on introducing the modern condition and its relevant literature via the disastrous moment of the Titanic. We observed that any serious attempt to grasp the modern moment and its requisites is to look deep into the moment of modern disaster. In this sense, Raf’at is staring at the disaster and basing his rebellious strategy on that gaze. He is looking into the abyss, but it seems that he forms a strategy not to become a modern monster. He is avoiding the abyss while gazing into it through his rebellious strategy. For not being a modern monster, or so to say, the defender and the victim of the status quo, one must rebelliously stand in the heart of the modern moment and fight for his life.

Now one may better understand Raf’at’s insistence on the Rebellion amid the emergence of the modern condition, where he points toward the Titanic. The Titanic as the new modern pain, sensation, and impression, as Raf’at suggests, could also be the point where the disaster and the immediate death make one grasp the reality and perceive what things really are. In that sense, the insistence on the Titanic is more rebellious rather than suicidal since that is the only moment where one can free himself of the limbless State and grasp reality. Grasping the reality could be the first step toward a rebellion against the existing condition.

Whether rational or not, this rebellious strategy is the most relevant scheme that one can think of. Remembering the absent passenger of the Titanic who was present in Raf’at’s writing,

⁸⁰ Walter Lord, *A Night to Remember*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1955), 94.

⁸¹ “Charles Melville Hays: Daring to Dream.” *Canadian National History Railblazers*. Canadian National Railway. Retrieved March 19, 2012.

Abdu'l-Baha, and the hesitancy on his side to decide on the miracle, it is helpful to put that miracle alongside the clairvoyance. The miracle wasn't decided and even couldn't be decided, while the clairvoyance miraculously is decided and relates itself to the historical reality in a definite manner. Probably this has something to do with facing death or facing the disaster. As we can remember, the master was absent on the Titanic and never faced the disaster. His prison years were in no way as disastrous as the imprisonment of someone in the Iranian land. In general, he was way safe and aside from the disaster. However, the rebellion Raf'at suggests is positioned in the heart of the disaster. Firstly, because this rebellion is craving the disastrous Titanic. Second and more importantly, since it posits itself in the heart of the battle against the fortitude of conservatism.

Abdu'l-Baha's peculiar strategy is merely based on rational expression since it naively pursues the unification of human beings under one religion, nation, and faith. In contrast, Raf'at's strength is that his strategy is based on the poetic expression. The poetic expression endowed with the forces of autonomous forms has the power not only to settle one's position in the heart of modernity in a meaningful rebellious manner, but it also has the power to play the most rational role since it enables one to grasp the reality, the flying flare of the modern moment, or so to say the human that flares up like a sparkle in the heart of modernity and vanishes into air.⁸²

Going back to the Titanic passage in "A Literary Rebellion," we can better perceive the cinematic/poetic manner of representation. The poetic expression has the power to represent things that even the author may be unaware of. The literary forms are like a living tool that do not fully obey their creator. The general atmosphere of the passage does not deviate from the usual representations of the Titanic. Thus it is hard to determine if there was a specific source for that or not. The alluded characters are neither possible to certainly determine. The reference could be to anyone, including Ismay, Herbert Pitman, Harold Lowe, William McMaster Murdoch, James Paul Moody, etc.

The first paragraph invites us to imagine the condition. The imagination includes the certainty that the safe shore is a hundred miles away and out of reach. In such a condition, the people of the twentieth century are described to be busy preparing the tools for survival with the victorious devices. This passage was written in 1918, long after the incident. Definitely, Raf'at was aware of the disastrous result of the incident and that nothing in the Titanic was victorious. Even the lifeboats failed to a great degree. Moreover, he himself has introduced the incident as the pain in the heart of the modern condition. Then it will be surprising to refer to the Titanic as the victorious device. One may initially guess that it is just an ironic allusion, but here we are interested in something more than that. What if the adjective "victorious" is a serious one here?

The Titanic and the modern devices aboard failed on the Atlantic waters, but they were the result of the Immanent Will, and in that sense, they were victorious devices. The historical progress took the human being to the modern moment of creating the Titanic with its luxury and disaster. Raf'at finds himself in the heart of the modern condition toward which he chooses the rebellious strategy. However, he is not turning his back on the modern condition, either refusing the modern life in total or conservatively accepting the tradition. The rebellion he suggests is based on a perception of modernity that simultaneously posits and negates it. This is not a peculiar strategy as was the case with the master, rather it is a common strategy among modern thinkers, especially those of the nineteenth century. Marx, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, and many others had the same strategy. Marx's nihilistic

⁸² See chapter 4 (p. 107).

understanding of the modern condition had never caused him to turn his back on reality, and the modern moment, rather he plunged into it, aiming for a rebellion in the heart of the condition in the Immanent Will itself. The same is happening with Raf'at as he is admitting the victorious modern moment and at the same time setting up his rebellion against it, which is the result of a particular perception of modernity.

Raf'at's suggested rebellion is similar to the revolution in the sense that Marx defines in the Communist Manifesto. Remembering that Raf'at himself considered the rebellious moment as the start of the uprising in which "the youth could invade the fortress of literary despotism and conservatism," it may seem evident that he had a passion for the French Revolution and the symbolic "prise de la Bastille." Storming the Bastille with its significance in the French Revolution means that there is something reactionary and conservative remaining in the moment which must be stormed. The Bastille is the remainder of the condition in which the Immanent Will created the Titanic and inevitably must be eroded by the Immanent Will and the Titanic. The new condition must deteriorate all that was before, although it is disastrous itself (and later terrifying). In this sense, the victorious device is no more ironic or a parody, but it is a grave reference to the heart of the condition and its change.

The following paragraph in Raf'at's writing encapsulates almost any serious topic and incident related to the Titanic. It is the most cinematic way possible to represent such an incident. The paragraph starts with a simple question word: "who" (ki). The question is heard on the scene, but nobody knows who has uttered the question. The answer to the question is: "only women and children, there is no place for men." Having heard the answer, we can understand what the question means and what it is inquiring about. Still, one can seriously doubt who is asking the question. It could be asked by all those on Titanic's deck, it could be the narrator's voice introducing us to the scene, or it even could be the Immanent Will heard by all those who are a part of it and are affected by it, or it may even be the sinister mate of the Titanic.⁸³ If it is asked by those on the deck, then one can suppose that this is a real dialogue between the passengers and the crew. But since the question is asked by all those on board then, one can assume that this is the collective ghost or the corporate conscience, as Chesterton mentioned, that is asking the question. In that sense, what is asked by those on the verge of death is the question precisely aimed at the heart of reality, for we previously observed how Chesterton proved those on the verge of death grasp the reality as it is. Thus one can assume that the possible question to ask from the very modern moment is "who." The question echoes in the whole history. As if the Angel of History is asking a question about those in the pile of wreckage. She is asking to see who has perished for the sake of a more giant pile. The echoing question "who" in the scene of history, which seems to be the only and true possible question to be posed, then could have been uttered by those on the verge of death, the Angel of History, or the narrator. If the narrator is asking this question, one must probably admire the author since he has successfully grasped the very question at the heart of modernity. If this is the case, one must admit that far from the Atlantic waters, Raf'at had captured the essence of the modern moment as precisely as the eminent thinkers of the western culture. This means that the representation of the Titanic in the relatively short passage of "A Literary Rebellion" proves itself worthy of study. This, in retrospect, proves that our quest to look after the Titanic as something crucial in the heart of modernity, and to believe that there is a link between that moment and Raf'at's understanding of the modern moment in Iran hasn't been in vain.

Now that we observed all are asking the simple question "who" in the heart of the modern moment, it may be worth looking at the answer given to the question. The response is the "rule," as Sylvia Pankhurst mentioned in her notorious quote. The rule is the forcefully imposed

⁸³ We may remember the same undecidability about the voice close to Immanent Will in Hardy's poem.

thing on the people, which Chesterton showed how meaningless it could be in extremities. We saw that this meaningless thing in extremities would be the dominant factor later in modern times. Indeed, Raf'at was not aware of the later conditions of modern life as we experience it. Still, it seems that intuitively he had understood that this is one of the core trends of modernity where the rule will rule everywhere, even on the verge of death. It will rule to the point that there will be no place for men, for it will be all wreckage substituted for the men. The point is not to prove that Raf'at may have had a clairvoyance power to predict the future of modern life where the extremities would erode any meaning of the people's lives, and it would be possible for the State/state to rule in any place and moment. The point is how a well-based intuition could possibly point toward a condition that probably wasn't imagined by the author himself, at least in the same sense that it is possible to perceive it today. Moreover, still, there is space to push the matter forward since Raf'at was probably the first one to bring up the discussion over the women's rights and had a series of essays which he signed as "Femina" arguing with Rafi' khān Amīn, "Feminist," over the topic's related to the girls and women in Iran. In this sense, it wouldn't be irrelevant even to state that maybe the clairvoyance power is present even at this point.

The following is the image of a young officer who has placed himself in a lifeboat and ultimately leaves it as the captain commands him to go back to the deadly ship. In the parentheses, there is the phrase: "captain's command is obeyed!"⁸⁴ This phrase is hard to decide how to treat, just like the other one describing the officer as "owning thousands."⁸⁵ This could suggest two different meanings in the context of the Farsi language of the time. It could mean that the officer owns thousands of wealth, meaning he is rich, or simply meaning that he is of a high rank and can command a thousand soldiers in his charge. Both could have definite relation since one suggests wealth and the other power, and both are related. But the ambiguity of the phrase "captain's command is obeyed" is not about its meaning rather it is again about the origin of the voice. Who has uttered such a phrase? It could be the officer or the narrator or even the impersonal voice of the Immanent Will present at the moment of disaster. In either case, just like the initial question "who," which we observed, these all could be entangled and bring about new insights to the reading. But what seems curiously important is that, again, one may feel the presence of Chesterton in this phrasing. On the verge of death, the wealth and power may seem to lose their meaning, but apparently, in this passage, something is still keeping its integrity: the rule. Either the Immanent Will or the officer, with their utterance, are showing that the rule is working in the extreme condition as opposed to what Chesterton described. This could mean that Pankhurst probably didn't make a mistake about her notorious comment. In this sense, this passage is not only a description of the disastrous moment of the Titanic. It could also be the prediction of the modernity to come or the extreme condition when the rule could work in extremes. One may also remember that this could have been uttered by the narrator/author as well, and in that sense, ascribe this prediction to Raf'at since he also was the "Femina" that could have something to do with Pankhurst camp. Even if there is a prediction in the passage, it most probably is the same as what we observed with Robertson. It is the prediction by the power of literary forms. It is a prediction of which the predictor is not aware of. However, if we are persuaded that the prediction is there, then we can deduce that it could be the prediction of a disaster even more disastrous than the Titanic. The prediction of the time to come when the rule works even in extremes. It does not matter if Raf'at predicted this or if it is the power of literary forms which gave way to such a prediction. We can treat

⁸⁴ امر کاپیتان مطاع است! ...

⁸⁵ صاحب کرورها

this as the fact that the passage is absolutely about the disastrous moment of modernity in its general sense, not even on a particularly disastrous moment.

It is no surprise if the next phrase of the passage is shouting what Pankhurst perceived as the rule: “only women and children.” The Rule is the loudest which could be heard and is the one thing to “obey” in the extreme. Surely, this must be accompanied by the sound of the music band; either it was playing the Rag Time to control the people as Shaw proved for us, or it was singing the hymn which suits the outrageous romantic lying and Pankhurst’s camp. The cinematic representation still functions, and framing the music band in waters raging over their knees is a nice cinematic device. Again, it is not surprising that what we hear of the band in this passage is the hymn: “Nearer, My God, to thee.” It isn’t surprising since we have previously heard a lot of Pankhurst’s voice and her camp, and if the music band is playing accordingly, one must not be shocked.

Then suddenly, the camera zooms out and stands over the disaster. As if we are looking at the sight from the perspective of the Immanent Will. From this perspective, what is seen is a “dreadful resurrection.”⁸⁶ For a disaster, being dreadful seems a natural description. However, what is it which could revive in a disaster to call it a resurrection? The answer could be found again in Chesterton’s argumentation. If those on the verge of death are who can grasp reality and perceive things as they really are, then one can assume that the real living people are those facing death. Thus the disastrous moment could be the moment of resurrection when people, dead in the condition of modernity and stuck in the pile of wreckage, get a chance to be alive for a very short moment.

What could be seen inside this disaster/resurrection from the perspective of the Immanent Will seems to be very much entangled with technology. Not surprising that those technological elements that could have attracted the narrative’s attention are related to electricity: antennas, electrical sparkles, and wireless telegraph. One may get suspicious of the exclamation mark after the wireless telegraph. Is the Immanent Will surprised with the wireless telegraph, or is it mocking such a technological endeavour? Nevertheless, it has been widely known that technology and technological advances have taken over the epistemological paradigm of modern human, to the point that science runs after technology. The critical point is the fact that when the picture is zoomed out and seen from a relatively far perspective, the modern condition seems to be represented to a great extent by technology.

In this scene, the horizon is cloudy, and the cloudy horizon blocks any possibility of foreseeing what the future will bring. One is just left alone with the disastrous moment. The only possibility seems to be the clairvoyance as we saw, either by the power of forces beyond the physical reality or the forms of literature and thought. On such a horizon of the disastrous moment of modernity, there could be a possible hope of being saved. There could be ships and vessels coming to rescue those on the verge of death. No moment is disastrous to the extent that could nullify any hope of survival within its own frame. The nihilistic approach to modernity always had some hopeful aspects within itself in the serious studies of modernity. This time it is not the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat but something on the scene of the modern technological moment itself. At least, there is a standpoint to narrate the disaster. Thus the resurrection could also be a small hope in the condition itself to save whom it has threatened to death. However, we retrospectively know that such a hope was not enough, and the survival mission failed to a great extent.

⁸⁶ رستاخیز دهشتناک

In this sense, the passage's occupation with technology could also be seen from a different angle. One can pay attention to the fact that the passage itself is the result of technology in a different sense. First of all, it is a passage in an essay published in a newspaper. As a technological advance in modern times, the newspaper could never be dismissed, especially in Iran during and after the Constitutional Revolution. The technology was initially present in the outrageous romantic lying. We may remember how Shaw delineated this new narrative and placed it at the heart of the modern condition. The mainstream narrative of the Titanic itself is a narrative of technology. Moreover, the modern condition has forced non-European/non-central nations to merge with the new conditions of economy and politics. The so-called encounter between the west and east is the inevitable result of the modern condition made possible by the technological advances formed in the economy. Regarding the presence of technology in any modern moment, one can again assume that the Immanent Will itself is technologically made up by human beings. The technology that made the Immanent Will is probably less material than the technology that made the ships and other crafts.

Now that we have seen the new pain, sensation, and impression as Raf'at declared, and we have observed the disastrous moment of modernity aboard the Titanic in these different locations, and how Raf'at's presence and absence at the same time on the deck of Titanic has a meaning for understanding the modern moment of Iranian literature, we can take a look at his arguments in the essay "A Literary Rebellion" and see how it is possible to situate them according to this reading.

In "A Literary Rebellion," where Raf'at intends to start his argumentation and bold the possibilities in the anonymous author's essay, he points out something which may seem a deficiency, but he tries to prove it as a normal methodology of the study. Raf'at declares this so-called deficiency as the inevitable exaggeration. He argues that any time you intend to study one cause of a particular effect, it is expected that you may seem to exaggerate, but this is no concern since it is no fault in that argument. The critical point is that this feels like a literary attitude toward the study, meaning it is like reading a text focusing on certain passages or notions. This is no surprise in a text primarily focused on the literary rebellion. If this is the case, then one may expect that the study, in the sense that it is a literary product itself, will have some characteristics of a literary text. One of these characteristics, as we observed with Robertson, was the power to predict things beyond the sight of the author and his domain of argumentation. Thus the clairvoyant power in "A Literary Rebellion" manifesting different aspects of the modern moment seems relevant to its general argumentation strategy.

Moreover, there is something beyond the literary methodology that seems extremely materialistic and historical. It is facing reality while one knows that reality is disastrous in its essence. Raf'at keeps referring to the rebellion caused by the anonymous author and writes:

The rebellion, the revolution, or whatever it was has happened. The arrow is flung. Now there is no power in this world that could erase this predestined accident from the page of happenings. We are facing a reality. We can do nothing rather than express our thoughts and beliefs.⁸⁷

The interesting point is that Raf'at's attitude toward the occurred rebellion or generally toward the modern moment he lives in does not make him turn his back. He is well aware that it is impossible to erase what the Immanent Will has created. He just finds himself able to contemplate over the moment, nothing more. His understanding of reality is in no way idealistic since he never finds reality in any sort depending on any idea. For him, the arrow is flung and

⁸⁷ Raf'at, "A Literary Rebellion," 25.

what remains is the contemplation. To better understand this, let us remember Marx in *The German Ideology*. After he tries to define the “world-historical existence,” he writes:

Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the now existing premise.⁸⁸

What interests us here is not communism and how Marx understood it. We are interested in Marx’s treatment of reality and ideal, namely the state of affairs to be established, or in the case of Raf‘at, a social/literary rebellion. This provides us with one of the significant modern insights toward the topic. The important point here is that if we consider communism as a mode of facing reality, it is important to pay attention to the fact that Marx considers it the result of “the now existing premise.” This means that communism, for Marx, is not a prescriptive thing, rather it is something that emerges from the already existing condition. For Raf‘at, reality and the strategy he chooses towards it seem to be in the same manner. (Here, one may remember the master and how his peculiar strategy of a totally different basis which was never based on the existing conditions, but it was a prescription). We can observe how Raf‘at treats what he calls “whatever that has happened.” The relation that a subject can establish with reality is, as Raf‘at puts it, to “express his thoughts and beliefs.” This defines the materiality of the idea as well. The thoughts get materialized after facing a reality, which in return makes them a reality. This could later pave our way to understand Raf‘at insistence on the discussion as a materialistic strategy toward reality, rather than a democratic gesture of freedom of expression.

The social/literary rebellion for Raf‘at is the result of the existing condition. This condition is simultaneously disastrous and rebellious, calling for hope in the midst of the disaster, just as we observed in the case of the new pain, new condition, or the modern moment. Paying attention to the term “*tajaddud*” for modernity in Farsi and how Raf‘at treats that, one can now see that *tajaddud* is the condition one must have to face, and being a *mutijaddid* is not the solution for Raf‘at, though it was for many others in that time. He believes in a rebellious strategy in such a condition. This means being rebellious against the premodern condition and at the same time being rebellious against the disastrous essence of the modern moment. In “Nowruz and Dehqan,” we will see how this rebellion is formed on the psychological level within an individual entity. Still, here one can see the general scheme that, to live in modern condition, one is inevitably meant for the pile of wreckage. To grasp reality and understand things as they are, one must be in a certain condition: being on the verge of death or being rebellious towards the disaster.

The question in the heart of the modern moment or the now existing condition, which repels Raf‘at from establishing his rebellious strategy in the literary scene, is pragmatically aimed at the already existing literature of the time, which is the old literature. “Do the proses or verses of the old authors cause any new thoughts, new impression, new information, new sensation, or anything new in us?” asks Raf‘at. The new pain, the Titanic, cannot be expressed within the old paradigm since the old paradigm could no longer cause any new thoughts, impressions, and sensations. Bahar responded to this with a rather literary strategy. Bahar suggested that with new information, new sensations, and thoughts, one may read the old literature and interpret it so he may reach joy in this procedure. Bahar believed and had overtly stated that any principle of thought and philosophy could be found in Sa’di’s oeuvre. It is no surprise that his strategy is to interpret the old literature with new sensations or to interpret them in the modern moment. One may think that Bahar could have been right, for if we accept that there is an autonomous

⁸⁸ Karl Marx with Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (Prometheus Books, 1998), 57.

power in literary forms, then it is possible that any principle could emerge out of them. First, this is easily possible to prove wrong, because a form is a form until it is not everything else. Being everything can negate being one specific thing. So the autonomous power of form has its limit to the point that it won't negate the essence of the form itself. If it does, it is no more the autonomous power of form since there is no form to have such a power. But For Raf'at, Bahar's argument does not have anything to do with the autonomous power of literary form. For Raf'at, the strategy is not acceptable since the interpretation by the Sa'di and those of his time was made in the same manner, and the joy was felt much better by them. Raf'at supposes even if such joy again appears in our hearts, it is just a hereditary gift and won't add anything to us. For him, this strategy could have meaning if we were *nothing* so that interpretation could add *something* to us. This is very important since we observed that in the modern moment, in the condition of the Titanic, one is meant to be nothing and finally becomes able to grasp things and become something on the verge of death or in the disaster. Then one can deduce that Bahar's strategy could be of partially small use for those in the modern moment until they are not caught in the disastrous condition, but when caught in the disaster, it totally loses its meaning. It seems to work only for those on the safe side of the modern condition, if anyone like that could ever exist (the conservatives delusionally felt themselves like that). However, Raf'at's strategy is about the heart of the disaster. It is about the moment when one can grasp what things really are, and he can become something, at least for a moment. In that case, the interpretation could add nothing to him. In such a moment, the only possibility to add something to the whole scene is the rebellion; the rebellion in the heart of the disaster.

This is due to the fact that the world is subject to an always existing change, as Raf'at himself puts it. The rebellion in the heart of the disaster seems to be the moment when one can find the sparkle of hope. Mentioning the evolution and the revolution in the world of existence, Raf'at brings up *tajaddud*, which he finds a vital inevitable part of life. Modernity, apart from its disastrous side, is the result of the perpetual change in the conditions of life, meaning that the modern condition itself is subject to change. Thus *tajaddud*, for Raf'at, is something greater than modernism. It is something deep in life and history. The rebellion alongside this perpetual revolution is the strategy he proposes. The perpetual change or *tajaddud* in its broader sense is what Raf'at refers to as "observation," which he thinks one must follow and believe what he has observed. The rebellion seems to be based on an observation of the modern moment which, simultaneously shows its disastrous essence and changing core. Despair and hope in one single moment and the strategy to face this moment make this rebellion.

We may look at this rebellion from the literary side again. Supporting the anonymous author of *Zabān-i Āzād*, Raf'at believes it is the time for the youth to invade the fortress of literary despotism. There is a link between such an image and storming the Bastille, but Raf'at's argument for encouraging such a rebellion is as follows:

And they must attack. Because we must be the children of our own era. The sound of cannons, guns, and pervasive wars wakes an agitation in our nerves that couldn't be soothed or expressed by the mild, harmonic, solid, and old language of Sa'di and his contemporaries in their odes or "Litanies." We have needs that didn't exist in Sa'di's era. We are suffering damages, which Sa'di could have never conceived, by different national and political trends. We feel a series of physical and spiritual defects in ourselves and in our atmosphere that Sa'di couldn't even write a letter about them.⁸⁹

The new condition, the modern moment with all its disastrous characteristics, does not suit a mild, harmonic, solid language. The language is subject to change like anything else. The

⁸⁹ Raf'at, "A Literary Rebellion," 26.

language of the previously existing conditions wouldn't satisfy the needs of the new condition. The old language, as Raf'at puts it, is like litanies which are of no use anymore. The litanies could make one remember the Titanic deck again. Litany found its way to English through Anglo-French and Late Latin and was originally a Greek word: *litaneia*, meaning entreaty. This word had no place in Persian literature and its reception, so it is surprising to occur in such a way in this writing about Persian literature. This could be a legit reason to think that such a word choice has something to do with another part of the essay: the passage about the Titanic. On the Titanic's deck, we heard the famous hymn "Nearer, My God, to thee" and one may guess that hymn and litany could have a link. Supposing this, then, one can deduce that if the litanies are irrelevant to the new condition, then the hymn must have been irrelevant to the Titanic disaster. It is no surprise that we observed a significant reluctance toward the image of the band playing the hymn in most of the writings about the Titanic. We also observed how the representation of the Titanic in Raf'at's writing matched those perceptions. Then it is no wonder that the reason for the rebellion is linked to the hymn on the Titanic. The rebellion is based on what reality suggests. The reality requires such a rebellion as we saw in the heart of the disastrous Titanic, and also as we see with Raf'at's reference to the war. People in the modern moment find a defect in themselves, which makes them disconnected from the Sa'di's language, for Sa'di didn't experience that defect and wrote with a wholesome body with an organic unity. But in the modern moment, the wholesome body with organic unity does not exist anymore. It is vanished into the air.

Having shown the irrelevancy of Sa'di's litany-like harmonic language, Raf'at points out a deficiency in the argument of the anonymous author. The anonymous author had shown some kind of interest in Ferdowsi, which made Raf'at reject his strategy. Raf'at believed that the anonymous author had betrayed his own rebellion by preferring Ferdowsi over Sa'di. He believed that the anonymous author didn't have any plans for his rebellion and just stepped into action offhand. He believes that there is no such rivalry between Ferdowsi and Sa'di, and all that is correct about Sa'di also applies to Ferdowsi.

The important point is that the preference of Ferdowsi over Sa'di started sometime before in the writings of Akhundzade.⁹⁰ The preference for Ferdowsi actually was one of the first points where the idea of a new literary paradigm and a new form of poetry emerged. The protest against the old literary paradigm was accompanied by refusing the lyric poetry and proposing epic poetry, symbolised in Ferdowsi. Moreover, as discussed a lot by others, Iranian nationalism had two different stages: the patriotic and matriotic phases. "In the official nationalist discourse, *vatan* was imagined as a 'home headed by the crowned-father.' This was contested by a counter-official matriotic discourse that imagined *vatan* as a dying 6,000-year old mother," writes Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi.⁹¹ As a result, the preference of Ferdowsi over Sa'di seemed like a nostalgic attitude toward the present time, which also intended to refashion the present. For Raf'at, it seems that this preference has no meaning, and this matches his strategy toward the modern moment that he embraces in a rebellious manner. The rejection of patriotic nationalism and Ferdowsi as its symbol has something more interesting in it. Less than six months after Raf'at's act of suicide, the 1921 coup d'état happened, which was the beginning of the Pahlavi dynasty and the emergence of Reza Shah as the most influential figure in the Iranian political scene. Interestingly, in the time of Reza Shah, patriotic nationalism boomed, and Ferdowsi became the everlasting symbol of Iranian nationalism. In this sense, the clairvoyant forces were working again. One can argue that Raf'at was rejecting the present disaster alongside the disaster to come. He rejected the future atmosphere of Iranian nationality

⁹⁰ See: subchapter 1.2 (p.28).

⁹¹ Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Nationalist Historiography*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 113.

and Reza Shah's insistence on Ferdowsi. Once again, one may rationally reject such an argument, but the emergence of clairvoyant power on so many occasions couldn't be a random incident. This could be supported by the fact that we are aware of Raf'at's rebellious manner in rejecting all sorts of players on the scene in the name of rebellion.

Going back to Raf'at's rebellion, after that we have observed his rejection of Sa'di and his language, he overtly states that in a quest to find a leader to solve the problems of the modern day, one is left alone, and that is the reason that he rebels. "The spiritual poverty is the drive of this rebellion," writes Raf'at. In this rebellion scheme, Sa'di and Ferdowsi may get hurt, but their salvation is through the rebellion's success. He believes that such a rebellion will produce their rescuers and supporters. The strategy within the modern moment refuses the ossified concepts but revives them with the power of rebellion or the so-called *tajaddud*. Same as *The Communist Manifesto*, where Marx reveals the structure of revolutions that revives the old figures and costumes. Their revival depends on battling against them in the revolutionary moment.

The rebellious strategy and all the plans and thoughts that Raf'at puts into it remind us of Conrad's idea of new seamanship where he wrote: "the bigger the ship, the more delicately it must be handled." The bigger the disaster in the heart of the modern moment gets and enlarges the rebellion against itself, the more delicate the rebellious strategy must be. Raf'at's insistence on the discussion and studying different aspects of this social/literary rebellion seems to be a concern to handle the situation with delicacy. What is more delicate than literary forms? Raf'at is concerned with this weakness in the heart of modernity, which requires the most delicate thoughts and plans. He has an awareness of the sinister mate of the modern moment. He doesn't reject it, rather rebelliously plans for it. This plan is the most delicate since it is a literary one.

This inevitable sinister mate could be understood as the modern State. As we saw with Chesterton, that historical human will is formed into the modern State; doomed and disastrous. In Iran, the Constitutional Revolution is the time when one can say the modern State is newly born and formed. This is the inevitable part of history, like the inevitability of the Titanic. One cannot ignore this and has to embrace it, either to cope with it or to explode it while it is in his arms. The rebellious strategy of Raf'at is not interested in coping with the disaster, but it plans the explosion, a very delicate explosion. His delicate explosion is the literary one. It is a literary explosion or a literary rebellion.

This all makes Raf'at's voice resemble some of the most serious voices of modernity. For a better understanding of this, let us listen to Berman, where he describes the voices of Marx and Nietzsche in their relation to modernity:

This voice resonates at once with self-discovery and self-mockery, with self-delight and self-doubt. It is a voice that knows pain and dread, but believes in its power to come through. Grave danger is everywhere, and may strike at any moment, but not even the deepest wounds can stop the flow and overflow of its energy. It is ironic and contradictory, polyphonic and dialectical, denouncing modern life in the name of values that modernity itself has created, hoping – often against hope – that the modernities of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow will heal the wounds that wreck the modern men and women of the today.⁹²

It is as if we are listening to Raf'at's voice again. Firstly this is proof of the relevancy of the whole of our reading—the reading which brought forward the powers and contradictions of Raf'at's writing. The modern condition is a time of dread and pain. Raf'at's insistence on the

⁹² Marshal Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The experience of Modernity*, 23.

disastrous moment of the Titanic was the insistence on the pain and the fact that pain is at the centre of the modern moment. The inevitable irony of such a voice resembles what we saw about the Titanic passage. Is Raf'at craving the Titanic or tries avoiding it? Was the Immanent Will mocking the technological advances in the Titanic scene, or was it applauding the modern human for the successful devices? Answering these questions is not possible since it needs a serious treatment of irony, and we all know that irony, to some extent, evades seriousness.

The rebellious strategy stands against the condition that made it possible to exist and was wished for by the rebellious strategy itself. This is precisely like denouncing modern life with values created by modernity. It is a strategy formed from within modernity. One can never deny hope in such a disastrous moment. Even the fact that one narrates the disaster itself means there is a sparkle of hope. A hope that the rebellious strategy, or the modernities to come, will heal the wounds that wreck the modern men. The modern men are meant for the pile of wreckage in all these images, but that is the hope and its forms that make the difference. In the case of Marx, this hope was in a materialistic perception of history which believed in a proletarian revolution, and for Raza'at, it is hope in a social/literary rebellion to define oneself in the modern moment and to become something more than nothing on the verge of death.

Now, this all may seem commonplace and evident that the modern moment is disastrous. However, one must never forget that this is not the case with everyone and in every situation. "For there is a real connection between such catastrophes and a certain frame of mind which refuses to expect them," wrote Chesterton about the Titanic. Apparently, it is not commonplace to expect the disaster. The modern man caught in the middle of the disastrous moment refuses to expect the disaster since there is a certain frame of mind established in the modern moment. The problematic of the modern condition is based on the fact that it can establish a mindset that can totally refuse the disaster. It can reject its own capacity to foresee the disaster. In this sense, the modern thinkers pointing toward the disaster are those who have critically stepped out of the condition and status quo and therefore have obtained the clairvoyant power. The literary forms proved their clairvoyant power before this. Now we can see the radical clairvoyant power of critical thinking. Raf'at not only perceives the disaster to come but also stands rebelliously against it to the extent that it seems he is craving it. Remembering the scene of modern Iran after the constitutional revolution, one can see the importance of such a stance. Since then, the majority has naively put their faith in the modern State/state and happily embraced it. Quite a few voices rejected the modern condition that we can still hear their "no" cry. The Rebellious literary strategy of Raf'at turns out to be one of the most radical vital parts of modern thought in Iran, though it has been dismissed on the scene where the majority refuses to expect the disaster.

3. “Nowruz and Dehqan”: A poem and the metaphor “cradle of fortune”

This chapter is intended to go forward with our reading of Raf‘at’s oeuvre and his perception of modernity. This could be the point where we can focus on the formal changes of the Persian poem in the last century, which mainly affected the meter, the rhyming pattern, and the length of the lines. After observing these formal changes, we can get into something more profound, which is the change of the imagery in Persian poetry particularly in Raf‘at’s poetry. We will specifically focus on one of Raf‘at’s compositions titled “Nowruz and Dehqan,” which presents the apparent formal changes in poetry and demonstrates the more profound changes in poetry and its imagery.

At this point, we can observe how the modern condition, which was loaded over the Iranian lands, affected the poetics of Persian poetry. The victorious qasidas of the classic Persian literature turn into a great sense of loss and defeat. This is the point that one finds himself trapped in a new condition where it is no more possible to produce poems of victory and victorious moments. This is when the whole army of the Iranian culture loses the battle, and the same happens with the literary troops and devices. The castle of the classic Persian meter and rhyming pattern falls, and one has to decide what to do with the remains of that tradition in the new condition.

3.1. The Modern Persian poem before Nima

Since the early moments of modernization in Iran and Iranian’s encounters with the modernized western nations, there was a drastic change in the Iranian social and cultural atmosphere. The new economic structure was settling and destroying the previous order, which caused unsettlement in the cultural atmosphere. As a result, new forms in the culture started to emerge. However, these new forms were not developed without any constraints. The already existing forms resisted change and being eradicated. Thus, there was and still is a tension between the old traditions and those benefiting from them, with the new forms and those advocating it.

The same happened in the superstructure and cultural atmosphere. The newly introduced economic forms created new cultural forms which the advocators of the previous order resisted. In the case of Persian poetry, there was great tension at this time. As we saw in chapter 1, the dispute over the new forms of literature in modern Iran was so significant to the intellectual atmosphere that the controversy and argumentations of each side got canonized.

At this point, we want to focus on a dispute over the new forms of modern literature, which is directly related to one of Raf‘at’s poems titled “Nowruz and Farmer.” The dispute starts in a Berlin-based journal *Kave*. On 21st March 1920, an article was published in *Kave* titled “The Progress of Farsi Language over a century.”¹ The article was published anonymously, but apparently, the authors of this article and the one in the next volume were Seyyed Hassan Taqizade and Mohammad Ali Jamalzade. The article is made of two parallel columns, each including a bunch of examples of Farsi writing. The first column on the right is titled “The Farsi of the time of Haji Mirza Aghasi,” and the second on the left is titled “The Farsi of Khan Valedé.” Aghasi was the grand vizier of Mohammad Shah, and the column included passages from the newspaper of his time. It also included some other writings from other papers and

¹ ترقی زبان فارسی در یک قرن (ترقی زبان فارسی در یک قرن)

books of the time, which the court primarily controlled. The second column gets its title from a caravansary in Istanbul, which was the place of residence for many Iranian businessmen from the western parts of Iran. The title was pejoratively used to refer to a corrupted, not-pure Farsi language used among those Iranians residing in Khan Valede.² The column included pieces of writing from different newspapers of the early twentieth century. Two of the quoted passages in the second column are taken from *Tajaddod*'s editorial, which most probably was written by Raf'at.³ After two pages of quotation, there is a short statement suggesting that the language of the first column is pure and the left one is corrupted.

In the next volume, on 21st May 1920, the same title showed up. The right column was titled "Persian Poetry," and the left was titled "Khan Valede Literature." The right column included a mosammat by Mirza Mahmud Khan Qanizade and part of a masnavi by Ahmad Khan Malek Sasani. Both are poems about Nowruz, which are usually categorized under the generic title of Nowruziyyah. The left column included two poems by Raf'at and another poet. Again there was no mention of the authors of the second column. The article ends with a short passage that claims that the poems on the right column are of good quality and the reason that "the spirit of poetry is still alive in Iran,"⁴ and describes the left column as the "metamorphic Farsi language."⁵ *Kave* claimed that this metamorphic language is the reason that "literary taste has been corrupted because of the national illness."⁶

Interestingly, one may remember the previous chapter that the whole dispute over Saadi started because Saadi was introduced as the cause of national and social misery. It seems as if the whole dispute is over a state of illness and misery. This is the point where there is a consensus. However, the writing in *Kave*'s receives a response from Raf'at in the journal *Azadiyestan*. He criticizes the way that *Kave* has made a comparison. According to him, this comparison is not adequately done since the compared things are not similar, neither in form nor in content. He invites *Kave* to compare his poem "Nowruz and Dehqan" if they insist on such a comparison for the fact that it is also about Nowruz.

Now, we may turn our attention towards a reading of Raf'at's poem and investigate its different aspects, and then we may have the chance to come back to the poem itself and its immediate context. This may let us situate the poem in a condition where we can have a better understanding of modernity and modern Persian literature.

3.2. Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak's reading of "Nowruz and Dehqan"

Raf'at's poem "Nowruz and Dehqan," which is our focus in this chapter, was studied by Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak in his book *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran*. In the chapter "Dismantling a Poetic System," he focuses on three poets and a sample poem of each to depict what he calls "the intercultural dialogue" through which he has advanced his

² Büyük Valide Han

³ Raf'at's article "Tajaddod dar Adabiyat" (Modernity in Literature) published in *Azadiyestan* proves the authorship attribution of these passages to Raf'at. See: Taqi Raf'at, "Tajaddod dar Adabiyat," *Azadiyestan*, (No. 3, 12 August 1920), 30-33.

⁴ Kave, "Taraqqi-yi Zabān-i Fārsī," *Kave*, (No. 4/5, 21 May 1920), 4.

⁵ مسوختات کلام فارسی

⁶ Kave, "Taraqqi-yi Zabān-i Fārsī," 4.

“examination of poetic change in Iranian culture.”⁷ For this reason, he chooses three poems by three different poets: Abulqasem Lahuti’s “To the Daughters of Iran,” Taqi Raf’at’s “Nowruz and Farmer,” and Mirzade Eshqi’s “The Three Tableaux of Maryam.”

Hakkak seemingly tries to delineate what he calls “the desire to bring about a new kind of poetry,” which he thought “was part of the intellectual milieu of Iran in postconstitution decades.”⁸ What seems important here is that Hakkak plainly finds a dialogue between cultures, but this looks pretty abstract to be accepted. The point is that, in reality, there is a reciprocal relation among economies that changes the economies and results in cultural transformation. In order to be able to grasp this, we must base our reading on notions that can represent the economic situation. This economic relation is not a dialogue; instead, it is invasion, destruction, colonization, and the like. Thus instead of dialogue, it is better to consider a confrontation or a sudden encounter. Later in our reading, we will see that focusing on a sudden encounter better describes the poetics of modern Iranian literature and has its roots in the economic reality of the time. The scene of modern Iranian poetry and the imagery of Raf’at’s poem is better understood via the sudden encounter of Iran’s feudal economy with the modernized capitalistic mode of the economy in the west, which forcefully imposes itself on the economies which have not yet been modernized.

Hakkak describes “Nowruz and Dehqan” as representing a trend which “expresses the desire to forge an entirely new system of esthetic signification and communication in a distinctly different poetic practice.”⁹ The distinct poetic practice is achieved through alteration of “the entire formal system of classification in the Persian poetic tradition.” Hakkak has well understood the close relationship between the classification and approved formal system of poetry. What he misses is the role of content in all his elaboration. He forgets that certain content is causing the change in the form. As we may remember, this was the case with Raf’at himself, where he insisted on the incompetence of traditional poetic forms to convey certain feelings and pains. These certain feelings and pain (the content) were the result of a new era. And this new content made the new form necessary.

Nevertheless, going back to Hakkak’s argument, his main claim is that this *trend* “In its most radical form, it aims, as we will see, at realigning the most lyrical Persian genre, namely the ghazal, with such European forms as the ode or the sonnet.” Hakkak’s argument revolves around two forms. On the Iranian side, the form is ghazal, and on the European side, it is the sonnet. So one can assume that his whole argument about the alteration of form and setting a new aesthetic system is to study the influence of Sonnet on ghazal. We will get to this formal argument of Hakkak and study it in depth. Now we may focus on Hakkak’s treatment of the imagery of Raf’at’s poem, which is even more significant to our reading.

He starts his argument by focusing on *bakht* (fortune) and *ruzegar* (times or days), and he rightly points out that these two terms “alter perceptions of predictable poetic meanings attached to them in more traditional poetic spaces.”¹⁰ Hakkak was successful in noticing something deep in the semantic order of the poem, which was disturbing the ordinary signification of these two terms. However, his analysis of this process to which he refers as

⁷ Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran*. (University of Utah Press, 1995), 187.

⁸ Hakkak, 187.

⁹ Hakkak, 202.

¹⁰ Hakkak, 207.

“semantic evacuation,” is not a big success. Firstly, it is obviously misleading to call it *semantic* evacuation since the terms keep their semantic signification and get rid of their traditional poetic significations within the old paradigm. Hence it will be more rational to call it poetic evacuation rather than a semantic evacuation. Even more importantly, while he has noticed something in these terms, he fails to grasp the real difference between their emergence in Raf‘at’s poem and the old literary paradigm. He notices that the image of *ruzegar* (times or days) swinging the cradle of fortune between sun and moon is unprecedented. Hakkak is right that this was unprecedented, but all the elements of this imagery were common in the old literary paradigm. Thus any possible mixture of them must have been a typical image in old literature. What he fails to notice is the actual new image of the sleeping fortune. One is put in a cradle to fall asleep, and the fortune in the cradle means a sleeping fortune. This is the new image that is essential in Raf‘at’s poetic imagery. The idiom sleeping fortune refers to a state where one is caught in a disaster surrounded by bad omens. This is the crucial signification of Raf‘at’s imagery. We will see the consequences of this image and logic in the following subchapters. However, here, we will stay with Hakkak and his reading of Raf‘at’s poem.

Hakkak describes Raf‘at’s image of the rocking cradle as mimetic and believes that the image is “connected with an observable and widespread conception of life outside conventional systems of poetic signification.”¹¹ Apparently, this is the very mistake that has trapped Hakkak all through his reading. In Raf‘at’s image, there is definitely a sort of disconnection, but a connection to a widespread conception of life is not the case. In fact, Raf‘at’s image is based on a specific perception of life and a particular event and time. Raf‘at’s image introduces the modern condition with a sleeping fortune to the literary paradigm and imagery. By this, he actually has grasped the very essence of his time and formed it into a literary product by manipulating the previous imagery. Furthermore, it is no surprise that Hakkak’s reading misses such an essential point in Raf‘at’s imagery since he also misses two other things crucial to understanding this poem. Firstly, he is missing the second part of the poem, which sheds light on the first part and lets one better understand Raf‘at’s imagery. Moreover, Hakkak apparently does not know about the tragic incident, which was the incentive for Raf‘at in authoring this poem. We will carefully study both of these later on, so that we may stick to Hakkak for now.

Hakkak’s misleading reading of Raf‘at’s poem, which rendered the poem a widespread conception of life, continues to produce new descriptions of the same misled conception. Hakkak believes that “Raf‘at’s depiction of the farmer’s little drama draws its uniqueness from the fact that it refers to a situation larger than family, but not larger than the specific social condition.”¹² In this passage, Hakkak is right about the fact that the farmer’s story is larger than his own immediate surroundings but again misinterprets it due to missing concepts in his reading. The misconception is rooted in Hakkak’s way of discovering little and large in his reading. The little drama, as described by Hakkak, is much larger than he was aware of since he missed the conceptual tool and actual facts to study it. Moreover, his understanding of *large* is also distorted due to the fact that he misses noticing the largeness of the concept of social condition in his own writing as he missed to perceive the poetry in a greater economic structure. He is not able to grasp that the poem’s indication is something in the essence of its time. This could be proven by the fact that the narrator describes the farmer’s rebellion against something very general in order to have good fortune. Moreover, in the following lines of the poem, we

¹¹ Hakkak, 208.

¹² Hakkak, 208.

can observe that this rebellion fails because of a catastrophe in modern life. Thus it is in no sense a little drama. It may seem to be little since it is the story of the immediate surrounding of the farmer, but it is large since it encapsulates the zeitgeist and the essence of modern life. It is large because of what Hakkak forgets in his own passage: specific social conditions. One must again remember our previous argument about the impact of the economic structure on cultural forms. Then one may realize that the specific social condition is the new economic condition, namely the capitalistic mode of production. In this sense, Raf'at has depicted the largest possible structure to refer to in human society. This is the point where Raf'at's poem and Hakkak's reading seem irreconcilable.

3.3. The French sonnet

Apart from the imagery of Raf'at's poem, Hakkak's reading also focuses on its formal features. Other than what he supposes as the semantic evacuation, he notices a procedure of the same spirit in the form of Raf'at's poetry. The very first element which he pays attention to is the most apparent one: rhyming pattern. He also puts emphasis on this most visible element as the most disturbing change in the literary form and paradigm. "Because it is visible, a 'foreign' rhyme scheme constitutes a more egregious departure from the imaginary "spirit" of Persian poetry, even though it may not be the most substantial one" writes Hakkak.¹³ He is definitely correct in pointing out that the imagery of Raf'at's poem is more important and is deeply related to its atmosphere. However, the rhyme scheme is the cause of controversy and is noticed first. Again what Hakkak notices generally seems to be correct, but the problem is in details that his reading goes against itself and Raf'at's writing.

The rhyming scheme rightly makes Hakkak think of European traditions of poetry. "Unrhymed or sparsely rhymed, such compositions often visually resemble modernist French poetry of the turn of the century" writes Hakkak.¹⁴ He is right in defining French literature as the source of inspiration for this particular type of poetry. This is proven by the fact that Raf'at admits the influence of the French literature on his compositions in another writing.¹⁵ Besides, certain formal features add to this argument and prove it true. This rhyming pattern, according to Hakkak, matches "a most common French variation on the Petrarchan prototype used by poets like Baudelaire and Mallarme."¹⁶ Hakkak describes his observation:

In this usage, the rhyme pattern in the sestet is distinguished by an internal couplet (lines 11 and 13) rather than the terminal one, which is more common in the English variations of the Italian sonnet. Metrically, however, the poem conforms with a frequently used traditional pattern in classical Persian poetry.¹⁷

Hence, what we observe in Raf'at's poem is the rhyming scheme of the French sonnet. The development of the French sonnet among different traditions of European lyric poetry took its own specific way. Michael Spiller, in his book titled *The Development of the Sonnet*, which is primarily focused on the English sonnet tradition, points out that the French sonnet was

¹³ Hakkak, 210.

¹⁴ Hakkak, 202.

¹⁵ Taqi Raf'at, "Tajaddod dar Adabiyāt." *Azadiyestan*, No. 3, 12 August 1920, 33.

¹⁶ Hakkak, 206.

¹⁷ Hakkak, 206.

invented by Clement Marot (1496-1544) in a way which he defines as “sort of upside down version of Wyatt’s procedure.”¹⁸ He describes these two supposedly upside-down procedures:

If Wyatt was prompted to put the couplet at the end of the sonnet by observing its witty effect in the *strambotti* of Serafino, and because of its use in already existing English stanza forms, Marot, it seems, rearranged the sestet of the sonnet to have a couplet at the beginning (CC DEED: more rarely, CCDEDE) because of the French *sixain*, a short form already in use, rhyming AABCBC. Now, it is clear why someone with a fondness for epigram and *sestentia* would find this unsatisfactory: the couplet so used is a form of closure, and the beginning of the sestet is always the opening of its development. The result is that French sonneteers never use the CC rhyme couplet as a sense couplet, and, indeed, may well produce sonnets in which the rhyme couplet does not work with the sense, and a sense couplet does not harness rhyme.¹⁹

What is interesting here is that an already existing form happens to influence the new form and schemes. The structure of the French sonnet as described here by Spiller is crucial to us since it describes that French sonneteers never used CC rhyme couplet as a sense couplet. This is the case in Raf‘at’s sonnet as well. The CC rhyme couplet at the end of the sonnet seems to fit the witty English style of poetry but apparently did not suit the French sonneteers. Raf‘at’s rhyming scheme matches the French scheme, which has probably been the case for different reasons. The French sonnet rhyming scheme could be divided into three parts, including two quatrains and one sestet. This seems to be good since it can better match already existing Persian rhyming patterns. The robai forms, which were quatrains rhyming like AABA, were prevalent in classic Persian literature. Furthermore, the sestet as AABCBC could better match the already existing Persian literary forms of ghazal rhyming as AABACA. More importantly, this structure made it possible to divide the poem into three sections, and each could appear as a short ghazal with distorted rhyming. The three distorted ghazals allowed Raf‘at to build his imagery on the previous sections, leaving behind ghazal rhyming pattern and introducing a new form into the literature.

Here it is also important to pay attention to the fact that in the classic Persian literary paradigm, the smallest unit in a poem is not a line but a couplet referred to as beyt. As a result, in our comparisons of the old and new literary forms, we must pay attention to the fact that the change in rhyming patterns of the couplets were the loci of interest for Iranians. It takes a decade when the smallest unit of Persian poetry changes to the line. Consequently, the rhyming patterns of the French sonnet, or the scheme that Raf‘at used in his poems, must be studied according to the rhyming scheme of the whole composition based on the rhymes of each couplet. In this sense, the French sonnet or Raf‘at’s compositions’ rhyming scheme would be AA AA B CC (or rarely AA BB C DD). In contrast to the Petrarchan sonnet, which may look like AA AA BCD. Now, this seems to be more congruent with the old literary paradigms. This actually looks like a short version of qaside rhyming pattern with a renewed starting couplet called as *tajdīdi maṭla’*. A normal qaside rhyming scheme was like (AA)AA...AA which turned into (AA)AA...AA (BB)BBB...BB with a *tajdīdi maṭla’*.

The epic meters like alexandrine or iambic pentameter, characteristic of the French sonnet, were also possible to imitate within the Persian literary forms. In different compositions, Raf‘at

¹⁸ Michael Spiller, *The Development of Sonnet: An Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 94.

¹⁹ Spiller, *The Development of Sonnet: An Introduction*, 94.

uses different meters, which can be judged as epic meters. Specifically, in “Nowruz and Dehqan,” he uses (uu-u -u-u uu-u -u), one of Persian Literature’s widely used meters. It has been widely used in different topics, from lyric ghazals to epic qasidas. Thus, one can say that the French sonnet form could be an excellent choice to implement in Persian Literature since it could simultaneously depart from the old literary paradigms toward a new one and keep its subtle link with the old literary paradigm.

Going back to Hakkak’s reading of Raf‘at’s poem, he deduces the same idea when he writes, “the poem’s rhyme scheme flaunts the poem’s ‘foreignness’ to those readers unfamiliar with Western verse forms. To readers familiar with the European sonnet, it points to a specific locus of poeticity which Raf‘at offers as potentially suitable for the modernization of Persian poetry.”²⁰ At this point, it seems that Hakkak admits that something *large* enough, larger than the farmer’s immediate condition in the farm, is represented in Raf‘at’s poetry. This happens both in the theme and imagery of his poetry and simultaneously in the formal structure of his composition.

Raf‘at’s poetry, to Hakkak, seemed like the model to modify the old literary paradigm and introduce a new possible paradigm. For Hakkak, Raf‘at’s poems were the “examples of socially directed lyrical expressions: they opened themselves to readers’ experiences only after testing their willingness to experiment with novel variations on the existing expressive devices in such a way as to minimize systemic dependence on Persian lyric poetry’s universe of discourse.”²¹ However, what could be more important is the incentive behind this so-called modification. It is not a solid argument to define Raf‘at’s goal of his poetry in only introducing new European forms to Persian literature. Remembering Raf‘at himself in “A Literary Rebellion,” we must think that he is trying to find a way to express a new pain. This pain is specific to modern times and the modern mode of living. As we saw some of its disastrous aspects in the previous chapter, the modern mode of living is the incentive to look for a new literary paradigm and form. Then it is possible to deduce that certain contents have necessitated the changes in the form. Moreover, these formal changes resemble the European forms since Europe was the centre for these social-economic changes. Then it is no surprise that the poetic devices emerging in modern Iran resemble the European forms developed as a result of identical causes.

3.4. Baudelaire’s world

Now that we have observed that French poetry, more specifically the French sonnet, had its impact on Raf‘at’s poetry, at least in the formal sense, it is worth looking deeper into the spirit of Raf‘at’s poetry and its possible relationship to the French poetry and sonnet. Now we may dive into some corners of the Baudelairean world and indulge ourselves with close connections of his worlds which can quickly remind us of Raf‘at and his poetry.

We may start with what was shared among all the serious modernists, which was the description of the old values as melting into air and vaporizing. One of the most characteristic cases in Baudelaire’s writing, possibly having a significant influence on Raf‘at’s writing, is represented in *Perte d’Auréole* (Loss of Halo). It was published among other prose poetry of his in *Le Spleen de Paris*. There we meet a poet in a disreputable place who encounters an

²⁰ Hakkak, 209.

²¹ Hakkak, 210.

acquaintance shocked by the poet's presence in that nasty place (*mauvais lieu*). Then the poet narrates his story on the way to get there where he had to do a "sudden brusque movement and" his "halo slipped from" his head "down onto the muddy street."²² It is evident that something previously venerable has fallen into the muddy street, and there is no way to retreat it. The poet even did not bother himself to risk getting it back. The halo or any venerable previous value is fallen, and there is no way to get them back. A new condition is in place, which erodes the previous values. Interestingly, this new condition is introduced by material representations. The condition which has caused the poet to lose his halo is the new shape of the modern streets of Paris. The new condition and the new economy are where the poet is no more able to carry his halo with himself. Finally, the halo slips into "la fange du macadam." Macadam, a specific type of road construction developed by John Loudon McAdam, was the material requirement of urban planning in modern cities, specifically Paris. The modern Paris with its busy boulevards was the characteristic sign of the new condition and new economy, and macadam was a material element needed in that condition. The halo can no more exist in such a condition. Baudelaire's poet is caught in a new condition which no more allows any previous values and could be disastrous in this sense. Later, in Raf'at's composition, we will see that exact depiction of new condition and the feeling of being caught in that is present in his writing.

Now that we have seen an example of the old values being eroded and the new condition settling in and catching subjects in them with no way out, we may pay attention to some specific imagery of Baudelaire's poems which have some links to Raf'at's "Nowruz and Dehqan." In his *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Baudelaire, on different occasions, depicts the sense of being caught in a condition where there is no way out. Unlike *Paris Spleen*, this inevitable condition in *Les Fleurs du Mal* is not satirical or ironic. Instead, it is something severe and emotionally occupying at the heart of the image. In the poem "La Cloche Fêlée" (The Cracked Bell), we meet the enfeebled voice of the narrator's soul that is reminded of a soldier caught in a lake of blood (*au bord d'un lac de sang*) under a pile of dead men (*sous un grand tas de morts*) which he then describes as dying, without movement but struggling (*qui meurt, sans bouger, dans d'immenses efforts*).²³ The sense of being caught is tragic this time. There is no satire in the whole imagery. The cracked soul (*âme fêlée*) is caught in a condition that cannot drive away the cold nights with its songs. This image is situated after the image of the bell, which, despite being old, faithfully tolls its sacred sound. Something bloody has changed the scene and condition where it is impossible to make a religious or faithful cry. Instead, one must decide to struggle wounded and dying. Dehqan's encounter with the bloodshed and his final decision to live or die in Raf'at's poem resembles this image. We may see Raf'at's *dehqan* later in detail. We may now take a look at the representations of fortune in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, which we have partly observed in Raf'at's composition in the previous section.

In "Hymn to Beauty" (*Hymne à la Beauté*), Baudelaire starts his poem by the question "do you come from heaven or rise from the abyss"²⁴ depicting the oscillation between two distant poles

²² Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen and La Fanfarlo*. Translated by Raymond N. MacKenzie. (Cambridge: Hackett, 2008), 91.

"...mon auréole, dans un mouvement brusque, a glissé de ma tête dans la fange du macadam." (Baudelaire, Charles. *Le Spleen de Paris: ou les Cinquante Petits Poèmes en Prose de Charles Baudelaire*. Paris: Émile-Paul, 1917, 151)

²³ Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*. (Paris: Pulet-Malassis et de Broise, 1857), 136.

²⁴ "Viens-tu du ciel profond ou sors-tu de l'abîme" Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*. (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1896), 116.

just like the oscillation of the cradle of fortune at the beginning of Raf'at's poem. In the third quatrain, the same depiction is expanded in a way that takes us a step further where we can feel the sense that there seems to exist a linkage between beauty and fortune. The quatrain begins with a question: "do you come from the stars or rise from the black pit."²⁵ Interestingly, destiny is depicted to follow its skirt like a dog. The gender of beauty here as feminine having a dog following her skirt reminds us of Raf'at's cradle. It is traditionally believed that rocking a cradle is a women's task. Then ruzegar rocking the cradle of fortune could be seen as a feminine entity which is very interesting since we know that sun and moon and celestial bodies were considered as masculine and fathers of living beings²⁶ as opposed to the earthly elements, which were considered feminine and mother of living beings.²⁷ Like ruzegar that is rocking the cradle of fortune, the beauty (fortune) is the entity that sows joy and disaster. However, the critical point is that while it governs everything, it answers for nothing.²⁸ This is the point where Baudelaire's image is departing from the classic imagery. The point of departure is a sense of being left with nothing and being totally on your own. There is no entity to beg and ask him for a change in the joy and disaster. This resembles Raf'at's dehqan, who is left with only one choice either to live or to die while being sure that his fortune is asleep at the moment. No response from anywhere could be found or heard in Baudelaire's image and Raf'at's poem. One is left alone with nothing but himself and his disastrous surrounding.

Baudelaire's poem's disastrous scene gets to the largest scale possible, which Hakkak was missed in Raf'at's poem. Although, Hakkak was not right in his reading of Raf'at's poem, the *large* surrounding Baudelaire's poem gets to a point which almost can miss its immediate social meaning. However, at the same time, it can represent something in the essence of history and nature. In his famous poem "L'Homme et la mer," Baudelaire depicts the sea as the enemy and image of the man. There seems to be an eternal battle going on between the two. The man and the sea are described as "lutteurs éternels" and "frères implacables."²⁹ This eternal struggle makes Baudelaire's poem go beyond modern times and apply to all human history, but at the same time, this is the point where Baudelaire's poem can lose its linkage with the modern experience. However, we know that Baudelaire is one of the most skilful authors in depicting the modern spirit and modern experience. What links the poem to modern life is that the sea is depicted as the image of the man where he can contemplate his own soul. Moreover, the man in this mirror-like relationship is described to have a soul (mind) like an abyss with no less bitterness.³⁰ Then if man could have possibly built anything in the course of this struggle, it is like a bitter abyss, for it definitely resembles himself. The social condition, the immediate surroundings of the man, which he tries to build while struggling with the furious sea (nature), is like an abyss. This is the point that the man must decide to give up the struggle and die or to live and also fight his own made abyss. The same spirit is observed in Raf'at's composition. The farmer is caught struggling with nature and suddenly finds himself in a disastrous bloody

²⁵ "Sors-tu du gouffre noir ou descends-tu des astres?" Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*. (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1896), 116.

²⁶ آباء علوی Celestial fathers

²⁷ امهات اربعه the four mothers

²⁸ "Tu sèmes au hasard la joie et les désastres,

Et tu gouvernes tout et ne répond de rien" Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*. (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1896), 116.

²⁹ Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*. (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1896), 105.

³⁰ "Et ton esprit n'est pas un gouffre mions amer," Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*. (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1896), 105.

abyss made by humankind himself. Then the only thing one is left with is to decide either to die or to live.

3.5. The second part of the poem

Hakkak's reading of "Nowruz and Dehqan" aimed for some crucial topics in Raf'at's writing and failed in some details as well as grasping the entirety of Raf'at's composition. Interestingly, this is to some extent due to a philological deficiency in Hakkak's study. He did not access Raf'at's writings through first-hand sources; namely, the journals in which he published his poems. Hakkak's source of reference was Ariyanpour's book, where he selectively quotes some of Raf'at's writings. In the case of "Nowruz and Dehqan," Ariyanpour had quoted only the first part of the poem for the sake of brevity.³¹ As a result, Hakkak missed the second part of the poem, which was as important as the first part. Moreover, he did not know anything about Raf'at's writing incentive, which was a disastrous bloodshed in Oroumiye sometime before the poem's publication. As a result, Hakkak was not able to situate the poem in its respective context.

Hakkak refers to this catastrophe in two occasions of his writing where it is obvious he has no knowledge of the Oroumiye disaster. The first occasion is when he refers to the last three lines of the first part. In the footnotes, he writes that "Kasravi mentions several instances of atrocities committed by the Iranian army against the civilian population in the city of Urmieh around the new year festival of Nowruz. Raf'at's allusion may be to the February 1921 uprising led by Lahuti."³² In fact, it is obvious that he is wrong. Paying attention to the fact that the date on which Raf'at committed suicide and the date of the poem's publication are both two years earlier than Hakkak's mentioned date makes it useless to go any further in disproving his claim. Nevertheless, it shows how much he did not know about the historical context of Raf'at's composition and his life. The second occasion is where he writes: "Rather than being linked with any specific act or incident, the atrocity is also kept at a vague and generic level."³³ Apparently, he is unaware of another poem of Raf'at titled "Oroumi" composed as an elegy for the people of Oroumiye and the disaster they experienced. The tercet suggests an allusion to that poem and the event. Now that we have seen how Hakkak fails to situate the poem in its respective context, we may look at the catastrophe in Oroumiye to better understand the poem, and then we can turn our attention to the second part of it.

During the last years of World War I, the western borders of Iran were the site for the struggle of different forces. The Ottoman and Russian troops were struggling to establish their power. While the Iranian government claimed itself neutral in the war, it was not left undisturbed. This was worsened by the fact that British troops found it essential to defend the western borders of Iran to defend their benefits in India. All this was happening on an ocean of ethnic and religious mixture of the whole area. One of the ethnicities playing a part in this time was the Assyrians under Mar Shimun XIX Benyamin, who was the 117th Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the east. On the other hand, there were the Kurdish tribes, specifically the Shekak tribe, led by Simko Shekak, based in Chehriq.

³¹ Yahya Ariyanpour, *Az Šabā tā Nīmā*. (Tehran: Ketabhaye Jibi (Franklin), 1350 [1972]), 461-462.

³² Hakkak, 307.

³³ Hakkak, 208.

By the early times of the war, the Ottomans, in order to establish themselves against the Russians, committed genocides in the region which was the cause of later atrocities.³⁴ The Assyrians who had suffered from these mass murders started to establish their own front in the region by causing troubles to other ethnicities and playing a part in the war. One of the occasions where Assyrians under Mar Shimun revolted and killed many was in July 1917, when they killed many people in Oroumiye and caused many deaths. Raf'at received this in his poem "Orumi," which was published then.³⁵ Things did not end that summer, and everything got worse after the murder of Mar Shimun. Apparently, after some time, in order to establish his power, Mar Shimun was looking forward to allying with Simko. By the time of their meeting, Simko kills Mar Shimun, and this causes a big catastrophe. On the last week of 1296 (1917-1918), the Assyrians and Christians in Oroumiye and Salmas heard the news of Mar Shimun's murder and revolted and killed many Muslims in the city. They were provoked by the rumours that Iranian authorities had intrigued Simko to kill Mar Shimun.³⁶ The number of people killed in this catastrophe has been estimated from 100 to 10000 people. Nevertheless, it had been a bloody week in those cities. More importantly, the whole bloodshed happened a week before Nowruz, which is generally a happy and vital occasion for Iranians.³⁷

These happenings before Nowruz were the incentive for Raf'at to write his poem "Nowruz and Dehqan" and republish his poem "Orumi." Furthermore, this is missing in Hakkak's reading, making it impossible for him to situate the poem in its respective historical context. This can be the doorway to step into the next part of the poem, formally the same as the previous one. The rhyming pattern and meter are the same as the first part, and the poem develops its imagery of Nowruz and dehqan's confrontation with a new disastrous reality.

3.6. The autonomous metaphor: "cradle of fortune"

Now, we may take a step forward and study the connections of two parts of the poem and see how the imagery and ideas of the first part are developed in the second. In doing so, we will leave behind Hakkak and his reading since they did not prove themselves serious for further study. The only thing we may take with ourselves is Hakkak's emphasis on the term *bakht* (fortune), and we will see how this term actually plays a more prominent role in this poem.

The term *bakht* primarily means share, portion, interest, and fortune. It is derived from the middle Persian *baxt* and ancient Persian **baxta-* which is from the stem *bag-*. This has its root in the PIE stem **bhag-* meaning to divide or to share. The word *bag* meaning God, also exists

³⁴ "Local conditions determined when and how the genocide took place. Ignoring individual atrocities committed during autumn 1914, the systematic annihilation of Assyrian peoples was concentrated in the year 1915. The first victims were Nestorians and Chaldeans, in Urmia. This region was occupied by an Ottoman army from 1 January to May 1915. During these five months, soldiers, aided by local people, committed massacres and atrocities. In order to mobilize local volunteers, the Ottomans agitated for a jihad and posted declarations in the occupied region." David Gaunt, "The Complexity of Assyrian Genocide," *Genocide Studies International*, 9, 1 (Spring 2015), 88.

³⁵ The poem was published in *Tajaddod* on 5th of Shawwal 1335 (25th July 1917).

³⁶ Sheykhnoori, Mohammad Amir, Nayebpour, Mohammad, Khosrozadeh, Sirvan. "Christian Political-Military activities and the Competition of Powers in the West Azerbaijan (1914-1918)." *Biannual Research Journal of Iran Local Histories*, (No. 7, Fall-Winter 1394), 61.

³⁷ To see some descriptions of the atrocities, also see: Raḥmatullāh Khān Mo'tamid al-Wizārah, *Oroumiyeh dar Muḥāribah-yi Ālamsūz (Oroumiye in the World War)*, Edited by Kave Bayat, (Tehran: Pardis Danesh, 1389).

in ancient and middle Persian.³⁸ The original meaning seems to be sharing, which is related to God as the one, who shares and gives each person his fortune.³⁹ There are many occasions in Persian literature where the term *bakht* emerges. It is also used in many phrases and idioms, one of which is the sleeping fortune. The term refers to an unfortunate condition or to a person who seems to have a small share of prosperity in life. This phrase was also widely used within Persian literature to refer to unfortunate conditions.

What makes the term *bakht* different and outstanding in Raf'at's poem is the fact that it is combined with the term *banuj* (cradle). The phrase *banuj-e bakht* could possibly mean the cradle of fortune, which could be interpreted differently. One way to interpret this is to perceive the cradle as belonging to *bakht*. The other is to perceive it as a cradle in which the *bakht* lies. It seems that Hakkak ignored this difference, and in some cases, treated it in the first manner. However, remembering the poem's opening lines where it was *ruzegar* (time) who was rocking the cradle, then it is clear that the second reading is more fit where the fortune lies in the cradle. It is worth considering that the Arabic term *vaght* (time) itself is believed to be the Arabic version of the Persian word *bakht*. Thus, we may deduce that time is rocking the cradle of fortune, consequently meaning a sleeping fortune. Moreover, there is no evidence of any phrase having a similar meaning to "cradle of fortune" in Persian literature. However, each of these terms was frequently used in classic Persian literature.

Now we can suppose that the term *banuj-e bakht* has never been used in this formal manner before Raf'at, and semantically it leads to a *sleeping fortune* which is a reference to a bad omen or unfortunate condition. We can see that this new formal combination is charged with an autonomous power that dictates the rest of the poem's imagery and even its general idea. It is determined for a poem with a *sleeping fortune* to narrate the loss or the disaster. There could be nothing victorious in such a composition. The fact that the sleeping fortune is put in a cradle requires a mother or an entity to rock the cradle, which is the *ruzegar*. This takes the poem's imagery a step forward, making it a doomed disastrous passage of time. Furthermore, the whole image of the rocking cradle is depicted in the time of Nowruz, which is a time to expect spring, rejuvenation, and prosperity. The whole idea of the poem seems to be encapsulated in this image. A disastrous moment is going to occur while one is expecting the previously expected prosperity. Time has changed the omen and the fortune.

Thus, one can see that the subtle formal manipulation of the already existing literary forms, here as subtle as making a combination like "cradle of fortune," decides and defines the whole entirety of the poem, its imagery, and its idea. Definitely, the "cradle of fortune" was made accordingly by Raf'at to put in such a framework of poetry. However, the point is that the whole thing also shows us the autonomous power of even subtle literary forms. One small image, which is a fortune in a cradle, seems to be dictating the whole poem and even the reality it is representing. The autonomous power of the "cradle of fortune" seems mighty enough to define the whole poem.

³⁸ Mohammad Hassandoust, *An Etymological Dictionary of Persian Language*. (Tehran: Academy of Persian Language and Literature, 1383 (2004)), 412-413, 494-495.

³⁹ The root for fortune is believed to have relation to PIE root *bher meaning to carry or to bear, which is not clear how the semantic turn has happened which made it mean fortune. One may come up with the hunch that there could be a link between *bher and *bhag. However, to prove this requires certain skill and knowledge which is out of our scope.

The second part of the poem is still under the mighty influence of the “cradle of fortune” and develops the notions brought up in the previous section. It also concludes the image with a psychological moment where one caught in such a condition must make a decision. The poem starts with a depiction of Nowruz as the vivacious festive ceremony to celebrate the sun’s step into the Aries. The first section depicted the ominous disastrous essence of the time’s passage to the particular condition of this Nowruz. In this second section, we face the rather joyful face of the ceremony. Nevertheless, this joyful face is soon contradicted with the *dehqan*’s image when he is watering his whole harvest with blood. Right at the heart of this contradicting depiction, *dehqan* starts to develop a feeling for revenge. Right after that, when one is reminded of Nowruz as a specific moment in history, he is suddenly awakened, unlike his fortune, and feels that it is the time to be aware and renovate his conditions. This is the only way to end the terror and take action in the new disastrous condition. Again the reference to Nowruz emerges, but this time as a new day in the old scene of history. *Dehqan*’s tale is getting to its peak, where he finally grabs his iron sickle and makes his decision. The decision is either to live or to die. Interestingly, the whole psychological path takes *dehqan* not to die or to live, but to the moment that one must decide whether to live or die in such disastrous ominous condition. There seems to be no way out of disaster. The only chance is to make up one’s mind and decide for life or death. The ominous death imposed on the modern man by its new disastrous conditions could be revolted only by deciding to live in that disastrous moment and fight for all that is respectable. The moment of decision is the moment not to let things melt into disastrous air.

Now, we can see how the metaphor “cradle of fortune” encapsulates and generates the whole reality of modern life for the *dehqan*. The whole disaster surrounding him, which is a modern disaster and the result of fundamental changes in the condition, urges him either to die or live and fight for himself. The whole scheme now may be understood in a better way. The new conditions of life caused by changes in fundamental economic structure result in new disasters and new strategies to face them. To represent this in a literary work requires a new language and a new form. This new language and form can be detected both in the entirety and in a minute formal detail of the poem. The new formal scheme of Raf‘at’s poem represents the new condition about which and in which he is writing his poem. It is impossible to produce a traditional *nowruziyeh* for the new disastrous Nowruz one is facing in modern life. It requires a new language, a new form, and certainly a new strategy and decision.

Traditionally, all *nowruziyeh*s were victory poems. This is self-evident, requiring no proof. The metaphor “army of Nowruz” is widely used in Persian literature,⁴⁰ manifesting the fact that Nowruz and *Nowruziyeh*s were all about victory. One of the most common ways of congratulating Nowruz is the phrase “Nowruz piruz,” which literally means victorious Nowruz. Having observed this, it is interesting to remember *Kave*’s article, which pejoratively aimed for Raf‘at’s poem and compared it with a *nowruziyeh* by Ghanizade. *Kave* proposed one of the poems of Mirza Mahmud Khan Ghanizade as an example of sound poetry, contrasting it with Khan Valed literature, which included one of Raf‘at’s poems. Later, Raf‘at proposed that in

⁴⁰ There are many examples of that. One of them is Manouchehri’s *qasida* starting

بر لشکر زمستان نوروز نامدار / کردست رای تاختن و قصد کارزار

Maouchehri, *Dīvān-i Ustād Manuchīhrī-yi Dāmghānī*. Edited by Mohammad Dabir Siyaghi. (Tehran: Zavvar, 1338 [1959]), 30-33, and Menoutchehri. *Divan*. By A. de Biberstein Kazimirski, (Paris: Klincksieck, 1886) 42-48.

order to compare those poems rightly, they must either have the same form or same content and, as a result, suggested “Nowruz and Dehqan” for comparison.

Ghanizade’s poem is typically an old-style qasida imitating the language and imagery of the famous nowruziyes of classic Persian literature. It is a poem of victory, as expected. It was written in the disastrous days of Iran at the end of the war and praised victorious Nowruz and spring. It seems as if the poem had no relation to its surroundings either in its language, form, or even content. The only thing that relates this poem to its immediate reality, other than being published in a paper of that year, is a footnote describing the poem’s occasion. “It is a Qaside by Agha Mirza Mahmud Khan Ghanizade for the Nowruz of 1336 when Russians were defeated, and Brest-Litovsk peace happened.”⁴¹ The poem is allegedly composed for the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The poem’s relation to its immediate reality is even more problematic than what one may have already imagined. It is disconnected from reality in its form, language, and content, and it cannot even settle a relation with reality in the footnote. The very victorious poem in its form is alleged to have something to do with peace in Brest-Litovsk and Russians defeat. Then it could be about loss and not victory, although the poem is victorious in every aspect. However, it is about the loss of Russians. An Iranian caught in a disastrous loss in the modern environment dedicates a victorious poem to the Russians’ defeat in the war. However, it is not quite right to call the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk a defeat for Russians since it was when Lenin tried dragging Russia out of a seemingly endless war. Moreover, the peace could make some party victorious, but is there any victory for an Iranian in it? The footnote, which tries to connect the poem to reality, disconnects it, even more, proving that the author has no perception of his position in the whole scene of the reality of modern life. *Kave* and its advocates and all those supporting the old literary paradigm seem to be caught in a victorious moment in their own mind forgetting the deadly scene in which they are caught. Then we can see how important the moment when dehqan makes a decision to live or to die actually is. It is a moment immediately related to the reality of modern life. Unlike the disconnected mindset of *Kave*, Raf’at delineates the disastrous connection.

Apparently, the articles in *Kave* were written by Seyed Hassan Taghizade and Seyed MohamadAli Jamalzade.⁴² In order to see the disconnected relationship to reality within the mindset of these two authors, it is worth paying attention to one of Jamalzade’s writing some months thereafter, which in fact, is one of the most famous works of modern Persian literature. The introduction to the book *Yeki Bud Yeki Nabud* by Jamalzade was written in August 1919. Interestingly, one of the central claims of Jamalzade and his first sentence in this passage is that “Iran, nowadays, is far behind other nations on the road of literature.”⁴³ This resembles Raf’at’s arguments when he was trying to depict the pain caused by the fact that other nations beyond the Iranian one were more prosperous. However, Jamalzade’s first actual argumentation is quite bizarre since it combines an evolutionistic view with some Islamic-Iranian determinism. He claims that literature has evolved through time in other countries, but in Iran, stepping out of the previous paradigms had been treated as the cause to ruin the literature. He also claims that there is a despotic essence of Iran which is also present in its

⁴¹ Kave. “Taraq̄q̄-yi Zabān-i Fārsī.” Kave, No. 4/5, 21 May 1920, 3.

⁴² There is a consensus over this fact nowadays. The articles fit the mindset of Taghizade and Jamalzade. Moreover, Iraj Afshar when republishing the journal, has directly indicated Taghizade and Jamalzade as the authors of the article. See: Hasan Taqizade, *Kave (Dowreya Avval)*. Introduction and index by Iraj Afshar. (Tehran: Asatir, 1384 (2005)), page 14 of index.

⁴³ Mahammad Ali Jamalzade, *Yeki Bud Yeki Nabud*, (Tehran: Bongah-e Parvin, 1320 [1941]), 3.

literature. He observes this because authors address the elite and literates and ignore the “literary democracy.”⁴⁴ Surprisingly, the whole evolutionistic view is related to a deterministic idea of observing despotism in the essence of one nation. It seems as if Jamalzade’s relation to reality is already getting disturbed. It is not disconnected like Ghanizade, but it is seriously problematic. In the following lines, he refers to masses with the Quranic reference: “like beasts or even worse.”⁴⁵ The democratic gesture criticizing the address to the elite suddenly turns against the masses with a sharp sword. His relation not only with reality but also with the masses is disturbed. He does not seem sure about his treatment of reality, and he is not consistent in his arguments. The people for Jamalzade are beasts and need to be tamed and taught, in contrast to Raf‘at’s depiction of *dehqan* in which an individual decides to live or to die and settle his relationship with his surroundings.

The most crucial issue in Jamalzade’s introduction to *Yeki Bud Yeki Nabud* is the language that could link the previous dispute (between Raf‘at and *Kave*) and this piece of writing. We have already seen the attitude of him and his peers in *Kave* that advocated the eloquent classic language. In the introduction, we find Jamalzade with a sort of museum curator attitude toward the language. He seems to be defending different languages and accents with a cultural heritage attitude, so one must preserve them and use them to enrich the language. His most excellent skill in authorship is actually of the same spirit. He is capable of imitating different languages and accents and rebuilding them in his narrative space. However, by all this, he is suppressing the fact that he has the power to claim so. It is the power that gives someone the right to ask for being understood; otherwise, he is easily dismissed. Remembering the first story in his book *Farsi Shekar Ast* (Farsi is Sugar), he is obviously criticizing the two strata (clergy and westernized) for their language. However, the point is that these two sects cannot understand each other, and that is not because of their language, rather because they are separated in their power sources and social position. The only dialogue between them is when there is a fight and struggle over material rights and power. Interestingly, that is what happens between Raf‘at and those in dispute with him. The only reason they engage in a dispute with Raf‘at is that he and his party have gained material power, and that material power is what makes *Kave* and *Daneshkade* start a dialogue with him. Otherwise, Raf‘at would have been definitely dismissed by them, as is the case in later years after his death, which we will see in chapter4 (p. 105).

3.7. The poetic moment of deciding to be modern

Having met Raf‘at’s *dehqan* in both parts of the poem, it is worth comparing him and his relation to his surrounding with some other *dehqans*. We may remember a disaster we previously encountered when we embarked on our journey of reading Raf‘at’s oeuvre. The first disaster was the Titanic shipwreck which was closely related to a disaster in Iran: the bombardment of the Holy Shrine in Mashhad. Adib Heravi, in his account of the event, describes that in Mashhad in the time of the Russian Ultimatum, the students of religious schools demonstrated with banners and were chanting:

Heavens, reveal what you have secretly

⁴⁴ Jamalzade, *Yeki Bud Yeki Nabud*, 3.

⁴⁵ The phrase “كالا انعام بل هم اضل” is found in two verses in Quran (25:44, 7:179) and is idiomatically used for referring to ignorant people.

For Iranians won't be subdued to tyranny
 We are ready to give up our lives, and we are chanting
 Either Iran's independence or sudden death⁴⁶

What is essential in this account is that even the clergies and the students of the religious schools did feel that they must either choose between death and another thing, though there is a difference in these two examples. Raf'at proposes a mere choice between life and death, not between death and anything else. For him, the issue is not independence or political power, at the same time that it really is crucial for him. For him, the focal point is life. One must decide to live or to die in a specific way. This includes any topic of independence and political power but at the same time goes beyond that.

Interestingly, in the same event, Adib Heravi reports Taleb al-Haq (the Islamist anti-constitution pro-MohammadAli Shah) that he was teaching his peers to reverse the constitutionalists' claim, and he ordered them to say "either death or Mohammad Ali Shah, when constitutionalist said either death or independence."⁴⁷ Surprisingly, the subversion of the phrase "either death or independence" by Taleb al-Haq has nothing to do with life, and death remains there. The important thing is that the two extremes of society and social attitude both understood that death has something to do with their living moment. Nevertheless, the whole idea brought up by *Kave* and its advocates, namely the newly emerging middle class, did not have any sense of death. It seems their problematic relation to reality or the fact that they were disconnected from reality made them ignorant of the fact that some deadly thing is going on in their immediate atmosphere.

Now, it is worth observing how *dehqan* was depicted in other poems before Raf'at's depiction of *dehqan* in his poem. The poems published in *Kave* do not prove themselves serious enough to be treated here. If we aim for a poem within the paradigm of classic literature, it is better to go for one of the best and most popular ones. One of the most famous poems of the constitutional period written in classic paradigm is the *mosammat* by Adib al-Mamalek Farahani on the occasion of the birth of Islam's prophet. It was written in August 1902 in the reign of Mozaffar al-din Shah. It is a long poem mentioning many national symbols in order to congratulate the birth of the prophet. The joyful atmosphere of the first half of the poem turns into grievance over the current condition of Iran. Finally, it turns again to praise the Shah for protecting the homeland. What interests us here is the part that leaves behind the classic imagery and describes the current condition and misery. In one of the stanzas, he writes:

Alas! This farm is flooded
 The stricken *dehqan* is caught in sleep
 Our hearts blood has turned to the wine's colour
 And because of the fever our whole body quivers

⁴⁶ آنچه اندر پرده داری آسمان بنما عیان / تن نخواهد داد بر ظلم و ستم ایرانیان / سر بکف جان در قدم داریم ما ورد زبان / یا که استقلال "یا که استقلال ایران یا که مرگ ناگهان"

Mohammad Hasan Adib Heravi, *Hadiqat al-radawiyya*. (Mashhad: Chapkhane Khorasan, 1327 [1948]), 171. (my translation)

⁴⁷ Adib Heravi, 179.

The art's visage is pale like white moon

The wisdom's eyes are covered by blood

The riches are worthless and health is ill⁴⁸

At first, what is interesting is that we find dehqan stricken by a disaster which is quite similar to Raf'at's dehqan. The fact that something is sleeping also exists in this poem. In Raf'at's poem, the fortune was sleeping, but here it is dehqan himself sleeping. Dehqan in Adib al-Mamalek's poem is asleep, and everything happens while he is asleep and has no influence over the situation. However, Raf'at's dehqan is awake and encounters the new condition and comes to a point to make a decision. The fortune is sleeping, but dehqan has to encounter it awake. Remembering the entirety of Adib's poem, we can see that dehqan is the symbol of what is at stake and must be preserved for him. In his scheme, that can happen by the power of the victorious king. However, for Raf'at, dehqan symbolizes the end of a particular era and the start of a new one. He is positioned where one must decide what to do with this change and how to react. As further as we dive into Raf'at's poem, there is no sign of victory in it, but it seems to be the only possibility for a supposedly victorious future; to gaze into the loss.

The fortune in premodern time is something reaching sun and moon and maybe some ominous star, but it is meant to differ and oscillate. It is perceived as causing the vicissitudes of life. However, Raf'at's artistic imagery subtly destroys the whole idea. The sun and the moon and time are not changing the fortune, making it good or bad, instead, they are putting the fortune into sleep. That is something which never happened before and is not observed in classic literature. In modern times, time is suddenly putting the fortune to sleep, leaving man shelterless and helpless. The distorted idea of the farmer is the same, he is deceived by the movement of bakht among the sun and the moon and thinks that time is going to bring good things just as it brought bad ones, but suddenly he faces a disastrous moment where time is putting his fortune to sleep. The bloodshed happens. Modernity arrives. There is no more such a thing as fortune. The fortune has been put asleep by modern times. It is time for dehqan to make up his mind, get rid of the deceptive idea of bakht and step into cruel real modernity. This is where Raf'at's dehqan and Adib's dehqan depart, and each finds their own strategy and form.

Now that we have met Raf'at's strategy and his depiction of Dehqan in contrast to others', we may try to meet the Dehqan in his actual life condition. This will make us pin down Dehqan and Raf'at's strategy materially and situate it within the material condition of Iran at the time. In the introduction, we shortly observed that with the emergence of capitalism, the free capitals were directed toward the lands. As a result, class tyranny became more than before. Because the agricultural production process was left untouched, these new owners (the predecessors of the established bourgeoisie) were more tyrant and exploited Dehqans even more. This is significant to our reading because if Dehqan did not face the bloodshed, he had to face this

⁴⁸ افسوس که این مزرعه را آب گرفته / دهقان مصیبت زده را خواب گرفته،
خون دل ما رنگ می ناب گرفته / وز سوزش تب پیکرمان تاب گرفته
رخسار هنر گونه مهتاب گرفته / چشمان خرد پرده ز خواب گرفته
"ثروت شده بیمایه و صحت شده بیمار"

Adib al-Mamalek Farahani, *Divan-e Kamel*. Edited by Vahid Dastgerdi. (Tehran: Armaghan, 1312 [1933]), 514.

tyranny which was less bloody in the face but more tyrant and pain-causing than the bloodshed.⁴⁹

In fact, in Orumiye, the focal point of our reading and Raf'at's poem, since more than half of the population were lost in World War I, Dehqans had a better condition. However, this better condition about twenty years later is reflected like this in statistics: "less than 12 percent of Dehqans can afford their lives from their lands."⁵⁰ This clearly proves how disastrous Dehqans' lives were and to what extent they were exploited. Soltanzadeh points out that the emergence of capitalism in other European countries resulted in the creation of industries and settling the farmers in industries, but in Iran, the import of cheap commodities just resulted in making the farmers poor and forcing them to migrate to cities.⁵¹

With the introduction of a new taxation system and the religion being pushed away as the only institution which could settle struggles and support Dehqans, the main burden of the taxation fell on Dehqans. In such conditions, Dehqans had to give away 33 to 85 percent of their product as tax.⁵² This even caused some uprising of the farmers and peasants around 1905 alongside the Constitutional Revolution, which widely wished for bourgeois aspirations. In some cases, the peasants denied paying the tax and made local assemblies.⁵³ Dehqans and those who were settled on lands were also exposed to the threat of brigandage by those who were not settled like nomads.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, what is essential here is that the Constitutional Revolution was a bourgeois revolution that did not aspire to the class benefits of peasants. However, along the way, at some points, because of mutual benefits, peasants also took part in the revolution. But as Iransky points out, they were not involved radically in the revolution. "The oppressed peasants of Iran did not see a meaningful difference between the domestic landowners and foreign concessionaires. Therefore, they were outside the revolutionary movement."⁵⁵ Considering this, the fact that Raf'at tries to revolutionize Dehqan and, deep in his depiction, links his material existence with rebellion is a significant point in modern Persian literature and even in the history of Iran's history of class struggle. Revolutionizing Dehqan, in Raf'at's writing, even happens at a profound level linking the revolt to the immediate condition of Dehqan in his historical presence and even in the general sense as a human being against a life which he despises.

3.8. Chatterton sensations: The moment to "compose my mind"

Considering the fact that the class material revolution to which Raf'at links his Dehqan has a more profound signification which is composing one's mind in a disastrous moment, we can try grasping that aspect as well. That may seem less material, however, it is not less significant

⁴⁹ To see a more detailed account of Dehqans' material condition see: Avetis Soltanzadeh, *Inkishāf-i Iqtisādiyi Iran va Amperīyālīzm-i Ingilistān (The Economic Development of Iran and English Imperialism)*, (Florence: Mazdak, 1388 (2009)), 102-177.

⁵⁰ Soltanzadeh, 105.

⁵¹ Soltanzadeh, 116.

⁵² M. Pavlovich, V. Triya, and S. Iransky, *Si Maqālah darbāriyi Inqilāb-i Mashrūṭīyat-i Iran (Three Essays on Iran's Constitutional Revolution)*, (Tehran: Sherkate Sahami Ketabhaye Jibi, 1357 [1979]), 13.

⁵³ Iransky, "Three Essays," 19.

⁵⁴ Iransky, "Three Essays," 22-23.

⁵⁵ Iransky, "Three Essays," 141.

because it does not turn its back to the material condition. It even extends the material dilemma beyond the realm of material, proving itself serious enough to be treated. This could be investigated in some moments of his favoured figure Chatterton.

Raf'at's *dehqan* proved its uniqueness, and at the same time, its relation to the previously existing literary paradigm and social conditions. Its relation to a broader nexus of perception of modern life could be investigated. In his article "A Literary Rebellion," we already met him praising Chatterton for its sensations. The ambiguity in his phrase did not make it possible to understand whether "Chatterton" is a reference to Thomas Chatterton or Alfred de Vigny's play *Chatterton*. Nevertheless, both have some linkage with Raf'at's *dehqan* and Raf'at himself.

Before authoring *Chatterton*, Alfred de Vigny had actually coined a new term that was later widely used, and one of its most famous examples was Thomas Chatterton. In his 1832 novel *Stello*, he is the first to coin the term *poète maudit* (accursed poet), referring to a poet who lives a life against society resulting in insanity, drug abuse, and a final act of suicide. The term was later widely used after the publication of *Les Poètes Maudits* by Paul Verlaine in 1884. Thomas Chatterton became one of the exemplary figures for the term *poète maudit*. He was a genius with a tremendous literary talent who finally committed suicide at the age of 17 for not having lived his passion, poetry.

In chapter XII of *Stello*, Docteur-Noir says in a dialogue with Stello: "I mean he had a reason to complain about knowing to read, because from the day when he learned to read he became a poet. Since then he belonged to a race that will always be accursed by the powerful ones of the earth."⁵⁶ The idea of *poète maudit* emerges for the first time. It interestingly is related to the poet's inability against the powerful ones of the earth, or according to some other versions, the powers of the earth. What is essential in de Vigny's perception is that the curse happens through the material means of power. This makes it possible to take the romantic notion of *poète maudit* linked with melancholy and trapped in psychological analysis to another level and make it function on a political level.

De Vigny's fascination with the accursed poet is probably the incentive for his play *Chatterton* published in 1835. It depicts Thomas Chatterton in the last days of his life. The play shows how Chatterton is rejected on two levels. He is rejected in his sentimental life as well as his social life. He cannot keep his honour unharmed, which leads him to the only solution left, which is the glory of remembrance after his death. In the context of the notion *poète maudit*, it is believed that the act of suicide is a sacrifice for the sake of art, but it is correct to look at it as a sacrifice for one's venerable principles in life. These venerable principles are at stake in modern life, which melts them into air. Thus the sacrifice is a reaction to one's immediate conditions in the modern era. Modern life transforms the genius into an outcast. One may even say that the genius turns himself into an outcast as a rebellious strategy against modern life since he must either accept his utilitarian function in society or be outcasted and finally die. Chatterton's position in the new condition requires him to decide either to live or to die. Now we can see that the idea to decide either to live or to die has its roots in the early moments of

⁵⁶ "Je veux dire qu'il avait raison de se plaindre de savoir lire, parce que du jour où il sut lire il fut Poète, et dès lors il appartient à la race toujours maudite par les puissants de la terre." Alfred de Vigny, *Stello*, (Paris: Bookings International, 1996), 45.

The word *puissants* in some versions is spelt *puissances* which may change the meaning from "the powerful ones" to "powers." See: Alfred de Vigny, *Stello*, (Paris: Librairie Nouvelle, 1856), 45.

modern literature, which definitely had affected Raf'at in his writing. The last line of the last stanza of Raf'at's poem is significant for any reading since it is closely linked with a serious tradition of literary and intellectual writings on modernity itself. It has its roots in romanticism but is folded and twisted on many levels till it finds a rebellious political meaning.

To see this moment of decision, it is worth looking into one of Chatterton's poems: "The Resignation." It starts with Chatterton's talk to God praising his greatness and being sure that his omniscience could see any danger and his mercy could prevent the anguish of trying hours. Then comes the most crucial question, which turns Chatterton and his poem from a mere expression of faith into something quite problematic:

Then why, my soul, dost thou complain?
 Why drooping seek the dark recess?
 Shake off the melancholy chain,
 For God created all to bless.

But ah! My breast is human still;
 The rising sigh, the falling tear,
 My languid vitals' feeble rill,
 The sickness of my soul declare.⁵⁷

Chatterton finds himself in anguish even though merciful God is expected to prevent that anguish. He finds himself caught in a material condition that the venerable idea of God is no help to him. He is trapped in a moment where he does not find a way to escape. Moreover, this is the moment where everything finds a new meaning by Chatterton's strategy. Finding himself trapped in a moment of anguish and misery, he is determined to make his choice.

But yet, with fortitude resigned,
 I'll thank th' inflicter of the blow;
 Forbid the sigh, compose my mind,
 Nor let the gush of mis'ry flow.⁵⁸

This is the moment that Chatterton makes a decision and composes his mind. One is yet to decide and compose his mind in a condition that has trapped him and made the fortitude resign. In the condition which renders one powerless to prevent the anguish, there remains a decision to stop the gush of misery. What Chatterton depicted in these lines is similar to how Raf'at depicts dehqan and narrates the moment that dehqan finally composes his mind. Then it is no surprise that Raf'at was insistently bringing up Chatterton in the most significant moments of his writing. The poète maudit has been adopted in a political scene of modern condition where the sense of being trapped is the same, although the material condition has changed drastically. Raf'at finds himself and his dehqan and probably anyone living in that moment as trapped in the conditions of modern life when their fortitude is resigned and they are only left with a decision about their situation. This decision is an extreme one. It is a choice between life and death. Raf'at depicts this choice in his poetry and performs it in his life. Firstly, he performs it by his rebellious strategy toward modern life, and he concludes his final decision with his own act of suicide when he finds himself trapped and lost in a battle. When he is sure that his

⁵⁷ Thomas Chatterton, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Chatterton with a Memoir*. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company. Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1855), 306.

⁵⁸ Chatterton, 307.

political agenda has been destroyed and his peers are killed, while finding his fortitude resigned, he composes his mind and commits suicide. The Romantic notion of *poète maudit*, adopted to a rebellious political strategy, culminates in one final moment: the poet's act of suicide.

4. The Flying Flare: How Raf'at's oeuvre came to be forgotten

هُوَ الَّذِي يُرِيكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا

رعد، 12

(He it is who showeth you the lightning, a fear and a hope)

بگفت احوال ما بريق جهان است...

مصلح الدين سعدی، گلستان

It is not solely the presence that can shed light on dark aspects of a case; its absence could reveal as much. The literary products and authors are usually treated posthumously with a curatorial attitude as parts of a cultural heritage to be preserved for museums and curious audiences who may visit them once in a while. In fact, in many cases, the whole reception of an author and his oeuvre happen posthumously. A well-known example of this is Franz Kafka, who gained fame posthumously when Max Brod ignored Kafka's will to burn all his manuscripts unread. Thus, one can say that the absence of an author or his oeuvre has a vital force in itself which can put into light some aspects of its study.

That is also the case with Taqi Raf'at, but things are more complicated in this one. Raf'at was not received like any other author or cultural figure. His emergence on Iran's political and cultural scene was abrupt and ambiguous. He also faded abruptly. It is tough to trace his presence or later influence on the cultural scene of Iran. The essential thing in his presence and absence is this abruptness. As if something flares up in this scene and quickly fades. No one could be sure where it comes from and whither it has gone.

In this chapter, we aim to trace this flare, study it in detail, and try to grasp what it means for any entity to flare up on the scene of history. The emergence of an entity on the historical scene is related to a more profound study of history in a philosophical sense. However, we are able to observe this spectacle on the historical scene with our naked eyes and without any philosophical tool. Nevertheless, the literary tool can prove itself very useful in such an observation. Thus, this chapter is a quest for the image of a flying flare or a sparkle or a sudden lightning which enlightens the scene for some moments, and then everything fades into oblivion.

Such a quest would enable us to better understand Raf'at's presence on the historical scene with its peculiar flare-like characteristic. This quest also lets us discover the image of a flare and the flaring images in other contexts so we may situate our reading of Raf'at better. This may also allow us better perceive history and any historical understanding and recognition of a past moment as it flares up.

4.1. Raf'at's reception posthumously

The literature containing any reference to Raf'at after his death are a handful. There are three significant figures whose writing includes references to Raf'at and his oeuvre. These three are: Ahmad Kasravi, Yahya Ariyanpour, and Reza Barahani. Other than these three, there are some rare occasions where Raf'at is referred to which are of no significance. Later, after 1979, he is

again brought up in the literary scene for a couple of times that are left without any continuation and actually include nothing new either in the historical aspect or in the literary one.¹ The essential thing about Raf'at's reception is that there is almost no serious reception. He quickly fades away in the cultural scene of Iran. It seems that he is hardly remembered later in the course of history. However, while he was alive, everybody felt forced to write about him and react to his writings. As if it was his body and his material presence which required actual reaction from other parties. When the material presence is faded, there remains no need to react, and oblivion takes over.

The primary historical references to Raf'at exist in the writings of Ariyanpour and Kasravi. Other papers hardly contain any information, especially biographical ones. Interestingly, not only Raf'at's figure fades abruptly in these writings, but it also abruptly emerges on the scene. There is a sense of disconnection in Raf'at's emergence, even in these few writings. He suddenly appears on the scene, makes almost everyone react, and abruptly fades. It is a unique spectacle that we observe in Raf'at's case. He comes from an unknown cloudy background, shines like lightning, and vanishes like smoke.

In *Az Šabā ta Nīmā*, Ariyanpour provides a straightforward, progressive narrative of modern Persian literature. This narrative has a particular starting point, a climax, and a closure, presenting itself as the legitimate reality, yet it is not comprehensive. Ariyanpour alludes to World War I as the moment in which later political, cultural events have their roots.² As the symbol of the establishment of a new political-economic order, World War I is the right point to start with, but Ariyanpour does not study its material causes. His anthological approach results in listing the new literary figures and new literary forms and writings. He delineates the two supposedly existing literary trends; conservatism and revolutionary literature. However, when it comes to his long anthological passage on Raf'at, everything suddenly starts in the middle of the debate between Raf'at and *Dānishkadāh* members. It is unknown how Raf'at's story began, although Ariyanpour was Raf'at's student and definitely knew a lot about his life and ideas. Besides the anthological description of some fragments of Raf'at's oeuvre, Ariyanpour only provides a short biographical footnote.³ The footnote includes some biographic data that do not add to the topic. It is not still clear how he has emerged on the political, cultural scene and why he has faded. The starting point of Raf'at's story in Ariyanpour's writing is cloudy, and there is no way to trace it back.

Ariyanpour's story ends with a politically correct closure of the whole "struggle between new and old" and "the modernity in literature."⁴ It is pretty odd that, as a student of Raf'at, he neither clarifies any of the obscure points of his writing and life, nor closes his paper with a certain argument. "If we observe impartially, both sides had right in their arguments,"⁵ writes Ariyanpour concluding his writing about the dispute over modernity in literature. His chapter on Raf'at seems like an attempt to make a whole out of a short selective span of Raf'at's life and writing rendered as an independent homogenous narrative. His account of Raf'at's

¹ One of the examples of these writings is "Taqi Raf'at va Sakhtarīn Hingāmi Inqilābi Adabī" (Taqi Raf'at and the Toughest Moment of Literary Revolution), published in *Chista*, No 190, pp 714-721.

The other which seems to be the early emergence of Pan-Turk attention to the subject is "Taqi Raf'at at Shā'irī Sīṭihandī" (Taqi Raf'at a Rebellion Poet) published by Reza Hamraz in *Ketebe Jom'e* No. 35, 64-68.

² Yahya Ariyanpour, *Az Šabā ta Nīmā*, Vol. 2. (Tehran: Ketabhaye Jibi, 1350 [1972]), 433.

³ Ariyanpour, 2: 437.

⁴ The phrases in quotation marks are the chapter titles by Ariyanpour.

⁵ Ariyanpour, 2: 465.

presence, although it is homogenous and independent, is the most obscure one. More importantly, it deliberately ignores the problematic beginning and closure of Raf'at's biographical narrative. The image of Raf'at as presented by Ariyanpour is homogenous and clear to the point that one must doubt it. The quoted texts or the referred biographical facts are not to be doubted; rather, one must doubt the narrative itself. Later we will see how Raf'at's presence is totally distinct from Ariyanpour's account. Raf'at's flare-like presence not only was neglected by Ariyanpour, but one may even say that it was deliberately dismissed in the context of the making of modern national literature and the narrative of its emergence.

Two of Kasravi's writings include references to Raf'at and his lifetime. These passages are found in *Qiyami Shiykh Muhammad Khīyābānī* and *Tarīkhi Hijdah Sāliyi Āzarbāyijān*. Kasravi's hostile attitude toward Raf'at is famous. Thus, one may expect an antagonistic writing which should depict Raf'at as its villain. One is not disappointed in this sense, and Kasravi has done his best in doing so. Kasravi describes Raf'at as an "arrogant and snob" and pejoratively describes his writings using Kave's coinage *Khan Valed*.⁶ Apart from this animosity apparent in Kasravi's description of Raf'at, there is something crucial in his account. Kasravi provides a short account of something in Raf'at's life which is not mentioned in any other sources. Kasravi does not provide enough explanation to make us fully trust his account. He writes:

In those days, a public conference was held about *Tajaddod*, and it was discussed that some members of the party, having Khiyabani's support, had revolted, misbehaved, and committed treason, and must be expelled. One of these was Raf'at, whose name was suggested by Agha Seyed Jalal Ardabili, who recently had come from Istanbul. He (Raf'at) was unanimously called betrayer and expelled.⁷

As Kasravi describes, the charge of treason had to do with the time that Tabriz was invaded by Turks and Raf'at, who had already left the party, published a paper "Azarābādīgān," which must have been a link to the Turks and probably a sign of betrayal.⁸ The crucial point is that if the charge of treason is proven, then Khiyabani himself is guilty, for he has assigned Raf'at again as the editor in chief of *Tajaddod* and his interpreter and speechwriter. Khiyabani and his party were never really accused of any treason and were usually perceived as the fighters of liberty and supporting the people of Tabriz. Then one may question the whole account or at least suppose that the reality could be much more complicated. Furthermore, it is a known fact that Kasravi's ideas and moral principles eventually made him denounce Hafez and Saadi for their moral corruption. Thus, one may at least stop at this point and rethink the whole narrative. However, there are no other sources of these incidents by which one can judge Kasravi's account. The story is told solely by him, which prevents us from any scrutiny over the sources and the exact details of the narrative.

⁶ Ahmad Kasravi, *Qiyami Shiykh Muhammad Khīyābānī*. Edited by Mohammad Ali Homayoun Katouzian. (Tehran: Markaz, 1393 (2014)), 122-123.

⁷ Kasravi, *Qiyami Shiykh Muhammad Khīyābānī*, 122.

⁸ "After a couple of weeks, again, some incidents happened: Mirza Taqi Khan Raf'at, who had joined the Ottomans who invaded Azerbaijan and published the paper Azarabadegan by their order and published writings not in favour of Iran, was sacked from the party by the democrats. Khiyabani brought him again into the party and made him responsible for writing *Tajaddod*. Such defiance by Khiyabani caused annoyance."

Ahmad Kasravi, *Tarīkhi Hijdah Sāliyi Āzarbāyijān (The eighteen year history of Azarbayijan)*. Second Edition. (Tehran: Negah, 1386 (2007)), 678.

What is significant for us here is not whether Kasravi's account is a truthful one or not. The critical point is that his account adds to the complexity in a way that fits our reading of Raf'at's reception. At this point, not only Raf'at's presence fades suddenly on the scene of Iranian history, but we are also facing an abrupt and problematic emergence. None of Raf'at's students and advocates in his time mentioned anything of his emergence on the scene. All the narratives start with a sudden introduction of Raf'at to the literary, political scene. Moreover, the only reference by Kasravi remains vague and obscure due to the animosity between him and Raf'at and the fact that Kasravi does not provide any details or arguments to support his narrative, which is unusual to his writing as compared to other cases. Raf'at's presence on the scene of Iranian history is like a flare that nobody knows how and where it has been ignited and suddenly fades just like the flare leaving everybody in oblivion. This is a problematic spectacle, but this problematic spectacle itself we will use to better understand this flying flare in the Iranian scene of history.

Kasravi's narrative is one of the few sources referring to Raf'at's act of suicide which is disputed for its details. Apart from the fact that some people claimed his murder, the place of his suicide is not clear, and there are two different narratives about it. More importantly, Kasravi's narrative is significant to our writing since it both enlightens and obscures Raf'at's emergence. The beginning of Raf'at's story has never been told clearly and is left vague. Kasravi's account provides us with a step earlier than others, but one can still assume that the earlier stages are cloudy and unclear. Moreover, Kasravi's account itself could be subject to many questions because trusting him could mean rendering not only Raf'at but also Khiyabani as betrayers that do not seem to fit the existing image. The image could have been distorted, so we now face freedom fighters who actually were betrayers. However, even so, the point is that neither Raf'at nor Khiyabani were more betrayers than others or whom they were fighting. In that sense, the meaning of betraying and the betrayed entity itself is the big question. Nevertheless, besides all these details in Kasravi's narrative, Raf'at's presence and emergence on the scene is rendered even more abrupt and complicated than without Kasravi's account.

The fact that the story of Raf'at's life is abrupt and his emergence and fading is obscure is something common in all narratives and could be traced in any account. Interestingly, all these narratives seem like fragments of a story or an image. All of them could exist independently by themselves, but when one tries to trace their preceding moments or their consequences, all of them prove self-contradicting and insufficient. As if everyone has made up a Raf'at or a fragment of Raf'at and offered it as the entire homogenous Raf'at, which may have never existed. One can possibly trust all the narratives believing that Raf'at has changed and evolved over time, which itself proves that not only the narratives are flare-like, abrupt, and fragmentary, but even Raf'at himself as a historical figure was. These narratives provide an entirety which seems to have never existed. Nevertheless, this renders Raf'at's image as a fragmentary abrupt flare-like image that evades being perceived entirely.

Reza Barahani, in his book *Kīmīyā va Khāk* (Alchemy and Earth), in a relatively short passage refers to Raf'at and his "A Literary Rebellion." This reference is not a historical reference shedding light on Raf'at's biography; rather, it is a reading of Raf'at's literary project within a broader scope of Persian literature. "The national literature of a nation needs people, society, earth, and language, more than democracy, justice, and equal rights," writes Barahani.⁹ By this,

⁹ Reza Barahani, *Kīmīyā va Khāk*. (Tehran: Nashre Morghe Amin, 1364 [1985]), 20.

he means to demonstrate the importance of immediate experience within a condition. He insists that any thought, whether rooted in a different culture or the same one, is worthless unless it is smelt in the furnace of domestic experience.¹⁰ He then delineates how this proves the authenticity of specific figures in Persian literature and its political meaning. Furthermore, he defines the exterior not only as western but also as something from the past. He shows that what is right about any idea adopted from a different culture is right about what we have received from the past. It must go through one's immediate experience of his surroundings.

After depicting Jamalzade's stance in his introduction to *Yīkī Būd Yīkī Nabūd*, within the framework of his reading, Barahani gets to Raf'at in his "A Literary Rebellion." After describing Raf'at's ideas in that essay, Barahani finds traces of different intellectual traditions in it. He finds Marx, Engels, and Kierkegaard haunting Raf'at's writing. Furthermore, Barahani grasps something crucial at the heart of Raf'at's writing, to which nobody else paid attention. He rightly demonstrates the anxious feeling and anxious writing in Raf'at's oeuvre, which we will later discuss in chapter 5 (p. 127).

Nevertheless, what is essential in Barahani's writing about Raf'at is that finally, we meet someone trying to grasp the essence of Raf'at's writing. In the scene where Raf'at has flared up and faded abruptly, and no one seems to remember him, Barahani tries delineating the lines that can link him to the lively literary traditions of the time. Barahani is the only one shedding light on Raf'at and his presence in the literary, cultural scene, while he does not even intend to biographically trace this flare of Raf'at's presence. He is not checking the historical details to see where this flare has come from or whither it has gone. Apparently, this flare's only and real reception happens in rereading his oeuvre carefully with new literary insights rather than ploughing his life and biography. The literary forms and their autonomous power once again proved themselves powerful enough to illuminate the reality of things.

Barahani's argumentation about internalizing any experience is critical: "Any foreign or domestic thought, unless it is smelt in the furnace of the internal experience of the society, is worthless and irrelevant."¹¹ Interestingly, these ideas and thoughts are not limited to the foreign thoughts adopted into one's culture. They also include the historical forms and contents or probably the tradition and history in its general sense. Then, the question is how we may perceive this within a moment of history that is hard to grasp and evades like a flying flare. For Barahani, this internalized domestic experience of the history, tradition, and foreign forms of thinking is the incentive to study Raf'at. However, we may take a step further and apply the whole idea to Raf'at as a moment in history that we may try to internalize and perceive. This may weaken Barahani's argumentation since it is based on a perception of tradition and historical forms as entirety. While we know that at least there are moments that evade being perceived in their entirety (e.g., Raf'at). Nevertheless, this reapplication could mean facing a problematic for us which we need to grasp. If we are to settle our relationship with Raf'at, then we need to define our relationship with a flying flare that evades perception as a whole. This questions our entirety as the subjects of perception as well. In this sense, the flying-flare-like nature of Raf'at and his abrupt emergence and sudden fade into oblivion is not limited to himself or his particular figure and moment in history. This flying-flare-ness could be expanded and include ourselves rendering us as flying flare and pushing us into oblivion which is not

¹⁰ Barahani, 19.

¹¹ Barahani, 19.

simply being forgotten in history posthumously or while being alive, rather it means that the whole procedure of perception could be hampered. And if we are to perceive any moment in history, we have to delineate the limits and extents of this flying flare essence of Raḥat and ourselves. Thus, it is worth tracing this flare-like presence in other writings and other moments of history to better understand Raḥat's presence and our own process of perception of history. To do so, it is worth going back into the history and heart of the tradition to find a point to start our quest.

4.2. The Flying Flare: A metaphor from Persian Mystic Literature

Having observed how Raḥat flared up in the cultural scene of Iran, while nobody really knows where he came from and whither he has gone, it is worth observing the flare and the flare-like presence in other scenes. One scene, to begin with, is the classic Persian literature. The one figure to start with is the one we have frequently met: Saadi. In his *Golestan*, he narrates a tale about Jacob, which actually expands itself to any Sufi or dervish. It is a short dialogue as follows:

One asked the man who had lost his son:

“O noble and intelligent old man!
As thou hast smelt the odour of his garment from Egypt
Why has thou not seen him in the well of Canaan?”

He replied:

“My state is that of leaping lightning.
One moment it appears and at another vanishes.
I am sometimes sitting in high heaven.
Sometimes I cannot see the back of my foot.
Were a dervish always to remain in that state
He would not care for the two worlds.”¹²

Here, Jacob plays a part in the dialogue that is probably true about any Sufi. The conversation actually is intended to demonstrate *ḥāl*, which refers to a temporary state of Sufi, in contrast to *maqam*, which is a more stable state. This temporary passing state is rendered in a frame where we see *barq-i jahān* (برق جهان), which Rehatsek here translates as leaping lightning. Edwin Arnold and James Ross translated it as “lightning.”¹³ Francis Gladwin translated it as “darting

¹² Saadi, *The Gulistan or Rose Garden*. Translated by E. Rehatsek. (London, 1964), 120.

"یکی پرسید از آن گم کرده فرزند / که ای روشن گهر پیر خردمند
ز مصرش بوی پیراهن شنیدی / چرا در چاه کنعانش ندیدی
بگفت احوال ما برق جهان است / دمی پیدا و دیگر دم نهان است
گهی بر طارم اعلی نشینم / گهی در پیش پای خود نیینم
اگر درویش در حالی بماندی / سر دست از دو عالم برفشاندی"

Gulistān Sa'dī. Ed. GholamHoseyn Yusefi. (Tehran: Kharazmi, 1389 (2010)), 90.

¹³ Saadi, *The Gulistan (Being the Rose-Garden of Shaikh Sa'di)*. Translated in prose and verse by Sir Edwin Arnold. (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1899), 96-97.

Saadi, *Sadi: Gulistan or Flower-Garden*. Translated by James Ross. (London: Walter Scott), 133-134.

lightning.”¹⁴ Edward B. Eastwick translated it as “heaven's flashing light.”¹⁵ Each of these translations has tried to cast some semantic nuances of the phrase, but none can claim perfection.

The term *barq* (برق) principally denotes lightning, a phenomenon happening in the atmosphere in the clouds. It also indicates electricity and electrical power. However, in classic Persian literature, it has been used on different occasions, mostly in a metaphorical sense. Aside from that, it has a broader scope of significance, including sparkle, light, etc. The term *jahān* (جهان) is rooted in the stem *jahīdan* (جهیدن), meaning to leap, to jump, and to flare. This is also a homograph which can also mean the world or the cosmos. The phrase *barq-i jahān* has been used for the first time by Saadi. The rest of the examples all date after Saadi's time.¹⁶ This could suggest that Saadi probably coined the phrase or used it under the influence of a source of which we are not aware yet. However, there is an important instance that can shed light on the semantic structure of this phrase. There is a verse by Asadi Tusi in his *GarshāspNāmi* which is linguistically crucial to this study.¹⁷ In this verse, the adjective *jahān* is used for another noun *dirakhsh* (درخش). The term *dirakhsh* is rooted in *dirakhshīdan*, meaning to shine, to flare. Having these in mind, one can be less sure to translate *barq* in Saadi's phrase to lightning. It is better to remember that there is a sense that it can mean light or flare. Moreover, there is a sense of suddenness in a flare that matches the original term here. Thus, we may use the term flare as the translation. We may translate it as a leaping flare or a flying flare and at the same time remember all these semantic nuances.

Getting away from the vocable, we may approach the meaning now. Jacob describes his state as a leaping flare that suddenly appears and vanishes. This sudden appearance and vanish are interpreted as the times when one is at the high of his understanding and presence and the time that is totally fragile and weak. Interestingly, Jacob mentions that if a dervish were to remain in such a high state for ever, he would not care about two worlds meaning that he would not be earthly anymore. Till one is a material earthly being, one cannot remain in that state. All Jacob's description seems to symbolically represent Raf'at's presence in the cultural scene. Firstly, it is a sudden appearance and a sudden vanish. Nobody knows where he has come from or whither he goes, just as nobody knows about lightning. Moreover, this appearance and vanish are paralleled with the state of one's being. There is a duality of being at high and low in a weak, fragile position which also fits Raf'at's biography as far as we have observed. More

¹⁴ Saadi, *The Gulistan or Rose Garden*. Translated by: Francis Gladwin. (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1865), 178.

¹⁵ Saadi, *The Gulistan; or, Rose-Garden*. Translated by Edward B. Eastwick. Second Edition. (London: Trubner & Co., Ludgate Hill, 1880), 82.

¹⁶ “طلب کردند مرد کاردان را / کجا بینی دگر برق جهان را” (They asked for the professional man / where would you see the *barq-i jahān* again) Saadi, *Kullīyāt Sa'ādī*. Ed. MohammadAli Forughī. (Tehran: AmirKabir, 1392 (2013)), 853.

“میفند عکس جمالش دم به دم بر جان ما / ما بره دنبال این برق جهان افتاده ایم” (The image of his beauty constantly reflects on our soul / we are on the way looking for this *barq-i jahān*) Fiyz Kāshānī *Kullīyāt Ash'ār*. Ed. Mohammad Peyman. (Tehran: Sanai, 1366 [1988]), 91.

“فلک ز قوس و قزح بر هوا کشیده کمان / هوا ز برق جهان برجهان گشاده کمین” (The heavens have nocked the arrow by the rainbow / the atmosphere with the *barq-i jahān* is in ambush) Salmān Sāvujī, *Dīvān Salmān Sāvujī*. Ed. Abulghasem Halat. (Tehran: Ma, 1371 [1993]), 278.

“یاران به روز حادثه برق جهان شوند / چون یار شد جهان همگی مهربان شوند” (The peers will become like *barq-i jahān* in the case of incidents / if the world is in your favour everyone becomes kind). Interestingly, this form is found in only one of the manuscripts. The rest have “yār-i jahān.” urfī Shīrāzī, *Kullīyāt-i urfī Shīrāzī*, Edited by Mohammad Valiulhaq Ansari, (Tehran: University of Tehran, 1378 [1999]), 1: 586.

¹⁷ “به پیش اندر آمد یکی تند ببر / جهان چون درخش و خروشان چو ابر” (A fast tiger came close by / leaping like lightning and roaring like clouds) Asadī Tūsī, *Garshāsp Nāma*. Ed. Habib Yaghmai. (Tehran: Tahuri, 1354 [1976]), 76.

importantly, when everything is materialized and perceived within an earthly frame, one cannot remain in that high condition. It is the material earthly human part of everyone to oscillate between these two levels or poles. Raf'at's sudden appearance, his sudden vanish, and his accusations of betrayal are all facts that make it material and human. He could not have remained in one state permanently. He could not always exist in the wholesome progressive narrative of Ariyanpour or in the role of betrayer depicted by Kasravi. Staying in either of these narratives means not being earthly or human. Since we are studying the material history, then this is disproved already. His presence and life are like a flying flare; *barq-i jahān*. By activating this mystic metaphor once again in the literary scene of Iran, we may charge it with political meaning. Furthermore, this could also describe some abrupt acts and events in the Iranian political scene. Here it can demonstrate the strange fact that one of the most radical freedom fighters, Raf'at, is accused of betrayal. However, it can be used on other occasions to understand all those abrupt, sudden, and strange happenings in post-constitutional Iran. A lightning or a flare have their material roots and causes, which lets us formulate them and forecast them to some extent. But at the same time, even though we can study their material cause, they have a sort of autonomy and freedom to emerge and fade which is abrupt and could never be precisely predicted. This makes the metaphor worthy to our study since it can encapsulate different notions and ideas in our reading. It can depict the materiality of the historical presence while it can charge it with a theological power for a better perception of history as such. While it delineates the subtle complexities of a historical presence of a figure (here Raf'at), it can fully demonstrate the autonomy of the forms of the superstructure and how they can be abrupt, sudden, and unforeseen while their material cause is not neglected.

Having freshly observed this flying flare, it is worth remembering Raf'at in "A Literary Rebellion," where he quoted Abdu'l-Baha.¹⁸ The quotation's phrasing was almost the same as the one reported in other sources by Abdu'l-Baha. However, there was a subtle difference in wording. In other sources, there was the phrase "emitted ray" (شعاع ساطعه), while in Raf'at's writing, the term "to flare up" (برجھیدن) was used. In the context of our study on the leaping lightning or the flying flare, this may now acquire new meanings. It is not indeed suggested that Raf'at chose this term so it can match the idea of Saadi's Jacob or our later study of his presence on the cultural scene. However, this shows the significance and relevancy of the metaphor that we developed to describe Raf'at's presence. This means that our reading is relevant enough and capturing something essential in the core of Raf'at's writing that it can be widely used in our reading of Raf'at. It seems as if Raf'at himself was trying to capture a flying flare within the immediate condition of his own life. The quest to grasp and capture a flying flare seems to have happened in Raf'at's writing as well. Now we are trying to capture a flying flare (in this case, Raf'at). However, as we saw earlier, apparently, the effort to grasp a flying flare is inherent in any perception of material history. A particular manifestation of this is found in Raf'at's writing, while this specific manifestation and the quality of Raf'at's historical presence force us to do the same thing. It seems that history could only be understood as the moments flare up, and one has to find a way to capture those flaring moments.

Now that we have seen the metaphor flying flare (برق جهان) proven itself serious enough to describe the whole scene and specifically Raf'at's presence, we may go further and see how this metaphor can relate Raf'at's presence to other conditions and texts. This is the time to trace this image in different scenes and possibly detect linkages among them. The idea of a leaping

¹⁸ See subchapter 2.4 (p. 63).

lightning or a flying flare, a sudden appearance and vanish on the scene. By tracing this image, we may get to new scenes which can let us better understand Raf'at's presence on the Iranian scene.

4.3. The Same Metaphor in the Philosophy of History: Walter Benjamin

The image of the leaping lightning, the flying flare, and the sparkle could also be investigated in other scenes. One critical locus is the general meaning of this metaphor to the philosophy of history. This could be studied in one of the influential writings on the philosophy of history by Walter Benjamin. Benjamin, in one of his best-known writings titled *Theses on the Philosophy of History* or *On the Concept of History*, deals with this topic in a unique way. This was Benjamin's last major work before trying to flee to Spain from the Nazis and finally committing suicide. His materialist approach toward history is accompanied by a profound understanding of theology and Marxism, which enabled him to critically study historicism in a unique way.

This unique approach which encapsulates historical materialism and theology for a critical understanding of history, is best represented in the well-known image of the Turk at the beginning of Benjamin's writing. The puppet is introduced as historical materialism by Benjamin. This puppet can win any match if it uses the help of theology which, according to Benjamin, is nowadays wizened and must be kept out of sight. Remembering a long, rich tradition of studies on history, materialism, and theology in the writings of Hegel, Schlegel, Feuerbach, Marx, and many others, one can see that this tricky image can function somewhat as a point where finally one decides to envisage a philosophical frame, within which it is possible to theologically understand the historical materialism, and at the same time bring all the supposedly superstructural forms of theology into materialist frame and reactivate them within the new scope. This is possibly one of the most significant points of studying history, which deserves a more profound scrutiny.

The fifth fragment of Benjamin's writing delineates the whole problematic around Raf'at and his presence on the historical scene. "The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again."¹⁹ Interestingly, our image is emerging here as well: an image flashing up. However, the most significant point in this passage is "the instant when something can be recognized." This makes the ground to materialistically define the perception of a historical moment or the presence of a historical figure. All the occasions where we observed stories and narratives about the presence of Raf'at, which in fact controversially opposed each other, are the instants that Raf'at's image could be *recognized*. This recognition is due to different material causes. Kasravi's animosity is an actual material ground for recognizing Raf'at in the image of a traitor. Ariyanpour's selective narrative of an innovative young poet is materially caused by the fact that he was Raf'at's disciple and advocating the new literary forms. Even later, recognition of Raf'at by Pan-Turks is the sign of the unfortunate material condition that makes them remeet and recognize Raf'at in order to claim ownership of historical figures. Even the very writing of the present dissertation is itself an instant to recognize something from the past. The material condition of it is new student life and dependence on producing academic writings.

¹⁹ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*. Translated by Harry Zohn. Edited with an Introduction by Hannah Arendt. (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 255.

In the rest of this fragment, Benjamin describes the significance of the materiality of this instance, which lets us better understand it. He points out that “every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.”²⁰ We may pause here and remember Barahani’s argument about the process of internalizing foreign and domestic thoughts and traditions. For Barahani, any form and content must be smelt in the furnace of internal domestic experience. The same is present in Benjamin’s words. For him, these forms and contents must be the concern of the present so they won’t disappear. This means that if the material conditions of the present do not require a recognition of a past moment, it will be threatened to disappear forever. Or, in Barahani’s words, if the process of smelling in the furnace of immediate experience is absent, then the whole experience is vain and won’t function in the new atmosphere. This could not be soothed by the sincerity of a historian bringing us good tidings, for if the material condition does not exist, the words from his mouth will disappear in the void.²¹ In the case of Raf‘at, the materiality of all those conditions of recognition is what really counts. The material condition of Kasravi’s presence on the scene was disturbed, making it possible for Raf‘at’s image to get out of the traitor frame. The partial success of Ariyanpour’s condition of presence made it possible that the image he presented stayed in the cultural atmosphere for a long time. The Pan-Turk recognition is up to question as their own presence is. Their embracement of Raf‘at is like holding something you want to possess in your arms while falling or not being sure you can keep yourself. If they fall, their Raf‘at will fall. If they succeed, they will establish their new Raf‘at. The same goes with this writing. The so-called academic scientific philological image presented here only depends on the vitality of the economy of academic condition.

Moreover, since all the images of Raf‘at’s recognition have changed and developed a lot, meaning that their material condition of existence has changed and evolved, this means that at each instant, another narrative has been forgotten and disappeared. This could also be the reason for the contradicting images of Raf‘at, none of which can stand a long duration of time. All these images are like flying flares not only because any moment is like that, also because this specific moment was subject to different instants of recognition. Meaning that the moments of recognition of a past moment are themselves historical moments subject to later historical recognition. Thus, any recognition of the past moment actually redefines it, and in fact, plays a part in the existence of that past moment by bringing its own presence in the process. Like blowing a part of one’s soul in a form. As this reoccurs, the form is filled with different souls, so finally, it won’t be possible to distinguish between the parts. They all stand as one entity. As it is the case with the reading of Raf‘at. With each reading, a new Raf‘at is introduced, and there won’t be any original Raf‘at. He is charged with all those readings, no matter how they perceived him: betrayer, rebel, genius, etc. One should not forget the fact that Raf‘at himself disappears from the scene, and this makes any future conjuring a problematic. It is a problematic on different levels. First, it must have settled itself materially to be an instant of recognition. Second, it needs to relate itself to a series of recognitions and oblivions, like trying to grasp a flying flare.

Leopold von Ranke, in the preface to his book *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Nations from 1494-1514*, writes: “To history has been assigned the office of judging the past, of instructing the present for the benefit of future ages. To such high offices this work does not

²⁰ Benjamin, 255.

²¹ Benjamin, 255.

aspire: It wants only to show what actually happened (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*).”²² The idea of showing *what actually happened* is interpreted on different occasions by many thinkers. As we already observed, it is impossible to claim so since each recognition/reading of a historical moment remakes it and blows a soul into it, rendering it as an ever-changing form that is impossible to recreate its original state. Benjamin, in the sixth fragment, goes against this notion (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*) and criticizes such an understanding of history. Interestingly, his criticism turns out to have something to do with our image of the flying flare. For Benjamin, historically articulating the past is not, as Ranke believes, to recognize it the way it was. “It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger,” writes Benjamin.²³ Again we encounter the image of a memory flashing up like a flare. It seems as if the past is always a flare or sparkle in danger, and there are certain instants to recognize them or seize hold of them. Thus, in the case of Raf‘at’s memory, digging up the image for finding the way it really was is not the proper articulation. By “the way it really was,” I mean following any narrative to prove one true, whether he was a traitor or a hero or neither. As something from the past in history, it is a memory that must be grasped and recognized in moments of danger. The moment of danger, in this case, could be traced to some instances. The first moment of danger is probably Raf‘at’s presence on the scene and his act of suicide and consequently fading out. It is a moment of danger, not simply because he committed suicide. Rather, because of the material condition which led to that point. Another moment of danger could be the instant where he is vehemently attacked from different directions by different parties and schools. More importantly, the moments of danger are the ones where there is a claim of representation and recognition of his image in the writings of Kasravi, Ariyanpour, or later Pan-Turks. These are the actual moments of danger. These are the actual moments of danger since they seem to be establishing their victorious material condition of such recognition. The narratives that have been established or are establishing themselves are the real danger since they are being victorious in the material condition of the present, which means that they are part of the real danger of an ever-victorious enemy, which is the ruling class and its economic condition.

Interestingly, Benjamin believes that historical materialism “wishes to retain which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger.”²⁴ Therefore, it is not odd to claim that this reading is doing its best to establish a materialist approach to this particular instant of history. What we have done and will do is try to retain that image that has *unexpectedly* appeared to us in those moments of danger. Benjamin points out that such danger affects not only the tradition but also its receivers, namely us at the moment of reading. The danger is to become the tool of the ruling class. The ruling class changes during the time, and each moment of danger is a moment of danger because of a particular ruling class that has its own economic condition and ideology. In the case of Kasravi, it is some uncertain yet not successful idea of pure nationalism. In the case of Ariyanpour, it is the modernist idea of representation of a hero for the cultural heritage. In the case of Pan-Turks, it is the claim of new states and independence and claiming ethnic figures. Finally, the danger to our moment is

²² Leopold von Ranke, “Preface: History of Latin and Germanic Nations from 1494-1514,” in Fritz Stern, *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*, (Macmillan Education, 2015), 57.

²³ Benjamin, 255.

²⁴ Benjamin, 255.

falling under the economy of the capitalist academy. The danger is present in all these moments in different shapes and forms.

“In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to power it,” writes Benjamin.²⁵ If this danger is affecting the tradition and its receivers, no matter if we are successful in our reading, we must be reminded of Raḡat himself in “A Literary Rebellion,” where he was vehemently claiming that by his rebellion he believes redeeming not only himself and other individuals but also the tradition and the classic figures of literature and tradition. This is interesting since we face the same insight that Benjamin taught us, in the instant of history which we are studying. The materialist insight itself seems to have flared up like a flying flare in a moment of history, probably an actual moment of danger.

Benjamin, in an ingenious manner, concludes his passage: “Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.”²⁶ There is a chance to fan the spark of hope in such a dangerous moment and a leaping condition. And this is by remembering that no one is safe, even the dead, since the enemy is yet victorious. The enemy is still victorious for the fact that the material condition of its existence still exists, no matter how the form and appearance of its structure and the ruling class change. In other words, this enemy (the Antichrist) is this modern condition, the capitalist economy, or any apparatus it employs. This includes those trying to represent a certain sure image and recognition. Those enemies must be fought no matter what. Although the scrutiny over the past in the writings and resources itself could be proven material, we must not forget that the real fight happens on the material scene of which we must not lose track.²⁷ Having this in mind, we must remember that since our success to wrest away from conformism is at stake, we may turn ourselves to the Antichrist. This is the moment we must remember Nietzsche while we fight the monsters, not to become one.

Benjamin’s insight of historical materialism with its sparkles and flares flashing up and lighting the scene can provide us with an insight about our own reading and how to study a particular historical moment, namely Raḡat’s presence in Iranian history. Benjamin, in the seventeenth fragment, critically targets universal history. He describes its method as additive. “It musters a mass of data to fill the homogenous, empty time.”²⁸ On the other hand, materialistic historiography is not only engaged with the flow of the thoughts but also their arrest. Interestingly, the arrest of the thoughts in the moments of danger, which seem to disturb our instant of recognition, is the only locus to adhere since it is the only locus for materialist reading of history to emerge. This flow of thoughts could be interpreted as the flow of a homogenous image of Raḡat in contrast to a radically contradicting one that even contradicts itself. This is also the flow of the homogenous readings of Kasravi, Ariyanpour, Pan-Turks, and others which completely fit an additive method of historicism. The arrest of such readings, the instants that one can go against the flow, is best described by Benjamin himself: “Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it

²⁵ Benjamin, 255.

²⁶ Benjamin, 255.

²⁷ In the next section, we will observe this real fight and discussion, also Raḡat’s insistence on the discussion in that frame and the meaning it may have to our reading.

²⁸ Benjamin, 262.

crystallizes into a monad. A historical *materialist* approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad.”²⁹ The configuration pregnant with tension, in our case, is Rafa’at’s presence on the scene, which momentarily flares as a flare and its remembrance is a material fight over claiming the spoils that “fall to the victor” and according to the traditional practice are “carried along in the processions.” Each of the readings of Rafa’at’s presence are an attempt to claim that spoil to carry it in processions of victory. The fact that still there is a chance to contemplate over this presence, is because those victors and victories contradicted each other, which has allowed us to recognize the sign of a Messianic cessation of happenings in them. For Benjamin, this sign is also a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. The oppressed past, in our case, is different aspects of Rafa’at’s figure, which are left in the dark by each party and their readings.

Now that we have observed the image of the flare on different occasions of our reading and finally in the philosophical treatment of history by Benjamin, it is worth taking a short glimpse into the Messianic nature of such an image and seeing how it can relate itself to our reading and to the object of our study: Rafa’at.

4.4. Doomed Messiah: How the Catastrophe of the Titanic Reoccurs

In the quest for the image of a flying flare in the philosophy of history, we previously encountered Benjamin’s formulation of “Messianic cessation of happenings” as “a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past.”³⁰ Our position as the recognizers of Rafa’at’s position in the past, or Rafa’at’s position as the recognizer of a past, both could be treated as a revolutionary chance as long as they might fight for an oppressed past. Representing and retelling the victorious narratives could never be revolutionary since they are done within the material conditions of those successful narratives: the material condition of the ruling class, the ever-victorious enemy, or the Antichrist. This is the Messianic cessation of happenings since any revolution could arrest the flow of the events. Moreover, the Messianic nature of this cessation of happenings implies unexpectedness which must indeed affect the recognizer as well.

This is well understood by Fredric Jameson in “Marx’s Purloined Letter.” The article is meant to criticize Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, but in the end, deals with some profound topics in the Marxist tradition. When he gets to Benjamin and the idea of redemption and the linear idea of future, he best delineates Benjamin’s position on the essence of revolution or namely the Messianic cessation of happenings: “...as in Proust whatever is to happen, it will assuredly not be what we can imagine or predict. In this sense, Benjamin had a more historically vivid feeling for how revolutions actually happen, unexpected by anyone, even their organizers.”³¹ Previously, we observed the characteristics of the flying flare or the leaping lightning. We saw that they act to some extent autonomously, although their material condition is settled. On the first level, the same thing is present here. The revolution manifests itself like the flying flare or the leaping lightning, which can surprise its organizers. This could be thought of as the material

²⁹ Benjamin, 262-263.

³⁰ Benjamin, 263.

³¹ Fredric Jameson, “Marx’s Purloined Letter.” In *Ghostly Demarcations*. Edited by Michael Sprinker, (Verso, 2008), 63.

condition of revolution since it results from the economic condition which is defined by the ruling class.

The unexpectedness of a revolution or the Messianic cessation of happenings is linked to the fact that the present could be rendered Messianic and unforeseen. Jameson, when interpreting the last thesis of Benjamin, writes: "This is the notion of the non-announced, the turning of a corner in which an altogether different present happens, which was not foreseen."³² Interestingly, Messiah can render the present as something pregnant with tensions and unforeseen happenings. There seems to be a cessation in the heart of the present time itself. Benjamin himself also nicely formulated this in the second thesis as "a weak Messianic power" since, like any other generation, our coming was expected. We are endowed with this weak Messianic power, and it is important that the past has a claim to this power.

Therefore, the recognition of an instant in the past in the moment of danger seems as the advent of the Messiah or the redeemer. In this sense, a recognition of a past in the moment of danger trying to take it out of the hands of the victorious enemy renders us as the recognizers, as the Messiah, or the redeemer which matches our weak Messianic power. This state explains the unexpectedness and cessation of the happenings. In the case of Raf'at, the flying-flare-like nature of his presence could be attributed to this Messianic image. If so, utmost he can be perceived as a doomed defeated Messiah. A Messiah that could not redeem even himself. The same applies to us recognizing the moment Raf'at has lived in, for indeed, we have not yet redeemed anything in this life.

Furthermore, the state of being a doomed defeated Messiah seems to have with itself a sort of power which, despite being defeated, still can shed light on some corners of history for our better understanding. We may call this power the weak Antichristic power. Let us remember Raf'at and his passage on the Titanic, where it was impossible to understand whether he is craving the Titanic, predicting it after its happening, or explaining it. Now, we may feel that there was a weak Antichristic power in him, which let him foretell the reoccurrence of the disaster. Our weak Messianic power has not yet won any battle, and still, the enemy has not ceased to be victorious. However, in each loss, there is a power to foretell the disaster. The weak Messianic power enables one to recognize the future disaster as well as the past moment in danger. Apparently, our weak Messianic power could not redeem us, but our weak Antichristic power may let us foretell the disasters to come and recognize the disaster we are stuck in.

This is a fundamental idea that such a materialistic attitude could possibly provide us with insights about the coming disaster or even the unexpected revolution that may flare up in the scene. This is well understood in Jameson's reading of Perry Anderson in an excellent theoretic manner:

Perry Anderson has some suggestive remarks about what constitutes the unexpectedness of revolution as such when he distinguishes between an unforeseen mutation or crisis in the base, in production, and the sudden spark generated by its contact with a specific mentality in the superstructure. Both of those however can exist for long periods in unrelated states: neither is fruitful of eventness (as Heidegger might say) in and of itself; what is unpredictable is precisely the spark that flies between these two sealed and as it

³² Jameson, 62.

were unrelated areas. This helps us ‘think’ the messianic moment, the future event, in a somewhat more articulated way, it being understood that what the very concept of the messianic above all wishes to warn us against is that the event cannot be thought in the ordinary meaning of that word...³³

This passage includes some fantastic articulation of the ideas we have already observed and great theoretical insights to encapsulate our entire reading. Firstly, in this reading of the image of the flare and the Messianic unexpectedness of the events, something shows up which we partially met before in other topics: the autonomy of the form. Interestingly the sudden spark is generated with substructures contact with a specific mentality in superstructure or what we call the form or the form as it appears in the superstructure. This means that the forms of the superstructure, although they are determined by the substructure, they have a certain autonomy to affect the events as profound as related to base and production. It is like the image of the leaping lightning or the flying flare, that the material condition (the substructure, or the condition for a cloud to produce lightning) is determined in the material level, while there is a sort of autonomy to the lightning (forms of the superstructure) when and how to happen and manifest themselves that we can never predict even if we had carefully studied the material condition. Yet there seems to be something decided by the forms (the lightning) itself. This seems like a weak Messianic power in the superstructure forms, giving them certain autonomy.

Furthermore, the sudden spark is the result of such contact and friction, or partly the autonomous power of forms. It seems that the flying flare is present in any critical moment of understanding of history. More importantly, this sudden spark is unpredictable due to the fact that the two contacting structures whose friction causes the sparkle can stay unrelated for some time. The moment of friction and contact is unpredictable, leaving the time with a Messianic power in it. This Messianic power, in this sense, exists both in the substructure and the superstructure. In this sense, the Messiah exists in the heart of the condition and the time, and in the case of Raʿat, the doomed Messiah seems to be lurking in the heart of the moment. This can also mean that while the doomed Messiah is lurking around, the weak Antichristic power may enable us to recognize our condition and consequently a moment in the past. And in all these moments, which actually are the moments of the danger, there is always a chance for the sparkle, for a flying flare to happen on the scene, as well as a chance for Antichrist in any moment to win a battle and cause a disaster. That could be the reason why Raʿat’s presence constantly emits indications of disaster. An already happened disaster (whether the Titanic or the treason) or a disaster to come (establishment of the capitalist economy or mass murder).

Therefore, one cannot quickly determine where Raʿat has come from and whither he goes on the scene of history, but can be sure about the very essence of such appearance and fading. The flying flare in any moment of history is just a chance for Messiah or Antichrist to be victors. The Messiah is yet to come and has not been totally successful in battles, though the Antichrist has proved itself victorious in many battles and caused the disaster. However, these sparkles are the result of the fight between these two powers in history, and the flying flare could be the sparkle of the clash of swords and armours. Any instant of recognition of a past moment is like trying to grasp that flying flare, or that sparkle, in the hope of the advent of Messiah and conclusion of history or at least enemy’s stop in being victorious. That time has not come yet, meaning we are left with the recognition of the flying flares on the historical scene, while in

³³ Jameson, 63.

fact, we are ourselves flying flares. We will be established lights if we are the real Antichrist, the real enemy, the advocator of the economic condition. If not, then we start to become a flare with weak Messianic power.

Raf'at's problematic presence on the historical scene is essential in the sense that one can grasp a flying flare in it, not in the sense that one may biographically demonstrate the reality as it was. The reality as it was faded in the oblivion and was represented homogeneously by the enemy or those not aware of the enemy. This is the moment to understand such problematic presence in a way to render it more radical, so it could not be homogeneously represented and recognized anymore. In such conditions, there is no other way than writing fragments of recognition. The fragmentary writing is at the heart of such an understanding of history. Interestingly, Raf'at himself used to write in a fragmentary manner. Writing in a position of a flare, or writing about a flare, is only possible within fragments since the flare itself seizes to exist continuously. Such writing can never present itself as a whole and an entirety. The doomed flares with their Messianic power are also doomed to manifest themselves in fragments. And the fundamental paradox occurs when one tries to make a whole of such fragmentary essence of a study in academic writing. Poor doomed defeated, weak Messiahs we are.

In the next chapter, we will meet this *Doomed Messiah* once again. However, for now, we will try to find a relation between this Messianic flare-like image of our reading with the materiality of Raf'at's presence and his idealistic insistence on the concept of discussion. We will try to find a materialistic justification to fit it on our reading of the flying flare.

4.5. The Forgotten Discussion: Re-reading Raf'at's Insistence on the Discussion

In such a context that we have observed battles and the sparkles of swords and armours, between a yet always victorious enemy and the weak Messianic power of recognizers of the moment of danger, it may be strange to talk about the discussion. The battle requires actual material power to win, and a discussion with Antichrist could never make us win. Rather it is the Antichrist who can win a discussion since he has proved his mastery in language and rhetoric long before.

However, we may approach the idea of discussion from an angle where we can find its relation to this Messianic flare-like understanding of history and to Raf'at's position and manifestation on the historical scene.

Remembering the image of the flying flare and how it represents the whole condition of Raf'at's presence, then one may ask what it is to discuss with a flare or a lightning. Furthermore, how are the conditions and characteristics of such a dispute? In a surrealistic image, one can imagine that a discussion with a flare starts with a shock on the other party's side. This shock then evolves into a reaction to the flare and what it has put to light by its presence. Then, the relationship between the other party and what has stepped into the light determines the characteristics of this discussion. The newly emerged sight may either support the claim of the existing condition or contradict it. Thus, depending on the relation of the party observing the flare with the existing material condition, its reaction to flare and newly emerge sight is shaped.

Then, there could be four possible relationships, which we will go through one by one. (1) If the observer of the flare favours the existing condition, then the newly emerged sight contradicting the status quo would make the observer fight the flare and its light. As a result, when the flare has vanished, the observer will keep it dark, silent, and unspoken. (2) If the newly emerged sight does not contradict the status quo, then it would be declared as a cultural heritage with a curatorial approach to holster the existing ideology. (3) If the observer does not favour the existing condition and the newly emerged sight does not contradict the status quo, then nothing has changed for the observer as if the flare is not there. These two possibilities render the flare meaningless, thus making it void of the properties of the flare as we observed. (4) The last is when the newly emerged sight contradicts the status quo. In this situation, it functions as a sparkle of the hope or the Messiah, which must be seized to gain an opportunity of redemption. The flare in this condition works as the real radical instance in the past in a moment of danger with a Messianic power for the oppressed observer to take advantage of.

As we observed, the flare has its essential characteristic only if the newly emerged sight contradicts the status quo or the existing ideology. Thus the whole picture could be reduced to two possibilities that differ due to the observers' affiliation in the condition. Then we may examine the nature of the discussion in these two conditions.

The scheme where the observer does not favour the existing material condition and ideology takes us to the image of the flare in the Benjamin's writing. The flare, the newly emerged sight and the messianic power in it are the instant of history in the moment of danger which need to be recognized by the observer in order to extract its Messianic power in the hope of redemption. In such a scheme, the dialogue is something beyond a discussion. First, it is the ecstasy of the advent of Messiah or a weak Messianic power in a moment. The ritual following this advent is the exploitation of the forces inherent in the flare to arm the present with redemptive power. Here, the dialogue is not the confrontation of adverse opposing ideas. It is a dialectical relation between two forces joining each other. Since the forces have their material limit, there is a limit to this ritual of joining forces awaiting the end. The end is where the flare fades away. If the observer has not conquered (it has not drastically changed the material condition), the observer is left within a doomed state of despair, which in the optimistic scenario will wait for the advent of Messiah or another sparkle of Messianic advent to flare up. This again brings the whole scheme to the Benjaminian image where the observer needs to recognize the flaring moment which he himself has experienced this time: the moment which is in danger of fading into oblivion or being claimed in the procession of the victor and Antichrist as cultural heritage.

The second scheme is where we can detect the discussion or the dialogue in the sense of confrontation of two adverse ideas. If the observer advocates the existing material condition and ideology, then it will be shocked by the presence of the flare and its emergence. This shock will result in different strategies based on the existing condition and the flare's power and the organization of opposing forces. The general strategy in such a case must be an attempt to put the flare and the newly emerged sight into darkness and silence. However, if the flare and the newly emerged sight are empowered by the existing forces opposing the status quo, then the struggle will begin. This battle would continue to exist on two different levels. The crucial, fundamental level is the material level, where the forces will fight to determine the victor. On the other level, the battle will get a shape of a dialogue where seemingly two adverse ideas collide and meet each other in a cultural/intellectual battle. This intellectual battle is justified as long as the material battle is not determined in a final victory. For if the victor is determined,

the other party will cease to exist, meaning there won't be any more discussion. Since the enemy (the Antichrist), as Benjamin puts it, has not yet seized to be victorious, this is the case for all the experienced flares till now. Thus, the end is where the flare fades away, both because its forces have come to an end because of their material limit, and also because the observer – the advocators of the material condition – has exhausted its forces resulting in an earlier fade. Then, when the flare is faded, it is time for two new strategies to play their roles. If the flare, the newly emerged sight, and the opposing forces were powerful enough to resist being plundered, the oblivion would take over. The Antichristic silence will render the flare unspeakable as long as it has the capacity to do so. Suppose the flare, the newly emerged sight, and the opposing forces are not powerful enough to resist or are later exhausted to the point that they can't resist. In that case, the victor (observer) will recognize this past moment for its own benefit and render it as a national historical past or a cultural heritage fit for museums and curatorial approaches.

Therefore, as we observed, the discussion only happens when the observer advocates the existing material condition. In this sense, the discussion is the confrontation of antagonistic adverse opinions. Since it is based on a battle in the material condition, it lasts as long as one party ceases to materially exist (fade away, get killed, censored, etc.). Then, it is no surprise when we face the different forces of post-constitutional Iran engaging in discussions and disputes with Raf'at and suddenly becoming silent and letting the discussion rot in oblivion. That is due to the fact that Raf'at and his political project cease to exist materially, or better to say, they lose the battle, and their corpse is cleared away from the scene. It is as if Raf'at's material presence and power and body were the reason for the other parties to react. There is nothing in the realm of ideas. All is the struggle in the material ground, and the realm of ideas is a distorted mimicry during the battle of actual bodies.

With these in mind, it is worth getting back to Raf'at and his insistence on the discussion and its merits. This time it may seem very odd that we face such an idea and scenery in his writing. He must have been very naïve to insist on such an idea of discussion, or maybe we can plough this ground to find another meaning to this insistence. We may remember that on our quest to find the source of the phrase “the sparkle of truth flares from the collision of ideas” in “A Literary Rebellion,” we first came across John Stuart Mill. In his treatise *On Liberty*, he had a passage with the almost same idea. “It is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied.”³⁴ When recapitulating his arguments in the second chapter, “Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion,” he writes:

First, if any opinion is compelled to silence, that opinion may, for aught we can certainly know, be true. To deny this is to assume our own infallibility.

Secondly, though the silenced opinion be an error, it may, and very commonly does, contain a portion of truth; and since the general or prevailing opinion on any object is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied.

Thirdly, even if the received opinion be not only true, but the whole truth; unless it is suffered to be, and actually is, vigorously and earnestly contested, it will, by most of those who receive it, be held in the manner of a prejudice, with little comprehension or

³⁴ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859), 95.

feeling of its rational grounds. And not only this, but, fourthly, the meaning of the doctrine itself will be in danger of being lost, or enfeebled, and deprived of its vital effect on the character and conduct: the dogma becoming a mere formal profession, inefficacious for good, but cumbering the ground, and preventing the growth of any real and heartfelt conviction, from reason or personal experience.³⁵

Reading Mill's ideas on this makes one think that he is contemplating over the essence of truth and discussion thereof, without any historical particularity. However, when talking about *compelling* an idea into silence, it is impossible to try to grasp the universal. This is accidental and particular. Thus Mill's scheme at least does not seem to fit our reading. Or better to say, it stands at some point that seems to be advocating the status quo. Not surprising for his position. This approach appears to be unfit for grasping the flare-like discussion, since the flying flare is historically particular. This makes us come up with some questions. What if the body containing a particular opinion is compelled into silence? And this is a valid question for Mill, since he has depicted his opinion over the mastery of material condition over the ideas where he wrote: "despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians."³⁶ This clearly means that he believes in some eternal truths which do not need to be contested or collide with any other (barbaric) opinion so the truth will emerge. What is crucial in Mill's formulation of the collision of ideas is that if there is a war between the yet victorious enemy and another party, one must take sides. It is not possible to render this as each having a share of truth, for your material existence depends on the victory of one of them.

Lacking any historical particularity, Mill finds the non-contested opinions as prejudices with little comprehension. However, paying attention to the material ground, this seems a fallacy. Remembering Sir John Harrington's famous epigram: "Treason doth never prosper, what's the reason? / For if it prosper, none dare call it Treason,"³⁷ we may judge Mill's argumentation the same way. While the existing material condition of an opinion has not ceased to be victorious, it is a truth, and its material defeat may render it as prejudice. Finally, one may deduce that the whole notion of truth and collision of opinions in a discussion are fit for a noble gathering in London and a discussion among the ladies and gentlemen of the upper class, perhaps with the presence of some lowborn and commons. It is not a proper, universal description of the real collision of bodies and ideas in a material battle.

If we turn back to Raf'at's quotation and its insistence on the discussion, we may find ourselves trapped in a paradox of our own reading. If, in any sort, Raf'at's insistence on the discussion could fall into a scheme like the one that Mill has developed, then it would render him as the advocator of the status quo as we previously saw in our formulation of discussion with flare. Then, it is paradoxical that first, Raf'at tries to fight the status quo while he is unconsciously in his method defending it. Second, we have been trying to recognize a moment of danger, which now appears not to be in danger and probably part of the danger itself. The only fact that may let us desperately look for a way out of this is that Raf'at's presence on the scene of Iranian politics and culture was really flare-like and obscure to the point that one cannot easily deem it as the prevailing ideology. Moreover, the tragic end of his presence and project and its fade into oblivion again prove him far from Mill's scheme. Then one may simply come up with an

³⁵ Mill, 95.

³⁶ Mill, 23.

³⁷ Sir John Harrington, *The Letters and Epigrams of Sir John Harrington Together with the Prayse of Private Life*. Ed. Norman Egbert McClure. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1930), 255.

explanation that Raf'at's insistence on the discussion must have been a naïve act of imitating European ideas outside their own tradition.³⁸ In this sense, the flare-like presence of Raf'at could be rendered as the paradox of being Raf'at. And this, consequently, proves our position even more paradoxical and meaningless than Raf'at's position. Since we have desperately tried to read/recognize an instant of history as a moment of danger while it was not in danger and could possibly have been the danger itself. Nevertheless, this is a success to prove the academic writing paradoxical and irrelevant in a (writing) performance, although it can hurt our egos.

Interestingly, with all this track we took in studying the details of Raf'at's oeuvre, we seem to have proved Jalal right in his formulation of westoxification and in his writing on service and treachery of intelligentsia.³⁹ In this sense, Raf'at seems to easily fit Jalal's image of westoxification. Suppose we accept such a claim, then Raf'at himself could be portrayed as the betrayer, westoxified, etc. As we already observed, this may possibly render him as the danger itself or the Antichrist. However, even if Raf'at is the Antichrist, we may go on with our reading paying attention to one notion we have frequently met. The autonomous forms let us find things in his writings that are free from Raf'at's affiliation and political stance. And these autonomous forms may create images that may aim toward the truth while their creator is not aware of. Thus, we may go on with our reading and charge it with the radicality of the flying flare.

Furthermore, surprisingly, the best formulation of the flying flare seems to have happened in the writings of Jalal himself. This, surprisingly, may push us forward on the path we have taken to study the flying flare. And we are driven by the one who is the real critic of any mimicry of western ideas. Therefore, if Jalal is the one in whose scheme Raf'at could be proven as the westoxified, he is also the one who has best delineated the flying flare which we have closely observed its linkage with Raf'at. The way to rescue Raf'at from Jalal's accusation goes through Jalal himself. Jalal seems to both doom and redeem Raf'at.

“If the punch (fist) that you have thrown in the darkness causes a flare (sparkle) and enlightens a darkness even for a moment, everybody would panic,”⁴⁰ writes Jalal. In this passage, Jalal seems to have grasped the essence of the flying flare's image and have charged it with the essential image of the material battle: the fist. Anderson's notion of friction, Benjamin's idea of material historicism, the abruptness of the flare image, all are encapsulated in Jalal's passage. If so, then Jalal is the actual redeemer of Raf'at and his flying-flare-like presence and its narrative. Raf'at's image must go through a furnace which is Jalal's strict critique of westoxification and the severe influence of the imperial states over developing countries. This may also redeem our reading, finally providing it with a powerful image of a fist toward the established authorities and powers. May the time come.

Nevertheless, we may try to go beyond this and try to find a beam of optimistic ray and rescue the whole reading and the flying flare. What if the insistence on the discussion is the cry of a soon-to-be faded flare to engage with its surroundings? If this is true, then the idea of flying flare could be saved while it may lose some of its radicality. Although, some other aspects of radicality and complexity are added to the scene by this cry. Suppose a flare is caught in discussion with the advocates of the status quo (the enemy), and there is no material condition

³⁸ The idea of westoxification by Jalal. See chapter 1 (p. 21).

³⁹ For the details of Jalal's argumentation see subchapter 1.3 (p. 32).

⁴⁰ Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Arzyābī-yi Shitābzadah (Hurried Investigations)*, (Tabriz: Ebne Sina, 1344 [1965]), 13.

“اما اگر از این مشتی که در تاریکی انداخته‌ای جرقه‌ای پدید و ظلمتی را ولو در لحظه‌ای بسیار کوتاه روشن کرد – همه وحشتشان میگیرد.”

of opposing Messianic forces to recognize it in the moment of danger. In that case, we may imagine that the discussion could be supported by the flare to desperately extend its presence on the scene. This seems to fit our image of Raf'at, who himself admits being in distress, anxious, ill, and about to vanish. This we will scrutinize in the next chapter.

Thus, the insistence on the discussion may find a new meaning and formulation as the desperate Messianically-optimistic cry of the flare to engage with the condition in the hope of change, while one is sure that the real change must happen in the battle in the field of material condition and the whole cry on the realm of ideas could be vain. But since there has not been yet any victory on the material battle, there remains the flare-like cry in the realm of ideas. Therefore, our own reading of Raf'at could be saved, and we may stop understanding it as paradoxical and vain. Then, maybe our reading is also a cry of flare in the condition where we know that the enemy (the material condition of Academy) has not ceased to be victorious. This is a situation that definitely leads to despair and anxiousness. A condition where one finds himself defeated, about to defeat, or experiencing a deadly anxiousness: the same we observe in Raf'at's writings which we explore in the next chapter.

5. Raf'at's oeuvre from another perspective: Anxiety as a mode of writing

Viva the anxious hearts!

زنده باد قلبهای مضطرب!

Sheykh Mohammad Khiyabani

Should Jesus come, he must sell his cross

مسیح هم که بیاید انگار باید صلیبش را حراج کند

Mohammad Mokhtari

Previously, we observed the meaning and connotations of Raf'at's presence on the literary scene of Iran and consequently on the historical scene in general. The Messianic image of the flying flare provided us with an understanding of Raf'at's presence as an instance flaring up, which must be seized and recognized in the moment of danger. This moment of danger proved itself always present in history, even in the moment of this writing. However, the moment of danger, consequently, results in some specific rhetoric and internal structure of a writing which is present in Raf'at's oeuvre since we have already seen how deeply his oeuvre relates itself to the "weak Messianic" power and the "moment of danger."

Thus, now it is time to provide an alternative narrative of Raf'at's life and writing and ultimately of Iranian literature in the modern condition and of the people living in that condition. The moment of danger we live in requires us to recognize this past moment. And we have seen how alternately the enemy narrated this past. Now let us tighten our boots to visit this enemy and base our narrative on something deep in this battle: the image of an anxious individual caught in the modern condition and modernization who experiences this condition with sheer fear. Our narrative is the narrative of the anxious individual caught in such a disastrous moment of modernity. It is the narrative of anxiety.

Therefore, this chapter aims to read and interpret the images of anxiety in Raf'at's oeuvre and trace its relationship with the image of the flying flare and other loci where anxiousness plays a vital role in defining the condition. This will include the image of anxiousness in some essential modern writings, which we will investigate in this chapter. Interestingly, this introvert approach ends in a severe extrovert materialist approach, as we will see in Raf'at's writings on the condition of food and famine in Tabriz of the day. The journey starts with observing the symptoms of anxiousness, digging deeper into the existential angst and its formulations, then the doomed Messianic perception of anxiety, and finally, the material response to such a condition.

5.1. Anxious writing: the psychological aspect of Raf'at's oeuvre

On many occasions of Raf'at's writing and even in the writings of his opponents about him, one notion frequently occurs: anxiety. The references to anxiety are numerous. However, what is critical is that this anxiety plays a definite role in forming the rhetoric and the logic of Raf'at's oeuvre alongside the essence of his material presence in history. Anxiety is not limited to

certain instances of direct reference in his oeuvre, rather, it affects the whole structure of his writing and his historical presence and self-perception.

“We are ill and anxious. The remedy for our illness and anxiety is not to be found in the poems which have fatigued and aged our ancestors.”¹ Raf‘at explicitly refers to anxiety and illness. It appears that the anxiety and illness are the pivotal points around which he builds his narrative of himself. Consciously, he keeps referring to these pivotal points and delineate his psychological existence. However, unconsciously, many occasions of his writings appear to be directly related to this anxious narrative of the self while dealing with other topics.

The terminology and the imagery of the classic literature “is not suited to our modern subjectivity and chafes our sense of hearing,”² as Raf‘at describes. Apparently, the dispute over classic literature is linked to something more profound. Something that scratches and chafes one’s soul and body. In the writing where this extreme disposition occurs, Raf‘at’s following sentence deals with the fact that the abacus of our ancestors cannot solve the problems we face in modern times. The argumentation consciously builds on the image based on rationality and immediate material bodily problems with which one is engaged (symbolised in the abacus). Moreover, this argumentation suddenly, and probably one can claim unconsciously, relates itself to something deeply entangled with the existential angst that one can imagine in modern times. Then, the abacus, which apparently belongs to the realm of consciousness and rationality and has a bodily material existence, gives its place to the terminology and imagery of literature (like alienation, loneliness, exclusion, etc.), which supposedly have something to do with unconscious, spirit or the existence in its general sense. This sudden shift in Raf‘at’s conscious argumentation can represent what was previously described: the fact that anxiety not only is present in some profound existential moments of angst, it also exists on many other occasions where the topic has nothing to do with angst, yet the idea of existential angst plays a part in forming those arguments.

“When we try to mitigate and soothe our modern pains, our contemporary emotions and our new needs, we are left stray and wandering.”³ This claim, primarily busy with spirit, appears in the midst of his literary argument, which is a rational one based on the idea of evolution. He finds himself shelterless in his immediate condition of being. He believes that the existing literature cannot conquer his hungry spirit or mitigate its wounds.⁴ These are precisely the description of anxiety and illness: a hungry spirit and a wounded body. Therefore, he claims that he rebels since any attempt to find his way and solve its immediate problems fades in vain. Interestingly, the deficiency in the realm of spirit finally leads to a material rebellion. We will see this image in detail in subchapter 5.5 (p. 157).

The anxiety and illness seem to appear hand in hand on every occasion we meet them. We observe this not only in Raf‘at’s own writing, but also in the writings of others, whether they refer to Raf‘at or refer to modern literature and its poetics. Interestingly, the famous writing in *Kave*, which we have already met in subchapter 1.5 (p. 39), contained a synthesis of this duality, although it was not the concern of its authors. When introducing the writings which *Kave* considered as weak and pejoratively referred to as “Khan Valede,” the authors wrote: “there are instances of the metamorphic Farsi writings and [this metamorphic writing] signifies that because of the national illness, the literary taste has been disturbed.”⁵ The metamorphosis appears to be the synthesis of anxiety and illness. What is essential is that no matter one’s

¹ Taqi Raf‘at, “A Literary Rebellion,” *Tajaddod*, Nowruz 1297 [1917], 28.

² Raf‘at, “A Literary Rebellion,” 28.

³ Raf‘at, “A Literary Rebellion,” 26.

⁴ Raf‘at, “A Literary Rebellion,” 26.

⁵ “Taraqqī-yi Zabān-i Fārsī.” *Kave*, No. 4/5, 21 May 1920, p. 4.

affiliations and political stance, they all agree on observing an illness in the modern condition. From the very right to the left, everybody agrees on the existence of this illness. Supposedly, anxiety which is perceived as an illness, is the symptomatic response of the individual to the modern condition.

On every occasion, anxiety and illness are directly related to the impaired functioning of language or the disturbance of language. *Kave* perceives Raf'at's writings as metamorphic instances where the language is weak and degraded. *Kave*'s account comes from a conservative standpoint. However, when Jalal wrote about Nima, not for criticism but to admire him as a great poet, he defined Nima as the poet of sorrows. He described the complexities and disturbances in Nima's language as a "code, symbol or a sign of the complexes in the thoughts of the freemen of our time which is entwisted."⁶ Even Raf'at himself is disturbed by the impaired functionality of language to express his pain. The pain that he suffered from, he claims, is not expressible by the existing language and literature, and he is in search of a language to express that pain.⁷ We will later see that in other occasions where anxiety exists, the language stops functioning, as was with the case of Abraham. Nevertheless, we now can see that anxiety and illness are entangled with the disturbance of language in almost every case.

Jalal takes the idea of anxiety and illness even one step further and observes the "virus of anxiety,"⁸ which synthetically combines anxiety and illness. Interestingly, the idea of anxiety in Jalal's perception seems to be related to juvenility and youth. This seems to be a human experience that when one is young and immature, he is more susceptible to anxiety and illness (Kierkegaard formulated the same in *The Concept of Anxiety* that children are subject to anxiety more than adults); no matter if it is a young person (Raf'at) or a young literature. "Modern Farsi literature has just started its journey, and is in its youth. It does not matter if it is not mature and still has deficiencies. The vanity of youth makes its mark and acne on every face,"⁹ writes Jalal.

The idea of illness and health is recurrent in Raf'at's writing even where the topic is not closely related. In the dispute over Sa'di, one of those trying to defend Sa'di among *Dānishkadah* members claimed that healthy minds will never listen to such criticism of Sa'di and will only hate its author. "These sentences belong to a young person who has never felt the joy of literary and philosophical debates, or the joy of freedom of thought and imagination. Gentleman! Why do you think badly of healthy brains? Healthy brains will never regret *Zabān-i Āzād*'s essay,"¹⁰ responded Raf'at. It appeared that the dispute over Sa'di and his heritage was also a dispute over health and illness. Each side attempted to define *health* and what health means. Consequently, this is a dispute over illness and anxiety as well.

Anxiety and illness (consequently, health and metamorphosis and disturbance of language) seem to affect the rhetoric of Raf'at's writing to a great extent. If that is the case, then we must trace the image of anxiety and also find a legitimate description of why Raf'at must be anxious

⁶ "Nima is the poet of sorrows. The sorrows which penetrate our souls. Even his hopes are sorrowful. It has been years that there only exists a bell ring. The complexities of the [language] of Nima's poetry must be considered a code, symbol or a sign of the complexes in the thoughts of the freemen of our time which is entwisted." Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Haft Maqāli (Seven Essays)*. (Tehran: AmirKabir, 1357), 55.

⁷ Raf'at, "A Literary Rebellion," 30.

⁸ "You begin reading what you had loved when you were young. Once and twice. Alas! You find yourself full of passion for a moment or a mood without any thought or any virus of anxiety in your soul that is worried for the future of the world." Jalal Al-e Ahmad, "Kitābī dar siyāsāt va daftar-i shi'ri dar zamm-i īn kaj ā'in qarn-I dīvānah" (A Book in Politics and a Poetry book in remonstrance of this frenzied century), in *Arzyābī-yi Shitābzadah (Hurried Investigations)*. (Tabriz: Ebne Sina, 1344 [1965]), 19-20.

⁹ Jalal Al-e Ahmad. *Arzyābī-yi Shitābzadah (Hurried Investigations)*. (Tabriz: Ebne Sina, 1344 [1965]), 66.

¹⁰ Raf'at, "A Literary Rebellion," 27.

and what qualities this anxiety has. In the very first step, before getting close to the images related to the existential angst and dread, we may start from a material level, then find our way to the realm of self and spirit, and finally get back to the material bodily life and Raʿat's rebellion.

The feeling of strangeness and the anxiety caused by it was described on the material level in Walter Benjamin's materialist analysis of the evolution of the art forms into cinematic representation. Benjamin, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," delineates a material analysis of the emergence of cinema and cinematic representation in a time when art has lost its aura. He pays close attention to Luigi Pirandello's famous novel *Shoot! (Si Gira, 1916)*. In the tenth fragment of this essay, Benjamin describes the feeling of strangeness in front of a camera compared to the one felt in front of the mirror. However, this time the reflection is transported before the public. Thus, the actor is before a market to which he must also offer his self and soul. "During the shooting he has little contact with it as any article made in the factory. This may contribute to the oppression, that new anxiety, according to Pirandello, grips the actor before the camera"¹¹ writes Benjamin. Evidently, aside from the material conditions which have taken the aura from the art, this specific structure of the mediated relation to the market of audiences could be the cause of estrangement and anxiety.

The cinematic representation seems far from the subject of our study, which is Raʿat's oeuvre, although Raʿat already proved himself interested in cinematic representations.¹² However, the condition in which the actor is caught and is the source of his anxiety could be traced to some extent in Raʿat's material position. This could be observed in the medium in which Raʿat is trying to represent his ideas and probably himself. What is in Raʿat's writing and its medium which is different from Sa'di's writings? Probably, one answer is that the new writing is meant to be written in a medium always already meant to reproduce (mechanically). Raʿat cannot write in a book that is elegantly bound and awaits its reader in a quiet corner. It was possible for Sa'di but not for Raʿat. That could be the cause for anxious writing or even confronting Sa'di. In this sense, the anxiety could be the anxiety of being obliged to write in a newspaper, though we will later see that anxiety is directly related to freedom. However, the concept is dialectical and needs careful scrutiny. There is freedom in choosing whether to write in a newspaper or not, but the possibility of writing an elegantly bound book has totally vanished. Therefore, the anxiety, in this sense, is the anxiety of the obligation to write in a newspaper for the very public, while it is one's choice to do so since there has always been the possibility to annihilate one's relation with the medium or writing in general. It is the anxiety of dedicating one's soul to the public every day while having lost his aura. It is the anxiety of the lost possibility of keeping one's soul in a book for a few readerships.

This is not a sufficient explanation of the anxiety and its manifestations in Raʿat's oeuvre. However, it is a solid starting point to see that the anxiety pertaining to self and the realm of spirit could have certain material roots. Consequently, we can trace the notion of anxiety in other scopes where its relationship with the realm of spirit is investigated, and go on a quest for the notion of anxiety and images pertaining thereto. Finally, we can once again observe the material formulation of anxiety in a final rebellion and political act in Raʿat's life and writing.

One of the best formulations of despair and anxiety is found in the writings of Kierkegaard, which we will thoroughly investigate their relevance to Raʿat's mode of anxious writing.

¹¹ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 231.

¹² See: Chapter 2 (p. 47).

Raʿat's account of the Titanic is actually a cinematic representation. The rhetoric of his passage on the Titanic is closely related to cinematic and visual representation.

Moreover, anxious Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov* has certain characteristics that symbolically represent Raf'at's rebellion and his anxious writing. Thus, we will study Ivan's anxious rebellion as well. Interestingly, if we remember Barahani in his writing on Raf'at, he overtly expressed the opinion that there is a close linkage between Kierkegaard's ideas and Raf'at's writings.¹³ Furthermore, we will see that Kierkegaard's formulation of anxiety and despair matches our previous reading of the flying flare and the recognition of a historical instance in the moment of danger. These could legitimately draw our attention toward scrutiny over *Fear and Trembling*, *Sickness unto Death*, and *The Concept of Anxiety*. We will trace the image of anxiety in Dostoevsky's masterpiece and see how the literary images of anxious Ivan are related to the material act of rebellion in Raf'at.

Before diving into such a psychological study, it is necessary to set the boundaries of such analysis, for it is always possible to "draw whatever conclusions one likes from it."¹⁴ This evidently has been a serious concern of Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky as well. Dostoevsky, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, brilliantly depicts this concern in the final court and throughout his whole novel. Kierkegaard constantly mocks those who cannot set the boundaries of sciences, especially psychology. In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard comprehensively describes why psychology cannot deal with sin as such and has its limit. He states that "the mood of psychology would be antipathetic curiosity, whereas the proper mood is earnestness expressed in courageous resistance."¹⁵ Moreover, in the midst of his argument, he almost annuls the possibility of psychology based on literary (imagination) and, consequently, the psychological analysis of literature.¹⁶ However, we are not to walk in the footsteps of Kierkegaard in its strict sense. Rather, our apology to use psychology within its border is to grasp what we have proved through other means. Thus, one can say that the psychological concept is valid as far as it can shed light on our reading and remain within the boundaries of our reading. Any diversion could be related to the essence of psychological analysis, which, as Dostoevsky described, is a double-edged sword that can cut both ways.

Furthermore, another reason legitimates the study of the psychological deliberations of Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky and consequently emphasizes the psychological aspect of Raf'at's oeuvre. As we have already observed and will meet more instances in the following pages, there is sympathy/antipathy toward anxiety and despair in two different senses. First is

¹³ "In this writing, the reader is reminded of the disputes and discussion between Marx and Engels and their contemporary peers, on the other hand one is reminded of Kierkegaard's writings in *Fear and Trembling* and *Sickness unto Death*, especially his criticism of Hegel and Hegelian absolute." Reza Barhani, *Kīmīyā va Khāk (Alchemy and Earth)*, (Tehran: Morghe Amin, 1368), 30.

¹⁴ "I myself, gentlemen of the jury, have resorted to psychology now, in order to demonstrate that one can draw whatever conclusions one likes from it. It all depends on whose hands it is in. Psychology prompts novels even from the most serious people, and quite unintentionally. I am speaking of excessive psychology, gentlemen of the jury, of a certain abuse of it." Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. (Everyman's Library, 1992), 619.

¹⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, Edited and translated by Reidar Thomte. (Princeton University Press, 1980), 15.

Also, see: "The subject of which psychology treats must be something in repose that remains in a restless repose, not something restless that always either produces itself or is repressed," *The Concept of Anxiety*, 21.

And: "Psychology may abandon itself, so to speak, to the disappointment that sin is there as an actuality. But this last disappointment reveals the impotence of psychology and merely shows that its service has come to an end." *The Concept of Anxiety*, 22.

¹⁶ "Then, when he has perfected himself, he will have no need to take his examples from literary repertoires and serve up half-dead reminiscences, but will bring his observations entirely fresh from the water, wriggling and sparkling in the play of their colors. Nor will he have to run himself to death to become aware of something. On the contrary, he should sit entirely composed in his room, like a police agent who nevertheless knows everything that takes place." *The Concept of Anxiety*, 55.

the anxiety and despair pertaining to one's material condition like the social formation, economy, etc. Second is the anxiety and despair as it pertains to the realm of spirit, which is a more profound sense of anxiety. The need for a new literary expression seems to be the meeting point of the two, or maybe their synthesis. Thus, this shows us how closely the material bodily conditions of one's existence are related to his spiritual existential state. Moreover, this shows us a dialectical relationship between these two realms making it possible to penetrate through their dialectic in a study. Later, we will see Kierkegaard's formulation of these psychological concepts in its general sense pertaining to the spirit in which he shows us that the material despair, no matter how banal it may seem, has its root in the despair in the realm of the spirit which is the highest form of the phenomenon presented in a transcendental formulation. The longing for material anxiety alongside the spiritual one provides us with a ground to study this dialectic and surprisingly find its synthesis in a final material rebellion. This is odd to Kierkegaard's formulation and, to some extent, far from Dostoevsky's depiction of the realm of spirit, though it is the primary significance of our study. We observe a dialectic resulting in a final synthesis that transcends itself from the very material condition, not solely in the spirit, but also in the material rebellion for a new language, new literature, and earthly bread.

5.2. The moment to be modern as the moment of anxiety

“Describe to us the meaning of life! Introduce us the way to redemption and salvation! Provide wings for our souls and grandeur and glory to our thoughts! Take the nightmare of decadence and degradation out of our sight.”¹⁷ These phrases are Raf'at's overt utterances amid the disputes over modern literature while he seems concerned about technological modernity and scientific advances (one may remember his insistence on the abacus). Aside from the material happiness in the form of new literature, new technology, etc., he is clearly asking for redemption and salvation. The spiritual connotation of these desires may never be neglected. At least, one may claim such phrases unconsciously represent a desire for salvation and redemption of the self as spirit. This could introduce us to a profound level of perception of the concept of anxiety. On such a level, one must attempt to scrutinize the relationship of the material bodily anxiety and the anxiety of the self as spirit in a dialectical relationship which we will closely observe in its formulations by Kierkegaard.

Prior to such cries of salvation in Raf'at writing, he introduces an example that can shed light on the dialectics of anxiety as he understands it, which differs from Kierkegaard's formulation due to its final synthesis. Kierkegaard transcends the final synthesis as the spirit in accordance with itself before God. In contrast, Raf'at's final synthesis takes the form of a desperate, anxious individual attempting material rebellion to gain earthly bread.

Raf'at depicts a mass of hungry people vandalising anything they confront in the hope of food. He depicts the futility of such questions as “Oh comrades, do you think such a forensic rebellion will mitigate your hunger?”¹⁸ addressed to the hungry mass of people. He then concludes that the mass of hungry people would not stop by such a question. They will continue destroying anything till they get to the food. Raf'at then uses this example to describe what he calls his and his peers' spiritual poverty. Interestingly, then, he links this poverty-driven rebellion causing him to rebel against the classic literature and traditions. He overtly claims that the rescue of the old literary figures lies in the success of this rebellion. If it does not prosper, it

¹⁷ Raf'at, “A Literary Rebellion,” 27.

¹⁸ Raf'at, “A Literary Rebellion,” 26.

will continue to vandalise anything it confronts. The prosperity of the rebellion may finally produce the guardians of those cultural forms. In the apogee of this image, he writes: “those hungry for science and technology, poetry and literature, emotion and thinking, will find the intellectual (spiritual) alimentation they look for. They will complete the political-social revolution...”¹⁹

What is crucial is that spiritual poverty is first linked to the material bodily poverty symbolised in hunger. It results in material bodily rebellion to reach the bread and simultaneously a rebellion against the ossified forms of culture that cannot mitigate one’s spiritual poverty. There seems to be a serious representation of dialectics of anxiety caused by spiritual poverty on one side and the hunger for earthly bread on the other side. Thus, this forces us to contemplate the dialectics of anxiety and despair on the one hand and, on the other hand, the desire for earthly bread in the dialectics of spiritual and bodily hunger. In the following subchapters, we will scrutinize each of these subjects and return to Raf‘at’s rebellion once again.

To understand the dialectics of anxiety and what pertains thereto in the realm of self as spirit, one cannot find a better locus than Kierkegaard’s formulations of self, which interestingly relates itself to other images that we have already investigated (like the flying flare, the moment of decision in modern condition). Furthermore, the formulation of the quest for earthly bread and the heavenly spiritual bread is best provided by Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov* through Ivan’s character and The Grand Inquisitor. Thus, in the following subchapters, we will observe the details of each subject. Now we may begin with a glimpse toward self as spirit and the despair and the anxiety of which the self is made.

Before diving into Kierkegaard’s analysis, it is worth looking at two moments in Jalal’s formulation of modern Persian literature, which to some extent define and depict the anxiety that is not limited to Raf‘at and happens to exist in some sense in the entire modern Persian literature. In his short story *Health Insurance* (Daftarchi Bīma), he depicts the ill person, or so to say, the modern man encountering a disaster made by modernity or modern medicine.²⁰ Modern medicine and modernity only provide the disaster and are unable to mitigate the disaster or provide any remedy or solution. As a result, one can claim that what is left is the lonely human and a modern disaster that one has to face. This seems like the *shelterlessness* and helplessness of modern man exposed to disastrous modernity like in the case of the Titanic and the mass murder as we observed in previous chapters.²¹ Such a condition produces anxious characters who lose control of their life and still are the ones responsible, for apparently, they have made choices and still must do so. We can see what we had previously observed as the disastrous modernity, and its manifestations proves itself enough to be the cause of anxiety in modern man. Interestingly, in Jalal’s story, the anxious character is closely bound with the notion of illness, and Jalal delicately depicts all the nuances in such a condition. Apparently, the anxiety itself is the actual illness in which the protagonist is caught.

Jalal, in his articulation of modern Persian literature, fuses the anxiety and his famous notion of westoxification. He defines one of the characteristics of modern Persian literature as pessimism, which has a link to anxiety and despair. He describes this pessimism as not confined to the youth. He links it with any criticism of the condition. The ascetic mystical attitudes are also linked to the pessimism by Jalal, meaning he includes any attitude, whether conservative or progressive, in that scheme. However, he also relates to this pessimism another trend in

¹⁹ Raf‘at, “A Literary Rebellion,” 27.

²⁰ Jalal Al-e Ahmad, “Daftarchah Bīmāh” (Insurance Notebook), in *Zan-i Ziyādī (The Unwanted Woman)*. (Tehran: Ferdos, 1371), 63-91.

²¹ See the Titanic in chapter 2 (p. 47) and mass murder in chapter 3 (p. 85).

modern Persian literature: “it is also rooted in this [pessimism], taking refuge in the description of *Ajāyib al-Makhlūqāt* (The Wonders of Creatures) (eccentricism). And I mean describing people, moods and events which are extraordinary and exceptional.”²² Here, we may remember Raf‘at’s account of the Titanic, his peculiar Dehqan, and his moment of decision as *Ajāyib al-Makhlūqāt* (The Wonders of Creatures). The idea of rendering the subjects of modern literature as *Ajāyib al-Makhlūqāt* (The Wonders of Creatures) seems to be a perception of pessimism within the frame of the westoxification. *Ajāyib al-Makhlūqāt* (The Wonders of Creatures) is the synthesis of anxious pessimism and westoxification. This can play its role as a significant warning that we may always keep in mind through our reading that although the psychological study may seem irrelevant and something like the Wonders of Creatures, it is deeply rooted in the materiality of Raf‘at’s existence. This way, we may find a way to harness the psychology to stay within the boundaries it is meant to.

“Before God, or with the conception of God, in despair not to will to be oneself, or in despair to will to be oneself,”²³ according to Kierkegaard, is the sin. Moreover, anxiety is the presupposition of the hereditary sin in his formulations and is “freedom’s actuality as the possibility of possibility.”²⁴ Apart from the details of these definitions, which we will observe, they seem like universal definitions matching any being that possesses a spirit. Thus, this is a universal definition describing the human being in general or at least regarding one as a spirit. In this sense, there is no individual human being in Kierkegaard’s writing to meet, let alone Raf‘at. However, the minute analysis of the forms that despair and anxiety take, reaches the point of describing individual psychological states, which can boost our reading of Raf‘at’s anxious writing.

One may listen carefully to Kierkegaard in his writings and, in some moments, even hear the echo of Raf‘at’s voice in them. As if two spirits not having any knowledge of each other have uttered the same sentences. That could be the spirit talking. Kierkegaard, when describing the relation of the individual to history when the hereditary sin and its presupposed anxiety are concerned, describes the fact that each generation has its own tasks and troubles “just as each day’s trouble is sufficient for the day.”²⁵ When reading these lines, one is quickly reminded of Raf‘at when he wrote, “we must find new *rūzī*²⁶ for each new day. And we know well that the spirit of an old generation may not endure with ‘new day, new *rūzī*’.”²⁷ It is as if when reading one of these texts, the other echoes in between the lines. The spirit may be lurking somewhere between the lines causing such a coincident. Moreover, suppose one is to determine something more than coincidence in these lines. In that case, one could remember Barahani, where he stated that Raf‘at’s writing was influenced by Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling* and *Sickness Unto Death*. Interestingly, these lines are not found in those writings. They are part of *The*

²²Jalal Al-e Ahmad, “Chand Noktah Darbārah-i Moshakhkhaṣāt-i Kollīyi Adabīyāt-i Mu‘āṣir” (Some Notes on the General Characteristics of Contemporary Literature), in *Arzyābī-yi Shitābzadah* (*Hurried Investigations*). (Tabriz: Ebne Sina, 1344), 60.

²³Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*. Edited and translated Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. (Princeton University Press, 1980), 77.

²⁴*The Concept of Anxiety*, 42.

²⁵“Each generation has its own task and need not trouble itself unduly by being everything to previous and succeeding generations. Just as each day’s trouble is sufficient for the day, so each individual in a generation has enough to do in taking care of himself and does not need to embrace the whole contemporary age” *The Concept of Anxiety*, 7.

²⁶*Rūzī*, which literally translates to “pertaining to day,” has different significations in Farsi. Generally, it means what one earns and gains for sustaining his body and self. So it covers a wide range of what one can gain, including alimentation for body and spirit.

²⁷Raf‘at, “A Literary Rebellion,” 26.

Concept of Anxiety. Perhaps, Barahani was right about the fact that he recognized the influence, although the exact locus of reference and influence is open to dispute.

To our surprise, Kierkegaard's formulation of anxiety and the hereditary sin reminds us of the flying flare and the leaping lightning, as we have already observed in the previous chapter. According to him, the sin presupposes itself; therefore, "sin comes into the world as the sudden, i.e., by leap; but this leap also posits the quality, and since the quality is posited, the leap in that very moment is turned into the quality and is presupposed by the quality and the quality by the leap."²⁸ The sin, for Kierkegaard, is the hereditary sin. Hence the sin represents the self. Moreover, he tries to find a way to delineate the distinction between the qualitative numeration and repetition of sin and the quantitative position of hereditary sin being introduced. As a result, the whole image seems to define the self as such and its leap in the scene to posit itself qualitatively. This resembles the image of the leaping lightning not only for the fact that the leap plays a vital role in both, but rather because the quality of self and the historical moment in danger could be explained only by a qualitative leap. To posit themselves as quality, they need to evade the numerical repetition, which could only be described in a leap. In Kierkegaard's formulation the leap makes it possible to presuppose the sin, and in the flying flare, it makes it possible for a moment to posit itself as the instance to be recognized, not as an inconspicuous point in the homogenous stream of time and history.²⁹ The qualitative leap plays its pivotal role in both of the formulations. Kierkegaard's insistence on the qualitative leap is best described in *The Concept of Anxiety*. On the other hand, in the image of the flying flare, what transcends an instance to be recognized and seized in a moment of danger is a qualitative leap. For in the succession of the moments in the progressive flow of the time, each moment is like a numerical repetition and to render a moment with new recognition and save it from antichrist presupposes a qualitative leap that can render the moment in that way. Therefore, the qualitative leap is critical to both images.

In chapter 2 (p. 45), we attempted to understand Raf'at's relation to the Titanic, whether he was craving it or trying to evade it. The details of that argument we may now leave behind, and find another explanation for that ambivalence within the study of anxiety. Such explanation could be found on different occasions in Kierkegaard's formulation of anxiety. Kierkegaard defines anxiety as the presupposition of hereditary sin. Therefore, he has to find a way to define innocence in the same framework. As he defines innocence with ignorance, it is a state in which there is no contention and strife. Furthermore, the immediate question is what innocence is. "Nothing. But what effect does nothing have? *It* begets anxiety. This is the profound secret of innocence, that it is at the same time anxiety."³⁰ This is due to the fact that the actuality of spirit in the state of innocence and ignorance is nothing. "Dreamily the spirit projects its own actuality, but this actuality is nothing, and innocence always sees this nothing outside itself. Anxiety is a qualification of dreaming spirit, and as such it has its place in psychology."³¹ Thus, anxiety is the quality of the dreaming spirit. In such a case, one can get closer to the understanding of Raf'at's relation to the Titanic. Apparently, he is dreaming about it. Moreover, dreaming means suspension of self's position, as Kierkegaard mentions. "Awake, the difference between myself and my other is posited; sleeping, it is suspended; dreaming, it

²⁸ *The Concept of Anxiety*, 32.

²⁹ Kierkegaard delineates the same in his formulation of the qualitative leap pertaining to sin. He describes that the understanding is not capable of the perception and wants to explain the circle as a straight line, which is not possible to transcend one point in it. "To the understanding, this is an offense; *ergo* it is a myth. As a compensation, the understanding invents its own myth, which denies the leap and explains the circle as a straight line, and now everything proceeds quite naturally" *The Concept of Anxiety*, 32.

³⁰ *The Concept of Anxiety*, 41.

³¹ *The Concept of Anxiety*, 41.

is an intimated nothing. The actuality of the spirit constantly shows itself as a form that tempts its possibility but disappears as soon as it seeks to grasp for it, and it is a nothing that can only bring anxiety. More it cannot do as long as it merely shows itself.”³² Therefore, in the relationship of Raf‘at to the Titanic, the nothingness could be explained or the remoteness in the material sense. Here, Kierkegaard depicts the limit of psychology when he compares anxiety to “fear and similar concepts that refer to something definite,” and he defines anxiety as “freedom’s actuality as the possibility of possibility.”³³ By this, we can observe Raf‘at’s relationship with the Titanic from another perspective. However, we may also be able to grasp the significance of Dehqan and his moment of decision depicted in his poem. Dehqan’s moment of decision and making his mind is the actuality of his freedom’s possibility within the disastrous moment he lived in. Therefore, there is a link between Raf‘at’s strange attitude toward the Titanic and his passion for depicting Dehqan’s moment of decision amid disaster. Thus, although it may seem an example of *Ajāyib al-Makhlūqāt* (The Wonders of Creatures) and westoxification, now it can find a new psychological explanation concerning disastrous modernity. Such a disastrous condition in modernity, which exists on different levels, produces anxious characters who lose control of their lives and are still responsible, for apparently, they have made choices and must do so. As all human beings belong to the race and history and therefore are entitled to the hereditary sin and its presupposed anxiety, modern Iranians caught in the disastrous moment of modernity pertain to the anxious moment and may never find a way out of this anxiety.

The fact that one could not determine whether Raf‘at was carving the Titanic or rejecting it could be found in one of the characteristics of anxiety: “*a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy*.”³⁴ This quality could be traced in any manifestations of modernity and modern economy in Raf‘at’s oeuvre. One may conclude that Raf‘at is in a state where at the same time, craves and rejects modernity. He needs to make a decision about this world. He cannot reject it since he does not want to regress into conservatism and, at the same time, is terrified by modernity and its disastrous image. The freedom of possibility in such a condition makes him anxious and causes the anxious writing. The anxiety in such a case could also be linked to seeking “the adventurous, the monstrous, and the enigmatic.”³⁵ Therefore, Jalal’s notion of *Ajāyib al-Makhlūqāt* (The Wonders of Creatures) could be perceived as a naïve, childish quest for the adventurous, the monstrous, and the enigmatic. And one of the locus for such a quest in modernity is definitely the Titanic.

Kierkegaard points out that “the relation of anxiety to its object” is “to something that is nothing.”³⁶ Then it is no surprise that as we dig deeper, we find fewer answers to what is Raf‘at anxious about. As Kierkegaard refers, even the linguistic usage “anxious about nothing” is based on the relation of anxiety to nothing. We also know that “there is nothing in the world

³² *The Concept of Anxiety*, 41-42.

³³ *The Concept of Anxiety*, 42.

³⁴ “Anxiety is *a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy*. One easily sees, I think, that this is a psychological determination in a sense entirely different from the *concupiscentia* [inordinate desire] of which we spoke. Linguistic usage confirms this perfectly. One speaks of a pleasing anxiety, a pleasing anxiousness [Beængstelse], and of a strange anxiety, a bashful anxiety, etc.” *The Concept of Anxiety*, 42.

The endnote to this passage includes some elaborations that can clarify this: “The nature of hereditary sin has often been explained, and still a primary category has been lacking-it is anxiety (*Angst*); this is the essential determinant. Anxiety is a desire for what one fears, a sympathetic antipathy; anxiety is an alien power which grips the individual, and yet he cannot tear himself free from it and does not want to, for one fears, but what he fears he desires. Anxiety makes the individual powerless, and the first sin always occurs in weakness; herefore it apparently lacks accountability, but this lack is the real trap” *The Concept of Anxiety*, 235.

³⁵ *The Concept of Anxiety*, 42.

³⁶ *The Concept of Anxiety*, 43.

more ambiguous,” and this is the “only psychological explanation”³⁷ as we have already seen that psychology has its limit and must be restrained in those boundaries. This ambiguity could also be found in the language, as we have already observed the vehement criticism of Raf‘at for his disturbed language. However, as we continue with the psychological analysis of self as spirit, we will meet the impaired language again and, ultimately, the suspension of the language in the case of the knight of faith.

As we have already mentioned, Kierkegaard’s formulation of anxiety is a general account based on the perception of the human being as the only being which becomes and owns a spirit. It is meant to explain the hereditary sin. Thus it can be applied to any human being. However, the details of the psychological study of the human being or the spirit results in moments where one can analyse a particular individual as we have attempted about Raf‘at. Kierkegaard delineates the notion that spirit could be a hostile power in as much as it could be a friendly one. This general description of spirit and the ambiguity in it is overcome by Kierkegaard like this: “What, then, is man’s relation to this ambiguous power? How does spirit relate itself to itself and to its conditionality? It relates itself as anxiety.”³⁸ This general perception of spirit makes our ground to perceive Raf‘at and his anxious attempts and writing as a procedure of becoming spirit. This is the most one can make of Raf‘at, profound enough to be doubted. However, one may soothe the situation by claiming that Raf‘at is naively caught in a material life drastically different from his previous condition. That previous condition (non-capitalistic feudalistic) in relation to the new (capitalistic) condition could be perceived as the state of ignorance and innocence. During his lifetime, he seems to be in the process of finding himself present in the new disastrous condition and perceiving the sinful condition he is caught in. Consequently, such a process is overwhelmed with anxiety.

Kierkegaard explains that with sin coming into the world, sexuality is posited as well.³⁹ Therefore, it is an excellent occasion to look at one of Raf‘at’s poems titled “Interpretation of Love” (*Tafsīr-i ‘ishq*). In the second stanza, Raf‘at writes: “neither the pleasure of happiness/ nor the fear of sufferance/ I have neither hope/ nor fear for the world.”⁴⁰ One can see the ambiguous relation in which Raf‘at is caught with his immediate condition, where the worshiped beloved seems melancholically appear and fade, playing the tender strings of his soul. Furthermore, the beloved is obviously a woman as he introduces her as the “daughter of *shid*.” The anxiety is posited where the sexuality or the desire of another spirit in its bodily form is posited.

Here, one can object that Kierkegaard’s formulation is too materialized. However, his formulations are ambiguous enough to include anything ranging from heavens and ethereal spirits to earthly beings. Nevertheless, we can find profound moments where Raf‘at seems to become a spirit. The anxiety, as we saw since it was paradoxically posited by the relation of self to itself, could cause the dysfunctionality of language. However, the language’s suspension and deficiency could be traced on many other occasions. As we observed, Raf‘at’s writings were allegedly called *musavvakhāt* (metamorphic), which to some extent reflected the reality since his language does not fit the normal linguistic usage. Moreover, on many occasions in his formulations of despair, anxiety, and even faith, Kierkegaard depicts the suspension and malfunction of the language. The apogee of this is represented in the last utterance of Abraham and the fact that Abraham could not utter anything on his way to sacrifice his son.

³⁷ *The Concept of Anxiety*, 43.

³⁸ *The Concept of Anxiety*, 44.

³⁹ *The Concept of Anxiety*, 48.

⁴⁰ Taqi Raf‘at, “Tafsīr-i ‘ishq” (Interpretation of Love), *Azadiyestan*, No. 2, 8 July 1920, 22. For a prosaic translation see appendix p. 193.

In *The Sickness unto Death*, he writes: “the relation between ignorance and despair is similar to that between ignorance and anxiety.”⁴¹ Thus, one can imagine that as we have observed the anxious being and its manifestations in anxious writing and anxious modern life, then we must be facing despair as well. Anxiety and despair seem to be lurking underneath. They both lay underneath.⁴²

“Despair is a sickness of the spirit, of the self” and, as a result, belongs to any human being as a spirit, just like anxiety. However, it has different formulations and manifestations distinct in each particular individual and condition.⁴³ We may see that anxiety/despair and health are closely entangled, as we previously observed in Raf‘at and the writings of others. This means that even when we are not facing the symptoms of the sickness, it may still be lurking underneath.⁴⁴ This may, to some extent, explain the reason for sudden manifestations of anxiety and despair in Raf‘at’s writing. Anxiety and despair are underneath, and the severe symptoms occur occasionally and somehow randomly in accordance with the condition or the mode of superstructure forms.

The relationship between the sickness in the spiritual sense and the physical sense is best described by Kierkegaard himself:

We speak of a crisis in relation to sickness but not in relation to health. Why not? Because physical health is an immediate qualification that first becomes dialectical in the condition of sickness, in which the question of a crisis arises. Spiritually, or when man is regarded as spirit, both health and sickness are critical; there is no immediate health of the spirit.⁴⁵

We already met the physical crisis in Raf‘at’s writing. The incentive to start the dispute over modern Persian literature is rooted in observing a crisis in the Iranian society, which is physical and can be seen with eyes. However, there are many occasions where Raf‘at’s description of the crisis seems to step into the realm of spirit. To prove this, one may remember Raf‘at’s Dehqan and his moment of decision which could be easily treated with its relation to the realm of spirit. He is anxious since there is the freedom’s actuality of possibility. In that case, the possibilities are to live or to die. Raf‘at’s Dehqan totally fits Kierkegaard’s formulation of despair, which makes it legitimate to step into the realm of spirit. However, one must be careful at this point, since Kierkegaard himself, showed us that the symptoms of despair are dialectical and “therefore the superficial view is very easily deceived in determining whether or not despair is present.”⁴⁶ So we must not rush to conclude that what we have observed is despair right in the heart of the spiritual realm, rather we need to find hints. One of the clues which can push us in the dialectical study of the despair when human is regarded as spirit, is the fact that not only Raf‘at’s perception of language is impaired, even his language itself is. He finds himself in a situation where he cannot express his pain, and others find his writings impaired and his language malfunctioning and metamorphic. Thus, one can see that a serious quality lies underneath. To prove that the despair and anxiety in Raf‘at’s apparent attempt for happiness have something more serious to be concerned with spirit, we may remember Kierkegaard’s

⁴¹ *Sickness unto Death*, 44.

⁴² *Sickness unto Death*, 44.

⁴³ “Despair is a sickness of the spirit, of the self, and accordingly can take three forms: in despair not to be conscious of having a self (not despair in the strict sense); in despair not to will to be oneself; in despair to will to be oneself” *Sickness unto Death*, 13.

⁴⁴ “Just as the physician speaks of going around with an illness in the body, he walks around with a sickness, carries around a sickness of the spirit that signals its presence at rare intervals in and through an anxiety he cannot explain.” *Sickness unto Death*, 22.

⁴⁵ *Sickness unto Death*, 25.

⁴⁶ *Sickness unto Death*, 24.

argument that although happiness is not a qualification of spirit, “deep within the most secret hiding place of happiness there dwells also anxiety, which is despair.”⁴⁷ Thus, we may get a step closer to understanding that the quest for happiness in the disastrous modern condition in which Raf‘at is caught relates to anxiety and despair when humans are regarded as spirits. This makes Raf‘at’s rebellion serious enough to be treated in the realm of spirit as well as the material scene.

In this realm of spirit, one must consider that the whole anxiety/despair is a result of the dialectical conflict between possibility and necessity. One’s “actuality is the unity of possibility and necessity.”⁴⁸ This unity is the problematic one to be achieved. The whole conflict, not only on the material scene, but also in the realm of spirit, arises from this. Interestingly, Kierkegaard points out that a self is lost in possibility “not merely because of a lack of energy.”⁴⁹ As we observe in the case of Raf‘at, in his short lifetime, one cannot accuse him of not having the energy or being lethargic. He is even active to the point that one can find restlessness in him. Let us believe Kasravi’s account of him as the betrayer, and Khiyabani’s belief in Raf‘at as a significant person playing a big role in the game. These are all the signs of energy and the consequent restlessness caused by energy and a wide range of possibilities. Kierkegaard then delineates this missing quality that does not let one’s actuality be the unity of necessity and possibility as “the power to obey, to submit to the necessity in one’s life, to what may be called one’s limitations.”⁵⁰ We must pay attention that Kierkegaard’s formulation rests on the idea that one can be oneself before God with the ultimate remedy possible to a self which is *faith* and specifically the Christian faith. Since the Christian faith is not the case for Raf‘at, we may set it aside and try to reformulate Kierkegaard’s idea. The limitation in Kierkegaard’s formulation is that one cannot become himself before God, and that is the sickness of despair, though when we face Raf‘at, he is in despair since he cannot become what the condition makes him think of himself and expect himself. And this is a dialectical relationship, since he is not submitting himself to the condition, which is a modern disastrous condition. Rather, he wants to submit himself to the rebellion idea of a self which is produced in the disastrous modern condition, but it is meant for not submitting to the modern disastrous condition. This makes him differ from the knight of faith, who is depicted in its ultimate, most transcendent sense in *Fear and Trembling*. Raf‘at is not the knight of faith, and somewhat he resembles the tragic hero in Kierkegaard’s formulation. However, we will see the subtle differences Raf‘at may have from the classic tragic hero.

Before observing the details of the difference between the tragic hero and the knight of faith, we can see the lack of faith in Raf‘at’s condition from another perspective. When there is no faith, or one does not become a self before God, not because of the hereditary sin and the obstacles inherent in one’s being since he is far from God (he is not God). Then, he is lost in the possibilities since no being can render the possibilities meaningful. In the premodern condition, even if one was not a believer, his material condition made him believe in certain values, which could render the possibilities meaningful so that he would not get lost. However, with modernity and modern economy, those values melt into air, and one is left with possibilities in vain. “In possibility everything is possible. For this reason, it is possible to become lost in possibility in all sorts of ways, but primarily in two. The one takes the form of desiring, craving; the other takes the form of the melancholy-imaginary (hope/ fear or anxiety).”⁵¹ Hence, there are two different directions that being lost in the possibilities can take:

⁴⁷ *Sickness unto Death*, 25.

⁴⁸ *Sickness unto Death*, 35.

⁴⁹ *Sickness unto Death*, 36.

⁵⁰ *Sickness unto Death*, 36.

⁵¹ *Sickness unto Death*, 37.

craving, and melancholy-imaginary. This is like the exact description of Raf'at's oeuvre with two notions. Suddenly everything seems to be very simple. In the case of the Titanic and all other instances of modern life, we see the conflicting mode of desire and fear. We already saw that this is one of the attributes of anxiety. On the other hand, the melancholy-imaginary can go as wild as possible, rendering its objects as *Ajāyib al-Makhlūqāt* (The wonders of Creatures) as Jalal described. Being lost in the possibilities of modern life with the melancholy-imaginary is where Raf'at departs from his own rebellion. In such cases, we are actually facing the westoxified figure of Raf'at in search of modern instances and melancholic expression. We can remember the poem "Interpretation of Love" with its melancholic atmosphere. Moreover, Raf'at, in his poem "Iran," seems to be at the highest point of this melancholy-imaginary. The whole poem seems to be the melancholy of a self caught in disastrous modern condition, lacking faith, or any other value, and having substituted all for naïve nationalism. At the time that Iran is caught in the middle of the conflicts of the Imperialist powers of the time and is not at its strongest point, he praises it as "the marvellous paradise in Asia," that "ten Kings of west are in love with it."⁵² This is melancholic, but it also seems to be the ultimate point of westoxification. On the surface, it seems that it is not submitting to western politics and culture, but it actually praises Iran as an Orientalist would do in an apolitical frame. This is the furthest Raf'at can get even from his own rebellion. The poem actually submits itself to the condition more than any other writing or moment in Raf'at's life, culminating in the point where he calls the Iranians "Ariya." The poem falls into the fundamentalist ideas of modernity. While Iran is caught in its worst historical period, being invaded by many imperialists, he addresses Iran and congratulates it that "none of those attempting to murder it are alive." The poem is melancholy-imaginary to the point that it has lost its relation to any reality.

However, when we do not face the melancholy-imaginary, the desire seems to progress dialectically toward something less conservative and more rebellious. The desire and craving seem to be formed in a dialectical process that is not solely submitting to the condition, rather, it is based on an understanding of the condition as disastrous. This makes the desire to go against the condition and become rebellious. The most significant example is found in Raf'at's formulation of literary rebellion, which is profoundly entangled with the spiritual hunger he depicted. This makes it possible to go beyond the material westoxified desire and get to a rebellious spiritual attitude toward the disastrous modern condition. Then, one can imagine Raf'at as the "victim of this anxiety or a victim of that about which he was anxious lest he be overcome."⁵³ Now, we can see two parallel distinctions in two different loci. One is the distinction between the formulation of psychological conditions with and without faith. The other is the distinction between the westoxified desire and the rebellious agenda, both of which result from the psychological condition (fear, despair, and anxiety).

The distinction based on the presence of faith is best described in *Fear and Trembling*, where Kierkegaard tries to grasp the faith as it is, which he ultimately presents as absurd. In that scheme, he tries to depict this distinction by introducing two images: the knight of faith and the tragic hero. Interestingly, the scheme formulated by Kierkegaard, here, seems to have a close relation to the image of the flying flare and Benjamin's ideas in *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. Kierkegaard begins his "Eulogy on Abraham" with hypothetical questions. He asks what one can make of human being if he did not have eternal consciousness. Consequently, he asks what "if one generation emerged after another like forest foliage, if one generation succeeded another like the singing of birds in the forest, if a generation passed through the

⁵² Taqi Raf'at, "Iran", *Tajaddod*, No. 43, 27 September 1917, 1.

⁵³ *Sickness unto Death*, 37.

world as a ship through the sea, as wind through the desert.”⁵⁴ Reading these lines, one can quickly remember Benjamin, where he endowed each generation with a weak Messianic power since they were expected by the previous ones. Benjamin’s materialist perception of history seems to be closely linked with Kierkegaard’s theological perception of eternal consciousness, on which then he builds his idea of absurd and faith. As the image of the flying flare in the previous chapter proved, the weak Messianic power could be traced in Raf‘at’s perception of modernity in the sense that he was trying to impose a new consciousness on the social/literary history of Iran. In the meantime, he faded out into oblivion. Thus, as one could imagine his presence as the moment of danger we had to seize and recognize, one can perceive it as a cancelation of the eternal consciousness in Kierkegaard’s scheme. “If an eternal oblivion, perpetually hungry, lurked for its prey and there were no power strong enough to wrench that away from it—how empty and devoid of consolation life would be!”⁵⁵ writes Kierkegaard. This eternal oblivion resembles death not in the physical sense, since if we accept Kierkegaard’s perception, “this sickness is not unto death.” However, it can cause anxiety. Nevertheless, one may not trap oneself in asynchronicity and claim that Raf‘at’s anxiety was caused by the fact that he faded into oblivion after his death. Rather, one can claim that Raf‘at’s anxiety in this scheme results from his cessation of the tradition, as defended by the conservatives. That cessation renders him out of the continuous consciousness of the literary/cultural atmosphere and causes anxiety. Kierkegaard himself concludes this problematic condition in a genius way: “But precisely for that reason it is not so, and just as God created man and woman, so he created the hero and the poet or orator. The poet or orator can do nothing that the hero does; he can only admire, love, and delight in him. Yet he, too, is happy—no less than that one is, for the hero is, so to speak, his better nature, with which he is enamored—yet happy that the other is not himself, that his love can be admiration. He is recollection’s genius.”⁵⁶ The hero, here, is the knight of faith, but, in our study, we are just facing the tragic hero. So the formulation could be slightly changed. The poet admires the hero as his better nature, what he could be, or what he craves. However, at the same time, caught in the faithless disastrous modern condition, he synthesises a new idea (image) of a hero in his anxious consciousness. That image craves the real hero. However, the image itself is the synthesis of the real hero’s image and the anxious rebellion toward the disastrous condition. As a result, the poet is not craving for the hero. He is craving an image in the heart of which there is a desire for the hero. Our hero is two levels away from the knight of faith. At this moment, we can remember Raf‘at, where he praised Dehqan on the verge of disaster, trying to make up his mind and unite the necessity and possibility of his life. As previously described, Dehqan is the better nature of Raf‘at, but he is not *the hero*. Dehqan is an image in which there is a desire for the hero, but he is tragically far from the real hero.

If a poet finds the real hero, “he roams about to every man’s door with his song and speech so that all may admire the hero as he does.”⁵⁷ This is the case of Kierkegaard himself, who is singing his *dialectical lyric* for the real *hero* he has found: Abraham (the knight of faith). However, in the case of Raf‘at, there is no such hero. Raf‘at’s hero is Dehqan, who is the image in which there is a desire for the hero since Dehqan is the synthesis of the desire for the hero and the disastrous condition. He is formed in a rebellious perspective within the disastrous modern condition. What Raf‘at has reached is the pain. It is the pain that he has found. In that case, knocking on every man’s door is like disturbing them with horrific news. Raf‘at has found

⁵⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling, Repetition*, edited and translated Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. (Princeton University Press, 1983), 15.

⁵⁵ *Fear and Trembling*, 15.

⁵⁶ *Fear and Trembling*, 15.

⁵⁷ *Fear and Trembling*, 15.

the pain and is knocking on each door anxiously presenting the pain. That disturbs every man. That is probably why Raḡat's discussion with his conservative peers is so controversial. His news disturbs them to the point that they prefer leaving him in oblivion. Therefore, this cessation of consciousness renders themselves and Raḡat weaker than being able to acquire the weak Messianic power.

Furthermore, if Raḡat is to "remain true to his love in this way, if he contends night and day against the craftiness of oblivion, which wants to trick him out of his hero,"⁵⁸ then he is desperately trying to shout the pain in the face of those who cannot feel it, or are reluctant to grasp it. The discussion continues only as far as the physical cry exists. With the physical cry vanishing, the discussion also fades, as we previously observed in subchapter 4.5 (p. 120). Moreover, since the poet is "the hero's better nature, powerless, to be sure, just as a memory is, but also transfigured just as a memory is," Raḡat's existence turns into a powerless memory in the moment of danger of being forgotten forever. He becomes a flying flare that one has to seize and recognize in the moment of danger which is oblivion.

Suppose one gets closer to Raḡat at this moment and tries to understand him psychologically. In that case, one can claim that in the disastrous modern condition, he does not find anything "that reminded him of what he cherished, but everything by its newness" tempts "his soul to sorrowful longing."⁵⁹ On the first level, this newness is the westoxified atmosphere which drowns one in the processes of being absorbed in the capitalist economy. On the other level, beyond that, the newness is the opposite of the image he has developed as the object of desire. We already saw that this image itself is the synthesis of the desire for the hero and the disastrous material condition within a rebellious scheme. Thus, one can see the simultaneous existence of banal westoxified procedures alongside a more critical desire driven by spiritual hunger. In both of these cases, one must constantly be reminded that there is a touchstone that, on any level, one can judge the significance of a desire. As Kierkegaard mentions: "what is the value of going to the trouble of remembering that past which cannot become a present." If a past does not relate to one's immediate material condition, it is better to ignore it. Same we observed in the case of the flying flare, that a historical instance must be recognized in the moment of danger, not when it is a spoil in the enemy's victorious procession. One must resist the victorious Antichrist to prove his faith in Christ.

Kierkegaard defines the recognition process based on prior hiddenness.⁶⁰ Considering the flying flare, the hiddenness could be translated as the moment of danger. Moreover, this hiddenness becomes a rudiment to define the tragic hero by Kierkegaard, which is closer to our perception of Raḡat than the knight of faith. "In Greek tragedy, the hiddenness (and as a result of it the recognition) is an epic remnant based on a fate in which the dramatic action vanishes and in which it has its dark, mysterious source"⁶¹ writes Kierkegaard. The condition of the tragic hero resembles that of the flying flare, leaping from a dark, mysterious source, resulting in the dramatic presence which vanishes because of fate (here, the oblivion). In such a condition, the more the tragic hero speaks, the more he sustains his presence. But the knight of faith is beyond that:

Abraham remains silent—but he *cannot* speak. Therein lies the distress and anxiety. Even though I go on talking night and day without interruption, if I cannot make myself

⁵⁸ *Fear and Trembling*, 15.

⁵⁹ *Fear and Trembling*, 17.

⁶⁰ "Whenever and wherever it is possible to speak of recognition, there is *eo ipso* a prior hiddenness. Just as the recognition is the resolving, the relaxing element in dramatic life, so hiddenness is the tension-creating factor" *Fear and Trembling*, 83.

⁶¹ *Fear and Trembling*, 84.

understood when I speak, then I am not speaking. This is the case with Abraham. He can say everything, but one thing he cannot say, and if he cannot say that—that is, say it in such a way that the other understands it—then he is not speaking.⁶²

Having this in mind, one can come to certain observations. Firstly, Raŕat speaks a lot, proving himself far from anything like the knight of faith. However, Raŕat is unable to express his pain. He cannot point where the pain is. He even aims wrong. In that case, one can imagine different scenarios. We may be facing a superficial, banal anxiety resulting from westoxification. We may conclude that pain and suffering are the essential qualities of modern condition in general. Alternatively, we can conclude that we must posit Raŕat as the tragic hero with a subsequent difference from Kierkegaard’s formulation. In this case, let us see how we can posit Raŕat between the tragic hero and knight of faith.

“The tragic hero does not know the dreadful responsibility of loneliness.” As a result, when his groanings cannot be uttered, it is a torturing condition to him.⁶³ In this sense, Raŕat accords with the tragic hero. “We feel a solitude, isolation and loneliness in the midst of current world which cannot be mitigated by any poetry”⁶⁴ writes Raŕat. The very same essence could be found here as well: the dread of loneliness alongside the torture and torment of not being able to express the pain. However, there is a subtle difference that can slide Raŕat a bit further from the tragic hero, pushing him toward another position. Kierkegaard calls it the intellectual tragic hero. The intellectual tragic hero culminates in his closure:

If an intellectual tragic hero like this culminates in a suffering (in death), he becomes immortal through this last word before he dies, whereas the ordinary tragic hero does not become immortal until after his death.⁶⁵

To perceive Raŕat as the intellectual tragic hero, one must ask: “did Raŕat have any last words to become immortal through them?” The first answer is a confident no. He committed suicide somewhere without many witnesses, which means, materially talking, he did not utter anything. However, was he looking for a closure to prove himself immortal? The answer is probably positive, since he was concerned with his spiritual poverty. In that case, maybe he had uttered his last words long before his death and even repeatedly enough to be bold so we may notice it. That last word which echoes in all his oeuvre even from the beginning, is “we are ill and anxious.” It may seem like an asynchronous perception. However, the echo of this anxiety and illness is so bold and ever-present in his oeuvre that one can be sure about the closure and his last words. He was ill and anxious.

In conclusion, one can see Raŕat as a self, trying to become a spirit, and since this is happening in a condition where one cannot claim that it is happening before God, it is all left in vain. Thus, the anxiety we observe lies in the fact that Raŕat fails to become a spirit, and this is the most immense despair and anxiety. However, this can be despair only if one has an image of God, faith, or the knight of faith. The anxiety could be perceived profound enough to be considered driven by the spiritual poverty only if there is an image of the faith. This image is not present immediately in Raŕat’s condition, not only because he does not manifest his religious faith, but rather because in the modern disastrous condition, all those venerable values have already melted into air. Yet, the image to which he aspires and tries to become a self through that, is the synthesis of a desire of the real hero contradicted by the disastrous material condition in which he is caught. This synthetic image is formed within a rebellious frame which

⁶² *Fear and Trembling*, 113.

⁶³ *Fear and Trembling*, 114.

⁶⁴ Raŕat, “A Literary Rebellion,” 28.

⁶⁵ *Fear and Trembling*, 116-117.

is not content with the material condition in which he is caught. It is the image of a doomed Messiah who cannot redeem, or better to say, one who has lost the material opportunity of becoming a spirit so as to be able to be redeemed by the Messiah. The whole scheme renders the self and Messiah doomed in a disastrous modern condition. We have already met, to some extent, the doomed Messiah and its pertaining images, and we will yet meet it on other occasions.

5.3. Modernity as Real Messianic Experience: “The Grand Inquisitor” and “Rebellion”

Having observed the psychological formulation of Raḥat’s anxiety and its link to the flying flare, we may go further to meet a literary representation of anxiety and its relation to our previous study and the idea of a doomed Messiah and self. This enables us to get back to Raḥat and meet his anxiety in the loci where it is more subtle and difficult to detect. One particular literary image can help us here: Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov*. We will see how we may relate the study of anxiety and anxious writing to Ivan and use it to perceive better the anxiety Raḥat was experiencing.

Ivan described his writing as “muddled poems of a muddled student.” Interestingly enough, Raḥat’s poetry and writing have always been disputed as metamorphic or deficient in their language, as we saw earlier in subchapter 1.5 (p. 39). Raḥat’s poetry seems to be as muddled as Ivan’s. Surprisingly, Ivan, who finally burns in the melancholic fever of his ideas, craves what Raḥat later performs: “I just want to drag on until I’m thirty, and then---smash the cup on the floor!”⁶⁶ Although these are superficial accidental similarities, there is more than to that. Ivan’s anxiety and his anxious muddled writing can be an excellent example to go through to understand Raḥat’s anxiety better.

Ivan’s character with his rebellious idea, intolerant of any injustice, culminates in the chapter dedicated to his strange poem *The Grand Inquisitor*, which D. H. Lawrence primarily found as “a display of cynical-satanical pose which was simply irritating.”⁶⁷ It is not odd that Jalal was afraid of Dostoevsky. “Any time, I read a book by Dostoevsky I get terrified,”⁶⁸ writes Jalal. Moreover, to him, Dostoevsky is not a person predisposed to delicacy or technique. Thus, it is not wrong to perceive *The Grand Inquisitor* as the narratological scheme which is meant to challenge the spiritual worldview of Alyosha. It can even be read as a philosophical treatise.

Before Ivan starts reading his poem to Alyosha, they engage in a debate. There, Ivan claims something which goes against his own stance that rejects Alyosha’s spiritual worldview. “Some people need one thing, but we green youths need another, we need first of all to resolve the everlasting questions, that is what concerns us. All of young Russia is talking now only about the eternal questions. Precisely now, just when all the old men have suddenly gotten into practical questions”⁶⁹ says Ivan. The Russian youth, including anxious Ivan, are primarily concerned with the eternal questions. The Ironic condition where youth seek responses to the eternal question and the old are into practical questions, and the youths’ consequent rebellion, reminds us of the rebellion of the mass of hungry people, which Raḥat depicted and later used

⁶⁶ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. (Everyman’s Library, 1992), 223

⁶⁷ David Herbert Lawrence, *Selected Literary Criticism*, edited by Anthony Beal. (Heinemann, 1919), 233.

⁶⁸ Jalal Al-e Ahmad, “Dostoevsky, Nihilism and its Destiny,” in *Arḏyābī-yi Shitābzadah (Hurried Investigations)*. (Tabriz: Ebne Sina, 1344), 109.

⁶⁹ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 197.

to depict he and his generation's spiritual poverty. There seems to be a realist rebellion, both in the case of Ivan and Raskolnikov.

The grand inquisitor, amid his dispute with Christ, asks an unsettling serious question and, by responding to that, criticizes Christ:

Who did this? He who came to give his life for them! Instead of taking over men's freedom, you increased it and forever burdened the kingdom of the human soul with its torments. You desired the free love of man, that he should follow you freely, seduced and captivated by you. Instead of the firm ancient law, man had henceforth to decide for himself, with a free heart, what is good and what is evil, having only your image before him as a guide-but did it not occur to you that he would eventually reject and dispute even your image and your truth if he was oppressed by so terrible a burden as freedom of choice? They will finally cry out that the truth is not in you, for it was impossible to leave them in greater confusion and torment than you did, abandoning them to so many cares and insoluble problems.⁷⁰

The passage is full of blasphemous doubts, while it surprisingly fits Kierkegaard's formulation of anxiety. The difference is that the grand inquisitor uses this scheme to oppose the Christ, while Kierkegaard uses it to give his soul to Christ and become a self before God. As we saw earlier, in Kierkegaard's formulation, anxiety is "freedom's actuality as the possibility of possibility." In the grand inquisitor's words, we can trace the pivotal role of freedom in his criticism of Christ. Apparently, the wrong deed on the side of Christ was that he did not take over men's freedom. Hence, this freedom seems to be the source of all the torments that man experiences. In such a condition, the man had to "decide for himself, with a free heart." This is the moment where anxiety begins as a presupposition of the hereditary sin in the formulations of Kierkegaard. However, when, unlike Kierkegaard, the faith is rejected, this is not only the beginning of anxiety, but also the beginning of all other torments. Because the time will come when the man eventually rejects even Christ's image and disputes it, and consequently, he will be oppressed by the burden of the freedom of choice. Faith is present in Kierkegaard's writings, so anxiety and freedom are the tools to describe the existence. However, when faith as such is gone, it is the creator to be accused for what human beings have enjoyed and suffered: freedom.

Firstly, we may remember Raskolnikov's Dehqan and his moment of decision which encapsulated the whole anxiety Raskolnikov himself was facing. The primary source of the anxious moment and writing was the fact that one had to choose. More importantly, the case of Raskolnikov resembles more the grand inquisitor's blasphemous criticism, rather than Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's formulation is a general explanation fitting the human existence in general, while the grand inquisitor's account is based on the disastrous material condition that human being is caught in. Thus, we are able to build upon our previous psychological study of anxiety and observe its relation to one's immediate material condition.

One may also remember the idea of the Messianic in Benjamin and the image of the flying flare, where the Angel of History could not make a whole of the pile of the dead while there was always a weak messianic power present in everyone. Raskolnikov's presence and oeuvre were the same, since it was deeply related to the spiritual (eternal) questions while sinking in the torments of material condition. One of the examples of this was his ambiguous account of the Titanic, where one is not sure if he is craving or rejecting it.

The grand inquisitor brilliantly and blasphemously points out the material deficiencies in Christ's worldview, which have made the human beings end in torment. By this, he justifies

⁷⁰ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 216.

his own material rebellion in the guise of faith to make a more prosperous life for the human being. “Thus you yourself laid the foundation for the destruction of your own kingdom, and do not blame anyone else for it. Yet is this what was offered you? There are three powers, only three powers on earth, capable of conquering and holding captive forever the conscience of these feeble rebels, for their own happiness--- these powers are miracle, mystery, and authority. You rejected the first, the second, and the third, and gave yourself as an example of that.”⁷¹ The grand inquisitor delineates the deficiency of Christ’s spirituality via concrete material notions: miracle, mystery and authority. He claims that he has corrected Christ’s deed and based it on “miracle, mystery, and authority.”⁷² Aside from the veracity of the grand inquisitor’s argument, the formulation seems to be ingenious enough to define the relation between anxiety and the material rebellion, which we will see in detail in the case of Raf’at in subchapter X.

Nevertheless, in the grand inquisitor’s argument, there is something else in which we may be interested. The image of the encounter between the grand inquisitor and Christ seems to represent modernity to some extent. Christ seems to be the modernity itself in the sense that it is bringing back the old values in the guise of new demands. However, the grand inquisitor represents the image of a synthesis of the conservative social forces with the rebellious forces fed up with disastrous modernity. Modernity is disastrous, and as a result, one cannot embrace Christ since it reminds one of the disastrous moment in which they are caught. The rebellious stance itself is a leap to go beyond Christ by materializing it. Christ is already doomed to be defeated. Christ and the faith, as represented in the gospels or formulations of Kierkegaard, cannot win the material battle. The battle is already lost. The Messiah is already defeated. We are facing the doomed Messiah just as we observed previously with the flying flare.

Furthermore, the rebellious stance itself is as doomed as Messiah and meant to be defeated. Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, who is the father and to some extent represents the already existing condition, describes Ivan in this manner: “Ivan loves nobody, Ivan is not one of us; people like Ivan are not our people, my friend, they’re a puff of dust ... The wind blows, and the dust is gone.”⁷³ Ivan’s dust-like presence resembles the flying flare, for it fades into oblivion desired by the father (the already existing condition). Ivan’s rebellion, materially talking, is a puff of dust, easy to be blown by the blow of the condition. The same was the case with Raf’at, whose rebellion was not easy to blow. However, it was finally blown by a gun.

The same concept is well depicted by the grand inquisitor. “But finally the foolish children will understand that although they are rebels, they are feeble rebels, who cannot endure their own rebellion,”⁷⁴ said the inquisitor. Evidently, as it is impossible to maintain Christ’s idea of rejecting the mystery, miracle, and authority for the sake of freedom of humanity, it is impossible to maintain the rebellion against that condition. This is boldly claimed by the grand inquisitor. He seems to be the brutal personification of the fact that Messiah and rebellion are both doomed. The material condition renders both as doomed and already defeated.

The fact that the rebellion is doomed is based on the material condition of the human being. This material condition is not only one’s surroundings, but also the existential condition within oneself. That existential quality in the human being is closely related to anxiety, as Kierkegaard explained. The grand inquisitor posits the difference between those who tend to rebel with other people. This distinction, in some sense, is an attempt on the side of rebellion to go beyond his condition and consequently, his peer human beings. It is impossible for him to imagine a human

⁷¹ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 216.

⁷² *The Brothers Karamazov*, 218.

⁷³ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 147.

⁷⁴ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 217.

being strong enough to reject the miracle “in those terrible moments of life, the moments of the most terrible, essential, and tormenting questions of the soul” and “to remain only with the free decision of the heart.”⁷⁵ The moment of decision in the torments of life cancels the possibility of a human being strong enough to reject the miracle. In Kierkegaard’s formulation, this is the essential quality of humankind: the free decision of the heart, which is equivalent to anxiety. Having faith in Christ, Kierkegaard treats it as a natural quality, while the grand inquisitor uses it to question the whole scheme. Therefore, the Messiah and rebellion both are rendered doomed. Consequently, the grand inquisitor posits himself as the rebellion against the rebellion, which in some sense brings him back toward conservatism, however, stronger than before: “so we took Caesar’s sword, and in taking it, of course, we rejected you and followed him.”⁷⁶

In such a conservative scheme, people will joyfully believe in the grand inquisitor’s *decision*. They do not need to believe in him. They must believe in his decision. The grand inquisitor claims to possess the miracle in the most mundane scheme where belief pertains to material decisions, not to any transcended truth. He delivers the people “from their great care and their present terrible torments of personal and free decision.”⁷⁷ This is deceiving the people, so they do not feel the moment of decision in which they are caught. The moment of encountering the modern disastrous condition is the same as encountering the revenant Christ. Both are expected but already defeated and doomed. In this conservative scheme of the grand inquisitor, one has to surrender to the doomed Messiah or the deterministic suppression of human freedom by the church that the grand inquisitor represents (namely, submitting to the already existing modern condition). There is no redemption in either of the choices.

Such a scheme ends in a witty representation of democracy: “It is said and prophesied that you will come and once more be victorious, you will come with your chosen ones, with your proud and mighty ones, but we will say that they saved only themselves, while we have saved everyone.”⁷⁸ What is happening here is that the grand inquisitor materially delineates the impossibility of redemption. However, one may remember Kierkegaard, in whose scheme the faith can save one’s soul. Nevertheless, it is the modern formulation of democracy that is important here. It directly renders the grand inquisitor as the representation of the modern condition. When faith is put aside, the more you can entice, the more authority you gain. This is the exact depiction of *mysteryless* modernity. This modernity can only save itself, as we observed in many cases like the Titanic or the ill character in Jalal’s story. It can create the disaster and only save itself, making piles of dead and tormented. This disastrous modernity may be discredited only at the cost of terminating the whole world.

“Your Inquisitor doesn’t believe in God, that’s his whole secret!”⁷⁹ This cry of Alyosha has the strength to give meaning to the soul of the one faithfully becoming a self before God. Alyosha, with his genius, finds the real secret. The inquisitor does not have faith since the modern condition suspends any possibility of faith, substituting it with egoism. Therefore, if we are to consider the scheme in which anxiety is formulated, Kierkegaard depicts it within the faith just as Alyosha understands it, and the inquisitor purports the egocentric disastrous modern perception of that. Nevertheless, if the inquisitor is the literary device made by Ivan, then one may claim either Ivan did not believe in God, or he was disturbed by the whole image of the inquisitor. In Raf’at’s case, it is not possible to overtly trace God, though the spiritual hunger

⁷⁵ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 217.

⁷⁶ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 218.

⁷⁷ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 220.

⁷⁸ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 220.

⁷⁹ *The Brothers Karamazov*, 221.

may suggest some sort of belief in God. This makes Ivan and Raf'at's rebellion resemble since they both suggest they either do not know God or have a disturbed perception of God. They do not know God sufficiently or are caught in a condition that they have to approach god via material means, which seems to be a doomed attempt from the beginning.

Such a reading of Ivan can make a ground for understanding Sigmund Freud's *Dostoevsky and Parricide*. Even so, one must always bear in mind that Freud is only competent in reading Ivan or any other single character, but he is not sufficient for reading *The Brothers Karamazov*, as he attempted because the whole novel depicts the nexus of complicated relationships among all these ideas. However, a psychoanalyst like Freud always focuses on single qualities abstracted from their context. Dostoevsky and Freud could never meet each other on peaceful terms. Dostoevsky abdicated him (psychoanalysis) as a tool with no meaning, which can cut both ways. Furthermore, suppose there is a legitimacy in Freud's writing, then his writing is the reproduction of Dimitri's court but this time in order to sentence Dostoevsky for rape, parricide, and total neurosis.⁸⁰ Freud merely finds in Dostoevsky the "retrograde position of submission both to temporal and spiritual authority, of veneration both for the Tsar and for the God of the Christians"⁸¹ and believes this is determined by "an intellectual inhibition due to his neurosis."⁸²

Suppose one is to believe Freud's analysis of Dostoevsky, although it is "so alien to our consciousness."⁸³ In that case, one can conclude that Dostoevsky and Ivan must get close in the biographical sense concerning the wish to kill the father, epilepsy, and neurosis. Howbeit, Raf'at does not seem to show such characteristics. He is simply anxious and regretful. In that sense, if Freud's psychoanalysis is to be taken seriously, one can judge Raf'at as an example of collective neurosis, in the sense that he represents to some extent what Jalal introduced as westoxification. One can claim that collective neurosis is the psychoanalytical expression of westoxification, reminding one of the notion of illness and its frequent emergence in our reading and Raf'at's oeuvre.

D. H. Lawrence, in his preface to Koteliansky's translation of *The Grand Inquisitor*,⁸⁴ was shocked by the idea of the novel that he found in it: "Jesus, you are inadequate. Men must correct you."⁸⁵ Lawrence was not content with Dostoevsky's blasphemous criticism of Jesus. However, the idea of discerning an inadequacy, outside the realm of faith, could be found in Raf'at. In that case, the inadequate qualities are the tradition, the language, and literary forms, and men must correct them. The inadequacy in this scheme is on the material level. However, we have previously observed that this material inadequacy is closely related to the inadequacy Raf'at finds in his own spiritual life, which he refers to as spiritual hunger.

⁸⁰ Sigmund Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide" in *Collected Papers*, (Ed. James Strachey). Vol. 5. (New York: Basic Books. 1959) Pp. 222-242.

⁸¹ Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide," 231.

⁸² Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide," 235.

⁸³ "So alien to our consciousness are the things by which our unconscious mental life is governed!" Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide" 231

⁸⁴ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. (1930). *The Grand Inquisitor*. Translated by S. S. Koteliansky. Introduction by D. H. Lawrence. London: Elkin and Marot.

The preface is reprinted in: D. H. Lawrence. (1919). *Selected Literary Criticism*. Edited by Anthony Beal. Heinemann. 233-241.

⁸⁵ Lawrence, *Selected Literary Criticism*, 234.

Lawrence's orthodox way of treating the subject leads him to believe in saints, heroes, and Jesus and treat the rest as impotent rebellious babies and horses.⁸⁶ Surprisingly, this is the echo of the inquisitor's ideas. Lawrence's description of man as "a horse harnessed to a load he cannot possibly pull"⁸⁷ is similar to the inquisitor's treatment of the man, who believes the man will fail in moments of torment. Nonetheless, this idea is critical for us since it is present in Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, and now in Lawrence. The man we need to treat seems to be somewhere close to being a horse. Ivan, Raġat, Dehqan, and the horse, are the ones we need to analyse in the material condition. Kierkegaard already explained that man without the anxiety and the hereditary sin would remain somewhere between human and beast. In a disastrous condition where faith is suspended, and the revenant Christ may not even seize hold of any authority, this is the destiny of any modern man. They are not human. They may never be the better human. The spiritual poverty which Raġat explained is inherent to their condition and consequently to their existence. The modern man is not able to stand in either of the extremes. He is somewhere in the middle. Being in the middle resembles the metamorphosis that we even observed in the language of Raġat's oeuvre and many other cases, even in Ivan's disturbed language and being.

Edward Wasiolek, in his article "The Brothers Karamazov: Idea and Technique,"⁸⁸ describes Ivan's rebellion against God based "on the rights of children against the fathers who mistreat them, and by analogy the rights of men against the God who has mistreated them."⁸⁹ Here, it is essential to pay attention that mistreatment could be used to refer to a condition where one cannot express himself. Ivan's attempt to express himself poetically could be treated as a sign of such a condition. In the case of Raġat, he seemed mistreated by two different conditions, which were in struggle themselves. He was mistreated by the tradition and could not express his pain within the traditional forms. He was also mistreated by the newly emerging condition of modernity which proved itself disastrous, causing him to suffer spiritual poverty. In such a condition, the external drama is one's internal drama.⁹⁰ In Ivan's case, we know both dramas. In the case of Raġat, the internal drama is based on the mistreatment by the disastrous modernity and its consequential spiritual poverty. And the external drama is what he tries to depict outside the traditional forms: his Dehqan, his own anxiety, etc. Anxiety in this sense is like the internalized drama of Raġat's existence concerning spiritual poverty.

Wasiolek believes that the justice looked for by Ivan is the "dream of a world remade in the image of him."⁹¹ In this sense, Ivan craves the image of the inquisitor, and Raġat craves the image of Dehqan. The crucial point is that this image is based on loss and disaster. Ivan craves justice, but Raġat craves the defeated Dehqan, for it is the actual condition he faces.

As we have already observed in the formulations of Kierkegaard, the faith and, consequently, the hereditary sin is based on anxiety, despair, and terror. Wasiolek correctly points out that, unlike the inquisitor, Jesus asks men "to rise above their natures, to make over their natures in his image, and they can do that only as he had done it: in loneliness, terror, and anxiety."⁹² In this sense, the image which Raġat craves (Dehqan) seems to be a better match for someone

⁸⁶ "The rest, the millions and millions of men throughout time, they are as babes or children or geese, they are too weak, "impotent, vicious, worthless and rebellious" even to be able to share out the earthly bread, if it is left to them." Lawrence, *Selected Literary Criticism*, 234.

⁸⁷ Lawrence, *Selected Literary Criticism*, 235.

⁸⁸ Edward Wasiolek, "The Brothers Karamazov: Idea and Technique," in Wasiolek, Edward. *The Brothers Karamazov and the Critics*. (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1967), 118-144.

⁸⁹ Wasiolek, "The Brothers Karamazov: Idea and Technique," 119.

⁹⁰ Wasiolek, "The Brothers Karamazov: Idea and Technique," 119.

⁹¹ Wasiolek, "The Brothers Karamazov: Idea and Technique," 129.

⁹² Wasiolek, "The Brothers Karamazov: Idea and Technique," 133.

with spiritual poverty. Dehqan encapsulates in itself loneliness, anxiety, and terror. Thus, one can conclude that the image Raf'at craves has a desire for faithful redemption in it. Unlike Ivan's desired image, which is all materially settled. As a result, one can claim that Raf'at expects Dehqan and himself to move beyond their condition in their moment of decision at the heart of the disastrous condition.

5.4. Being kissed by Jesus: Being-in-modern-condition

To this point, we observed the psychological aspect of Raf'at's anxious rebellion using Kierkegaard's formulations and Ivan Karamazov's anxious character. We may now take a step further and see how these images can define one's existence in his immediate modern condition, which we have already found disastrous. It will be beneficial to start with the closure of "The Grand Inquisitor," where the inquisitor is kissed by Christ.⁹³ The Kiss by Christ is like encountering modernity. It makes one anxious to the point that it burns his heart. As did the inquisitor, one has to make it go away. This is the strategy of pain. One has to decide at the moment either to embrace the pain, whether rebelliously or conservatively, or to submit to the condition. This means that one must admit that we are living in an era, in a condition, where redemption is impossible, and we are caught in anxiety and disaster.

Lawrence provides a politically realistic account of the miracle, mystery, and authority in his writing about "The Grand Inquisitor."⁹⁴ His account could be extended to the political scene of Iran on that day. In fact, Raf'at's condition and consequently the condition of Iran is like encountering this transition in the moment of crisis. Crisis as Gramsci defines it: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."⁹⁵ The old condition is dying, or better to say, it has already died, but the new condition is in the midst of a difficult delivery, and it appears that it is a pregnancy with much pain and suffering. The transition from the previous to the new condition happens while one is stunned by these three and is terribly anxious. Therefore, in the westoxification framework, Raf'at is precisely looking for what Lawrence described here. However, the crucial point is that there are moments when the desire for the new condition gives its place to anxiety, and everything finds a significant, profound meaning. Those moments Raf'at feels the danger as he was feeling with the Titanic, while he seems to crave it. The anxious unconscious plays its role in this process.

⁹³ "I was going to end it like this: when the Inquisitor fell silent, he waited some time for his prisoner to reply. His silence weighed on him. He had seen how the captive listened to him all the while intently and calmly, looking him straight in the eye, and apparently not wishing to contradict anything. The old man would have liked him to say something, even something bitter, terrible. But suddenly he approaches the old man in silence and gently kisses him on his bloodless, ninety-year-old lips. That is the whole answer. The old man shudders. Something stirs at the corners of his mouth; he walks to the door, opens it, and says to him: 'Go and do not come again ... do not come at all ... never, never!' And he lets him out into the 'dark squares of the city.' The prisoner goes away" *The Brothers Karamazov*, 222.

⁹⁴ "It is true that mankind demands, and will always demand, miracle, mystery, and authority? Surely it is true. To-day, man gets his sense of the miraculous from science and machinery, radio, aeroplanes, vast ships, zeppelins, poison gas, artificial silk: these things nourish man's sense of the miraculous as magic did in the past. But now, man is master of mystery, there are no occult powers. The same with mystery: medicine, biological experiment, strange feats of the psychic people, spiritualists, Christian scientists – it is all mystery. And as for authority, Russia destroyed the Tsar to have Lenin and the present mechanical despotism, Italy has the rationalised despotism of Mussolini, and England is longing for a despot." Lawrence, *Selected Literary Criticism*, 235.

⁹⁵ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. (New York: International Publishers, 1992), 276.

Having met these aspects, we may try to formulate a more concrete aspect of this rebellion and see how it is materialized and performed in Raf'at's writings and the reality of Raf'at's material performance in the historical scene. In the following passage, one can see the dubious nature of such rebellion and its materialization, which finally, to some extent, leaves space for transcendence:

Any attempt to alter this group's taste and perception would be futile and defective. However, we believe a group made of real knowledgeable modernists (*Mutajaddid*), real youth who are unique by their thought and soul and yet the cancer of despair and indifference have not affected the essence of their life, a selected group of people, exist who are fond of today's civilisation. Their spiritual and moral needs and emotions are never fully satisfied, and they wait with an unquenchable thirst for a cold potion of thought and industry/art to quench the regretful heat of their being. And we are intended to make a movement about this.⁹⁶

In this passage, one can observe the westoxified desire of the modern civilisation, which cannot mean anything other than the capitalist mode of production and its apparatuses, though one can claim Raf'at naively did not see that. However, again one can find the moments where something more profound is going on. Raf'at keeps referring to the moral and spiritual need and thirst in himself and his generation. Interestingly, in this argument here, spiritual poverty and thirst are found in those fond of the new civilisation. If we put aside the westoxification argument and find something deeper, then we may actually relate this spiritual thirst to the new condition. In this sense, the spiritual thirst Raf'at feels is the result of the new civilisation, and therefore, he is caught in a moment of anxiety during a crisis. During this crisis, the old is dying. The old condition which did not let him express his pain, and he does not intend to defend it. Moreover, the newly emerged condition with its disastrous face has rendered him anxious and spiritually poor, so he needs to quench his moral and spiritual thirst. Thus, in this scheme, he is suffering spiritual poverty during the crisis caused by both the old dying condition and the newly emerging disastrous one. This is the only way to redeem this scheme from the banal westoxified desire for the new status quo.

To better understand this scheme and why this reading is the only way to redeem Raf'at from the banal perception of his condition, we may look into two moments in the writings of Jalal and Sa'edi. In one of his interviews, Jalal compares the character of his story, the schoolmaster (*Mudīr-i Madrisah*), to Albert Camus' *The Stranger* and says:

Camus' *The Stranger* is indifferent and perplexed. While my schoolmaster is attentive and bewildered... The estrangement in Camus' oeuvre – I am not talking of himself – is the estrangement of an intellectual whose old values are seized from him by machine. The new values he is given do not let him be useful. Because the one who is rightly meant to create these values is the intellectual, author, and artist. This estranged – this intellectual – inevitably remains lonely. In the European world after the war with his existentialism and indifference. Because Camus has the machine in his control and using it. However, my schoolmaster is bewildered, for he is being squeezed under the machine.⁹⁷

The distinction which Jalal delineates here is based on *machine* (machinery), which is his favourite notion when formulating the westoxification. Nevertheless, the distinction matches

⁹⁶ Taqi Raf'at, "Tajaddud dar Adabīyat 2" (Modernism in Literature 2), in *Tajaddud*, No. 166, 11 December 1919, 4.

⁹⁷ Jalal Al-e Ahmad, "A Long Interview," in *Arzyābī-yi Shitābzadah (Hurried Investigations)*. (Tabriz: Ebne Sina, 1344 [1965]), 96.

the distinction between the old and new conditions in the time of crisis, as we have already seen. In this sense, Camus represents a new position in our scheme, which is someone caught in the disastrous condition but responding to this disastrous modern capitalist condition with a sort of indifference. The schoolmaster, on the other hand, represents a bewildered individual during the crisis, which makes his position similar to Raf'at's. However, their response to their condition is different.

Therefore, if it is to be taken seriously, Raf'at's condition must be considered as a synthesis of these two positions (Camus and the schoolmaster) in a time of crisis. Suppose it is taken seriously, then it can surpass Jalal's argument since it had predicted and felt something more profound in the dialectics of the disastrous modern condition. Moreover, being squeezed under the machinery resembles Raf'at's perception of disastrous modern condition as we observed in the case of the Titanic, Dehqan, and more importantly, in his anxious writing and unquenchable anxiety. Later we will see how Raf'at steps outside the westoxification limit to some extent, and leaves behind the western perception of his moment, and materializes his rebellion in concrete notions based on his immediate condition, which finally results in his quest for earthly bread.

Another instance can help us better understand Raf'at's position in this crisis and his later material reaction to it in the guise of earthly bread. Gholam-Hosseini Sa'edi, in his famous novel *The Cannon* (Tūp), depicts a condition that narrates the changes and transitions in the Iranian political scene. In one of the critical moments of this story, when the Mullah tries to persuade the peasants to join the militia of Mujahids to fight for their lives against the evil Shrapnel, we hear a conversation between Mullah and one of the peasants:

'I am not accepting this for God's requital. I don't know who is in charge of this world. Who is honest or who lies. My life is not fine. Me, my wife, and my children are hungry; that's why I accept this,' said the man.

'You will also earn good deeds for the next world,' said Mullah.

'Damn it, Mullah,' said the short man, 'bread and cheese are more necessary than the good deeds for the next world'.⁹⁸

The dialogue encapsulates many of our observations to this point. The anxiety caused by the moment of decision of the peasant (Dehqan) is depicted precisely as Raf'at did from another perspective. The peasants have to choose for their life, as did Raf'at's Dehqan. They must choose to live or die. The material aspect of the decision is brilliantly depicted in this passage, where the peasants reject any religious legitimations for their act. They only base it on earthly bread. As was the case with Raf'at's Dehqan, who was materially led to the point of decision. However, such a point is a moment of anxiety closely related to one's spirit. Nevertheless, one can notice how the modern condition, whether established or in the transition process of the crisis, renders everything void of metaphysics. Later, we will see the details of the quest for earthly bread in Raf'at's writing.

Therefore, if one is to compare Raf'at's position to Jalal's schoolmaster or the peasants in their moment of decision, one has to pay attention to something deeper in his soul, which to some extent is psychological as well. However, we must always bear in mind the limits and boundaries of psychology. Kierkegaard, in the epilogue to *Fear and Trembling*, wrote a passage that can lead us to the point to discover this quality:

⁹⁸ Qulām-Husiyn Sā'idī (Gholam-Hosseini Sa'edi), *Tūp (The Cannon)*, (Tehran: Nil, 1351), 104.

Whatever one generation learns from another, no generation learns the essentially human from a previous one. In this respect, each generation begins primitively, has no task other than what each previous generation had, nor does it advance further, insofar as the previous generations did not betray the task and deceive themselves. The essentially human is passion, in which one generation perfectly understands another and understands itself.⁹⁹

In Kierkegaard's argument, the essentially human is passion. Thus, we may need to find the place for passion in Raf'at's position in comparison to the formulations of Jalal and Sā'idī. The passion lies in the locus where one should also search for relation with the past and past generations. Here, one may remember the weak Messianic power each generation is endowed with. We also observed its consequences in the image of the flying flare. "Only the one who was in anxiety finds rest"¹⁰⁰ writes Kierkegaard. In this, we can notice a link between the anxiety and the theological materialistic perception of history in Benjamin. Keeping in mind passion as the essentially human, passion is itself the result of anxiety. One must be anxious to be passionate and perceive himself and his generation in a particular moment of history. Moreover, we shall remind ourselves of the moment where Raf'at insisted on rendering the Classic oeuvre anew since the interpretations of the previous generations were no use to him.¹⁰¹ In this sense, Raf'at, while he was anxious, was aware of the passion, and he demonstrated that passion.

We may see this passion in the famous image of the dam presented by Raf'at. We may approach this by remembering Kierkegaard when he tried to delineate the distinction between those who "abandon themselves like unmanageable animals to selfish appetites" and the one who demonstrates he does not belong to them "precisely by showing that he knows how to speak in fear and trembling, and speak he must out of respect for greatness, so that it is not forgotten out of fear of harm, which certainly will not come if he speaks out of a knowledge of greatness, a knowledge of its terrors, and if one does not know the terrors, one does not know the greatness, either."¹⁰² The knowledge of terrors makes it possible to possess the knowledge of greatness. Hence, one may prove himself passionate enough to posit his position in relation to the previous generations or the history in general. Raf'at's image of the dam is the intimation of the presence of such knowledge.

The vivacious water of the Iranian literature stopped living and rested in lethargy. The fountain of youth turned into a swamp. A dead water that has not seized emitting shining flying flares under the rays of the sun of different eras. We, the current children of Iran, are facing this vast body of water. Still, its fresh and stimulating chest of water wakes our excitement and appetite. The soul-awakening breeze coming from it, when it reaches us, brings to our regretful souls the smell of a happy and gone past. We are the settlers of a dry and uncivilised flatland whose only happiness is the pilgrimage of this green area. In the dry land where our permanent settlements are, a burning thirst exists. We bedew our burning lips with regret and unhappiness with the water of this old resource. After drinking a sip, the musty taste of this stagnant water stops the blood in our veins, and stops the flow of life in our souls. This area of green and happiness, in the middle of the desert in which we live, warns us of a disaster.

⁹⁹ *Fear and Trembling*, 121.

¹⁰⁰ *Fear and Trembling*, 27.

¹⁰¹ "The interpretation was made in its best by our previous generations. It was a joy that the previous generations felt much better than us. When they occur in our hearts, they don't bring us anything except hereditary gifts. They do not add anything to our soul." Taqi Raf'at, "A Literary Rebellion," in *Tajaddod*, Nowruz 1297 [1917]. p. 30.

¹⁰² *Fear and Trembling*, 75.

The waters on the other side of this dam are strong and powerful. The deserts surrounding this dam are full of wild animals and poisonous insects. With our first strike at this dam, we are sure that we will be covered and inundated with the sludge and mud of the bottom of this dam, and we will be attacked by animals and insects.
But, we are ready.¹⁰³

As one can judge, this is an intense passage. One can also see the intimations of almost any notion we previously discussed. The knowledge of terror is apparent and easy to locate. The image of the dam and being flooded by its mud and sludge is the actual knowledge of terror. The moment to decide to posit your stance toward such an image is an anxiety-causing moment. The moment of decision overwhelms one with anxiety rendering him, to some extent, as a self. If there is any chance of greatness, or so to say, the knowledge of greatness, it is embedded in this decision and its presupposed anxiety. Nevertheless, the quality that makes one decide and take on the risk of the beasts and insects, while being drowned, lies in passion: the passion for life, which we have observed in the descriptions of the thirsty soul and its pilgrimage for the green and fresh water. There is a desire that is closely related to passion; passion in the sense of becoming a self and proving one's spirit by attempting to quench its thirst. Thus, in this image, the spirit is supposed as its consequent needs are acknowledged and attempted to be met. As we learned from Kierkegaard, the very human is never learned from the previous generations, and each generation has to learn it on their own. That is why in the historical material sense, the previous generations and their interpretations¹⁰⁴ become solid and ossified and finally turn into a dam with sludge and mud. In this sense, Raf'at's image of the dam actually encapsulates the formulations of Kierkegaard and Benjamin since it presents the complex image of the dam and surrounding deserts and animals and insects to represent the past material moment or the previous generations and their interpretations. Therefore, to some extent, in Raf'at's literary rebellion, we can see the process of materialization of anxiety and its consequent (material) rebellion which was specific to Raf'at's stance in regard to the modern disastrous moment. In a more materialistic scene, we may remember Kierkegaard's teaching that one had to have knowledge of greatness not to become one of those who give up themselves to selfish appetites. We already observed how Raf'at was concerned about his excitement (passion) and appetite. Thus, we may be encouraged to use the dam image to indicate the fact that Raf'at did not want to become a human like that, and he cared for his appetite. Those with such selfish appetites could be anyone, not caring about their soul or conservatively forgetting the passion and appetite of their soul, which in the literary battlefield were the conservatives. However, it could signify almost any mode of conservatism. As a result, being flooded with sludge and attacked by wild animals and poisonous insects could be understood as the consequence of not desiring to be one of those with a selfish appetite, and standing for the passion. It is the manifestation of the knowledge of greatness.

The passion not to be one of those who give up to selfish appetite is also best described by Kierkegaard in his idea of "virtue of the absurd." It also appears on a lower level where the faith in its extreme sense, which fits Abraham, is set aside. This makes ground for "virtue of noble": "so that if a person does not always make the movement by virtue of the noblest and holiest in him, he may in anxiety and horror discover and lure forth—if in no other way, then through anxiety—the dark emotions hiding in every human life, whereas in association with others one so easily forgets, so easily evades this, is stopped in so many ways, get the opportunity to begin afresh."¹⁰⁵ In association with these others, the anxiety may vanish.

¹⁰³ Taqi Raf'at, "Tajaddud dar Adabiyat 3" (Modernism in Literature 3), in *Tajaddud*, No. 168, 24 December 1919, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Raf'at, "A Literary Rebellion," 30.

¹⁰⁵ *Fear and Trembling*, 100.

However, the knowledge of greatness, knowledge of terror, and passion will also vanish. Thus, one can claim that the rudiments of the materialized rebellion which can possibly take place are based on this loneliness.

Kierkegaard himself provides one of the best criticism of his generation, which to some extent applies to Raf'at's generation and his immediate condition, for they are both the result of the capitalist mode of production and its apparatuses. Kierkegaard links this criticism with comedy which he finds demonly. "This is of small concern in our generation, which believes it has attained the highest, whereas in fact no generation has been so much at the mercy of the comic as this one. And it is inconceivable that it has not already happened that by a *generatio aequivoca* [self-procreation] our generation has itself given birth to its hero, the demon, who ruthlessly puts on the dreadful theatrical piece that makes the whole generation laugh and forget that it is laughing at itself"¹⁰⁶ writes Kierkegaard. Interestingly, this generation can give birth to the demon as its hero, and it is not able to produce the real hero. It seems that the weak Antichristic power manifested in the demon is the only possibility in the condition. In other words, we are left with the doomed Messiah in the most material sense. However, the idea of comedy and laughing at oneself could be found critically in Raf'at's writings. The series of his writings titled "The Unspeakable Hearables" satirically represent the comic condition in which his generation has failed in finding out that they are laughing at themselves. "The Unspeakable Hearables" are the intimations of a moment in Raf'at's oeuvre in which he feels the urge to remind everyone to laugh at themselves.

In Kierkegaard's formulation, the demoniac and the comic find a link to the weak Antichristic power: "The age reveals its defect in a kind of clairvoyance, just as a demoniac discloses himself without understanding himself, for again and again the age demands the comic."¹⁰⁷ The reason for the clairvoyance is the defect. The defect could be perceived as the fact that the age is doomed with the doomed Messiah, and redemption is impossible in it. One can remember the Titanic in Raf'at's oeuvre as clairvoyance of the disastrous modernity to come, or even Morgan Robertson's prediction of the Titanic disaster. This seems to be an indication of the process in which the psychological aspect of a rebellion with weak Antichristic power and anxious passion becomes materialized. However, when one tries to recognize the instance of history in the moment of danger in a rebellious scheme, he must admit to face terror (possessing the knowledge of terror) to finally possess the knowledge of greatness or to find himself in the most challenging moment of literary/social revolution:

You must be sure that we are in the most difficult moment of a literary rebellion and have attempted a crucial action. What we want is no less than creating a *Tajaddud* era in the literary world, or so to say, in the world of thoughts and art/industry. We want to overthrow an old time-worn condition that was ruling us, and settle a new condition whose sovereignty is yet not established. [The prosperity of this plan] depends on ours and our peers' success and supremacy. Our main strength is the actual condition of things which means the help of time. As much as the current century's sensations and thoughts affect people's brains and bodies, we feel the necessity of an inevitable change and revolution. What drives us is an evolutionary movement prevailing in the civilized world which is invulnerable to any resistance against its establishment. The obstacle is that there is a robust, well-established literature in front of us, which is the pile of the oeuvre and attempts of some of the best authors and poets of yesterday's Iran. Possessing that power that is our drive and facing this consistent pile which is our obstacle, we are in a

¹⁰⁶ *Fear and Trembling*, 101.

¹⁰⁷ *Fear and Trembling*, 101.

critical moment that requires us to be thoughtful. However, if we act based on the requirements of our time and our condition, we will be successful.¹⁰⁸

We can plainly see the desire for authority without any mysteries at this point. This is the reason why success seems to be guaranteed to Raf'at. However, we know the big loss is going to come, and it will cost his life. Disappointingly, this resembles the grand inquisitor and, to some extent, Ivan. On this level, the whole scheme is a westoxified desire to imitate the prevailing condition in the civilised world, which is a sort of barbarism since "there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism."¹⁰⁹ It also resembles the role of the Antichrist and the enemy who never seized to be victorious, rendering Raf'at with a *mighty* Antichristic power. Raf'at, in such a scheme, also resembles the individual who gives up to the selfish appetite. Raf'at, in such a frame, even goes against any serious reading of Raf'at's oeuvre based on spirit and self. However, there is something that may save Raf'at from such a conservative stance and bring him to a more tolerable position. The idea of evolution in Raf'at's passage suggests a materialist perception of history. This materialist perception of history alongside the disastrous perception of the modern moment could indicate a desire to go beyond capitalism and the status quo, for the struggle of different evolutionary powers and reactionary ones leads to Capitalism, but there is a possibility to go beyond Capitalism. This could be proven serious enough to be considered the case with Raf'at by remembering some of his writings that seem to be directly pertaining to the leftist ideas like "Revolution in Revolution."¹¹⁰ Therefore, one can claim that when Raf'at steps outside the realm of spirit, making us disappointed about the profound psychological reading, he steps into a rebellious materialist perception of history, not a conservative one. In the following subchapter, we will see the progressive, rebellious aspect of this perception, when he steps outside of the realm of spirit. We have observed the desire of the authority in this passage pertaining to the inquisitor's desire, and now we may take a step further in the following subchapter and scrutinize the earthly bread.

To sum up this movement and transition from the realm of spirit to the material scene and vice versa, we may again refer to Kierkegaard, who profoundly understands human existence. We have already studied the formulation of anxiety as a spiritual/psychological drive to make Raf'at desire the rebellious decision in the moment of danger. At this point, we may wonder why Raf'at steps outside the realm of spirit and why he ends up in a rebellious materialist position and does not retrograde into conservatism. "It is one thing to be admired and another to become a guiding star that saves the anguished,"¹¹¹ writes Kierkegaard in his articulation of Abraham. However, the point is that Raf'at cannot find Abraham and even does not know where to look for him since such horizons are exploded and melted into air by the modern condition. The faith is suspended and rendered impossible and non-existent by modern condition. Therefore, he cannot be saved as the anguished by the knight of faith/Abraham. Moreover, he cannot save the anguished as the knight of faith because for that one must be the knight of faith himself, which is impossible in the modern condition. Thus, he steps out of the realm of spirit and leaves the anguished who need the knight of faith for their redemption, and intends to save the materially anguished ones. This stepping out, while one has found the faith impossible, is the real despair one can discover in the modern condition, though most of the people in this despair do not perceive their own condition as despair and ignore faith, or they

¹⁰⁸ Taqi Raf'at, "Tajaddud dar Adabīyāt" (Modernism in Literature), in *Āzādīyistān*, No. 3, 12 August 1920, p. 30.

¹⁰⁹ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn, edited by Hannah Arendt. (New York: Schocken books, 2007), 256.

¹¹⁰ Taqi Raf'at, "Inqilāb andar Inqilāb" (Revolution in Revolution), in *Tajaddud*, No. 28, 2 August 1917, p.1.

¹¹¹ *Fear and Trembling*, 21.

even cannot think of faith. However, Raf'at desperately steps out of the realm of spirit and faith to save the materially desperate, anguished ones, at least with earthly bread.

5.5. The search for the “bread”: Jesus refused the heavenly, Raf'at quested for the earthly

In the previous subchapter, we observed how Raf'at steps outside the realm of spirit and faith, and departs from all the readings based on anxiety as a psychological quality pertaining to self as spirit. However, as he stepped out and made us anxious to emerge as a conservative with a selfish appetite, he proved himself able to be rebellious and progressive in the material historical sense. In this section, we will study this material rebellion through the image of bread, which we have already met in “The Grand Inquisitor.” However, Raf'at's quest for bread is an earthly quest for earthly bread. We saw that this quest starts when he leaves the realm of spirit but in favour of an actual material revolution/rebellion.

“Do you know that in the name of this very earthly bread, the spirit of the earth will rise against you and fight with you and defeat you?”¹¹² In this passage and the others alike, the inquisitor tries to depict that the rejection of the earthly bread could lead to losing faith and obedience. In this sense, the modern condition is the condition that is formed around the earthly bread. As we observe, there is nothing but mundane, and the faith is gone. Ivan, as the creator of the inquisitor, “incarnates the refusal of salvation,”¹¹³ as Camus describes. The significant point is that Ivan is the incarnation of refusal of salvation, though, Raf'at seems to be the incarnation of despair of salvation. The difference lies in refusal and despair. For this reason, one can imagine that Raf'at does not overtly step into nihilism, rather he quests for a materialist rebellion to settle the earthly bread and the material condition causing the spiritual poverty. Camus himself delineates this subtle notion inherent in nihilism: “Nihilism is not only despair and negation but, above all, the desire to despair and negate.”¹¹⁴ In this sense, Raf'at stands aside from Ivan, for he does not negate the salvation, rather he is just in despair about its possibility. But at the same time, the desire to despair could be traced in his anxiety since he simultaneously craves what he fears because of the anxiety he is caught in. Thus, in all instances of anxious representation of modern moments and modern people in Raf'at's writing, one can feel a certain amount of nihilism, but at the same time, see the great distinction which makes Raf'at step into the pragmatic material scene to base his rebellion around the settlement of the question of bread and perhaps the general condition causing the spiritual poverty.

Therefore, we will read a series of Raf'at's writing which are directly dedicated to the condition of bread in Tabriz of the day and include his and his peers' attempts to settle the condition of the bread. The articles are titled “Bread.” The material condition leading Raf'at to write a series of writings alongside practical actions taken by his party is the famine emerging in Tabriz due to a defect in wheat supplies and, consequently, bread. This was caused by the World War and also the greed of local sovereigns and businessmen trying to hoard the wheat supplies for their armies or financial benefit.

This series of writings begin by introducing a new set of qualities determining human life. In “The Grand Inquisitor,” human life was based on miracle, mystery, and authority. Here, Raf'at

¹¹² *The Brothers Karamazov*, 214.

¹¹³ Camus 56 Albert Camus, *The Rebel: an Essay on Man in Revolt*, translated By Anthony Bower. (Vintage Books, 1991), 56.

¹¹⁴ *The Rebel*, 57-58.

proposes air, water, and bread.¹¹⁵ Miracle, mystery, and authority are substituted for bread as the authority. They are substituted with the material needs for sustaining one's life which is the source of material authority, as the inquisitor already pointed out. Raf'at ironically thanks God that air is in his merciful control and no hoarder is in control of it. "However, the water which God sends from heavens, and the bread which God grows from the earth are under the control of the hoarders causing the poverty and misery of Iranian people."¹¹⁶ In the first lines of his attempt to begin his quest for earthly bread, Raf'at, problematically, defines the relation between the material condition and authority from one side, with God and the realm of spirit from the other. As we have seen before, he seems to be in a state of despair since he cannot realize his faith in the material condition, and anxiously has made his mind to step out of the realm of faith and step into the material scene to improve the condition. Nevertheless, still one can see a trace of faith in him.

Raf'at introduces three causes that have worsened the situation in Iran. According to him, people have been deprived of information about new inventions, the industrial agricultural institutions have been sanctioned and their promoters were excommunicated, and the sovereigns have not made a ground for civil organizations. By this, he means peoples' ignorance of the new technologies, the resistance of the traditional religious section toward the latest technologies, and the government's disposition to keep the old forms while it was in the transformation phase into a modern capitalist one. Then, Raf'at writes: "we don't have a guardian or a supporter, however, today is preceded by a successful revolution in yesterday, and as a result, these obstacles should not cause despair in us."¹¹⁷ Here, one can see how Raf'at diverges from supporting the status quo, toward a more revolutionary stance, by pointing out the possibilities that an already successful revolution could bring. By "today's condition," he did not mean the established condition after revolution since the incentive to change lies in the immediate condition of the time. Thus he must have suggested the possibilities in a revolution to alter the condition. Yet, we observe how the stepping outside the realm of spirit plays its role, since he claims that there is no guardian and people are left without a hero or a guardian and they must not be in despair since the material condition can ignite the sparkles of hope at the moment, at least, to settle the question of earthly bread.

Raf'at continues with his previous argument and clarifies that when there is no such hero or guardian, people themselves must be their own guardians. Having stepped out of the realm of spirit into a materialist scene, the fundamental materialist approach is to find and activate the material possibilities of salvation, happiness, or gaining bread. "A free nation, in a constitutional state, may not have a guardian or supporter except themselves. They must find the remedies to their pains with hard work. When facing the miseries threatening its existence, it must use its own power,"¹¹⁸ writes Raf'at. Here we can see that he himself takes the argument to the materialist extreme of perception of the condition. This seems to presuppose the knowledge of greatness since it is also a condition where one is facing the terror of misery.

He enumerates those who desire and affect people's misery, then writes: "there is no need to such enumeration, for a hungry stomach won't listen to that. The rebellious masses are not open to any advice and will face their enemies with a wild natural drive."¹¹⁹ The material condition and its possibilities to reform are obviously declared. This happens in a way that

¹¹⁵ "The air which makes a hundred kilometres high atmosphere around the planet, and water which consists three-fourths of the whole planet surface, and bread are the crucial needs of the human being." Taqi Raf'at, "Nān" (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 23, 16 July 1917, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ Raf'at, "Nān" (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 23, 16 July 1917, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ Raf'at, "Nān" (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 23, 16 July 1917, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ Raf'at, "Nān" (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 23, 16 July 1917, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ Raf'at, "Nān" (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 23, 16 July 1917, p. 2.

covertly alludes to the legitimate violence that he endows the poor and oppressed with. This very much resembles the orthodox materialist conceptions of class struggle, which we will overtly observe later.

Then he depicts the moment of disaster where the famine is prevailing and writes: “those who await that moment inconsiderately and carelessly must know that the part of the nation who will come prosperous out of this moment is the part which was always hungry.”¹²⁰ He not only defines his affiliation with the suppressed and hungry, but he also links the moment of disaster to a sort of Messianic sensation, which resembles the Marxist tradition and also accords our reading of his anxiety via perceiving the self as spirit. The moment is precisely similar to the moment of Dehqan’s decision and almost any other manifestations of modernity in his oeuvre. The moment in which Dehqan was caught and it presupposed anxiety. Dehqan suddenly encountered a massacre threatening his life, and he had to choose either to live or to die. This freedom of choice was the source of anxiety, though it was set in a disastrous moment that can numb one’s feelings. Here, in the case of bread, Tabriz encounters a threat of death by physical hunger and again must choose to live or die, and this causes anxiety in a body numb because of physical hunger. The images keep recurring and echoing each other, and all suggest an anxious being in the midst of disaster, who has to step out of the realm of spirit into the material scene and rebelliously decide either to live or to die.

In the second part of these essays, Raf‘at introduces the previous writing as “the expression of the anxiety of doomed Tabriz.”¹²¹ He continues to define his stance and describe the condition. In this essay, he depicts the knowledge of terror: “they had announced this threatening phrase to Tabriz’s ears: ‘After a week, you won’t have any bread!’ And this horrific news made the city tremble.”¹²² Evidently, this is the knowledge of terror that can be the incentive for knowledge of greatness even in the material scene, so the hungry masses will win the battle to come. Surprisingly, Raf‘at’s material rebellion since he stepped outside the realm of spirit utterly accords to his anxiety in the realm of spirit, as we tried to understand via Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky. The passion for life, which is depicted in the moment of the decision either to live or to die, alongside the knowledge of terror, results in the knowledge of greatness which on the material scene means winning the battle by the oppressed. On the other hand, this material perception seems to fit with Marxist traditions, since both believe that the dialectical struggle of the powers will lead to the point where the battle is won by the oppressed. Everything seems to get to its extreme.

Raf‘at believes that his essay is also “the expression of the feelings of the poor people who are the ones without guardians.”¹²³ He introduces these people without guardians as those poor people whom one can see in the streets in front of the bakeries. He uses this opportunity to mock and criticize his own wealthy readers who “are usually only concerned of themselves and does not find the poor worthy of their attention and leave them behind in their poor condition.”¹²⁴ This can remind us of Kierkegaard’s treatment of the bourgeoisie amid his spiritual concerns and also how the leftists treat them.

A lengthy footnote in this essay is dedicated to an allusion to another article published in *Kīlīd-i Nijāt* (Survival Key) by its editor-in-chief, who had threatened the author of “Bread” with a judicial court. If one pauses for a moment, this threat is significant. The threat is made via the judicial authority, which is the body supporting the status quo. Also, if one remembers the

¹²⁰ Raf‘at, “Nān” (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 23, 16 July 1917, p. 2.

¹²¹ Taqi Raf‘at, “Nān” (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 25, 23 July 1917, p. 2.

¹²² Raf‘at, “Nān” (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 25, 23 July 1917, p. 2.

¹²³ Raf‘at, “Nān” (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 25, 23 July 1917, p. 2.

¹²⁴ Raf‘at, “Nān” (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 25, 23 July 1917, p. 2.

inquisitor and his established authority, one can see the depth of conservatism on the author's side since he not only supports the status quo via violent established authority, he is void of any spiritual reasoning for that. He is the inquisitor who does not believe even in material redemption. He only desires authority. Raf'at mocks and criticizes his arguments for distorting Raf'at's arguments and finally reaching the same conclusion as his own. Then, he writes:

Tajaddud needs to inform this Don Quixote of the political world that his turtle-like attacks are worth nothing, and we find our time and our readers' time worthier than paying attention to such prejudices. *Tajaddud's* opinion about the hoarders of pen and the speculators of literature is the same as the hoarders of wheat. We leave them to the dangerous consequences of their deeds in the presence of the consciousness of those who are fighting for their life.¹²⁵

The passage is based on a solid belief that the final battle will be won by the poor and the oppressed, and they are going to punish the author for his support of hoarding deeds. The sense of Messianic perception of history in the scene of class struggle is more than evident here, and could be linked to the leftist ideas. However, the ironic writing of Raf'at has something more interesting in it. He refers to the author as Don Quixote, which we had observed in another locus in our own observations indirectly related to Raf'at. Adbu'l-Baha proved himself as the Iranian Don Quixote in our previous reading of the Titanic (subchapter 2.4 (p. 61)). Here, Don Quixote is not much innocent. He is the Antichrist. However, his attempts are perceived as Don Quixote's attempts, for they are in vain since they are against the oppressed who will win the battle.

To make us sure that we were not wrong in being reminded of Kierkegaard and his criticism of the Bourgeoisie and the leftist perception of the Bourgeoisie, in the third part of his essay, Raf'at writes: "it is not irrelevant to dedicate this to the improvident unencumbered class of society which is the bourgeoisie."¹²⁶ He does not stop there and continues to gift us with more assurances about the righteousness of our reading: "Since the early moments of creation till now, the inequality between different classes has caused depression, struggles, animosities and envies. As far as the poor, oppressed, and Guilds are not organized and are not conscious of their rights, these rivalries don't have material consequences, and the sovereignty of the rich class stays untouched."¹²⁷ Suddenly, one may even be precisely reminded of the first sentences of the first part of *The Communist Manifesto* ("Bourgeois and Proletarians"). The sentences seem to echo here. Yet there is more to surprise one about Raf'at's material stance. "The modern era, with different subjects that you hear and may probably not comprehend it, not only unites the poor and oppressed of one society, it has united all the oppressed in the international world under one flag against a particular class. Thus, one must be ready for the possible hazards." Obviously, the things one can hear and cannot comprehend are the leftist materialist perception of history with its peculiar jargon. Raf'at points to the unity of all the oppressed and poor, which is more than clear that undoubtedly resembles the last lines of *The Communist Manifesto*. This proves that as soon as Raf'at stepped out of the realm of spirit with anxiety as its pivotal notion, he directly stepped into materialism or a particular perception of materialism at least. This is a materialist rebellion for him, not a revolution. Such distinction could lie in different reasons. One pertains to his own words that there are things heard and not comprehended, which could refer, one may suppose, to the unprepared society of Iran for materialist thoughts and jargon. It may also be caused by an impaired knowledge of leftist ideas on the side of Raf'at himself. Finally, one can imagine that the distinction could be rooted in

¹²⁵ Raf'at, "Nān" (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 25, 23 July 1917, p. 2.

¹²⁶ Taqi Raf'at, "Nān" (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 27, 30 July 1917, p.1.

¹²⁷ Raf'at, "Nān" (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 27, 30 July 1917, p.2.

the departure point of Raf'at, which was spiritual poverty. In this sense, one can imagine that he is interested in a material rebellion, not a Marxist revolution.

In his subsequent sentences, Raf'at leaves us suspended, so one cannot easily decide which of the reasons the actual one is. He points out that all religions of the world and all the ruling classes and intellectuals have taken measures to protect the poor and oppressed in order to prevent the possible hazard. This can be dealt with in two different manners. One can use it to conclude that he seems to be standing on the side of the reformist modern religions and institutions to mitigate the situation of the poor and prevent the possible hazard. This renders him standing by the Bourgeoisie to some extent. It is also possible to assume that he is again providing a realistic materialistic account which does not mean allegiance on his side. This second thought could be supported by the fact that he already showed his loathing of the Bourgeoisie. It could also be supported by his following sentences, where he again points out some serious materialist ideas. He asks if the people do not feel any excitement in their nerves when they see such degraded abjection. Supposing people would respond that they feel something for the condition, he writes: "a movement [in nerves] or an excitement that does not lead to any action is worthless. Emotions are valid if they cause deeds and actions."¹²⁸ Again one can see the serious materialist idea behind the passage. Nevertheless, the next passage can support the first claim as if he supports a reformist point of view. He narrates a powerful man who went through a catharsis when he saw the scene in front of the bakeries, so he decided to use his influence to help the poor. He points out that there is no manual for such people, and the only rule is the natural desires of conscientious and virtuous people who would work against their own direct benefits.

Raf'at greatly detects the material roots of the condition. However, in this passage, he may seem to have a bourgeois-like stance that one must help the proletariat sustain their life. However, one can easily argue against it and claim that the story is meant to show how a bourgeois could be in unity with the oppressed if he acts upon virtue and conscience. Nonetheless, Raf'at's materialist stance seems to be like his relation to modernity, hard to define.

The idea that Raf'at's materialist stance does not deviate from the Marxist perception and the fact that the story of the wealthy man is meant to gain more allegiance to the oppressed, could be supported by the fourth part of this essay which is a comprehensive report of the condition of bread. It includes an account of what has been done and what sort of betrays has occurred. It is all about practically defining the condition. The fifth part mentions and stresses the previous arguments about the disastrous future to come, and the horrific moment we have already observed.

Part six persists in dealing with the question of bread. Raf'at states that he will continue unless the condition changes. Until then, "the question of bread would not be absent in the newspaper pages, and this unsightly social wound, in front of the nation in need of guidance, will be dissected with honesty and fastidiousness."¹²⁹ Raf'at indicates that naming the condition of bread as the "social wound" is not a slip of the pen or a literary inadvertence. He believes that since people have always struggled for bread, they never had time to satisfy their other needs. He believes that the governor, the landowners, and bakers have rendered the easy task of eating a loaf of bread a difficult task. He then addresses the procedure and quality of baking bread in Tabriz's bakeries and writes:

¹²⁸ Raf'at, "Nān" (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 27, 30 July 1917, p.2.

¹²⁹ Taqi Raf'at, "Nān" (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 40, 18 September 1917, p. 1.

This bread that bakers sell us, and people inescapably eat, is not food, is not alimentation... This bread with unknown ingredients is a corrupted mixture of different dusts which have been approved by the conniving indifference and silence of all the observers. This bread poisons and spoils the general health of this guardianless people... This bread is the indigestible product of bakers' skulduggery, which will cause harmful disease to the human of today and tomorrow, meaning the men and women of today and tomorrow.¹³⁰

As one can see, amid the material rebellion for the bread, the notion of health/illness reoccurs. In the realm of spirit, when facing spiritual poverty, one had to look for the social illnesses on different occasions, as we already observed: from Sa'di to even Raf'at's own allegedly metamorphic writing. Again, when it comes to the material scene, there is a procedure that causes illness: material illness. In this sense, all the material rebellion seems to be a strategy against illness. This fact makes it stand aside from the traditional premodern beliefs in Iran, which were based on acceptance and surrendering to God's will. Now, no matter in the realm of spirit or on the material scene, one has to deal with the illness and find a strategy to banish it.

Raf'at himself directly links these two sorts of illnesses. He mentions that the bread crisis is actually a social wound and disaster that one had to deal with even if the condition was not as bad as today. He ironically links this to the fact that people tend to forget the disastrous condition after some days of repose and tranquillity. The crucial point here is the similarity between Rafa'ts treatment of bread and his treatment of Sa'di as we earlier met. At this point, he seems to present the cause of decadence, as he already did in the dispute over Sa'di. In this sense, for Raf'at, bread and literature are the same, and they both require a material rebellion to settle their state. Therefore, one can say that the general scheme of starting from spiritual poverty, or better to say, starting from the realm of spirit and stepping into the material scene with a materialistic rebellion, happens both in the material scene for the bread and also in the spiritual scene which is the case of literature. For Raf'at, literature, and bread seem to be similar in their material manifestations, and both are rooted in the question pertaining to spiritual poverty.

Raf'at, amid his material rebellion, brings up an image that is an excellent dialectical representation of the link between these two realms. The image is a synthesis of the material/spiritual or visible/invisible. He writes:

The fertile soil of this land, in its arms, at the same time that has generated food for its children, has also given life to a bloody cause and raised it: and you know the cause: landowner!

The landowner, in our country, has always been a hoarder.

Like hunger which is an invisible danger, the landowner is an intangible cause. So he can run away from the revenge of the people. For landowner is a universal. In other words, it is a guise that current enemies use to hide. We must know their names. We must provide its address to its victims.¹³¹

Here, one can see the delicate dialectical image that Raf'at provides to link the two different miseries we observed: spiritual and material. The synthesis keeps the spiritual and material qualities of the theses. The landowner plays a dubious part of a material being and a universal at the same time. However, Raf'at's material rebellion does not stop here. He attempts to materialize this notion and introduce the concrete enemy that one has to fight. Indeed,

¹³⁰ Raf'at, "Nān" (Bread), in *Tajaddud*, No. 40, 18 September 1917, p. 1.

¹³¹ Taqi Raf'at, "Āzūqah" (Food), in *Tajaddud*, No. 76, 20 February 1918, p. 1.

addressing the concrete enemy and introducing him meant materially fighting the hoarders and landowners of the Tabriz at that time. This fight finally ends in his own death. This dialectical material perception is essential enough that one gives his life for its sake.

At this point, Raf'at's rebellion has proved itself serious enough that once again, we can make it meet one of the most severe criticisms of modernity and modern literature in Iran. By doing this, we can see how Raf'at differs from the rest of the trends and figures and find his unique position in this flow.

Jalal, in his criticism of modernity and modern literature, gets to the point that he defines one of the characteristics of contemporary Iranian literature as pessimism. This pessimism is all-inclusive. He mentions young and old. "However, most of the people who are pessimists like this have no relation to any power and are crying in vain. They are pessimistic about established powers, established social institutions and living under these powers."¹³² Then he defines all the trends in literary modernism within the pessimism. This includes the overtly political works, the works which find old forms in the guise of metaphors or finding shelter in Sufism, and finally, what we have already met, which he called *Ajāyib al-Makhlūqāt* (The Wonders of Creatures). This last was the most severe locus for criticizing Raf'at and his depiction of exceptional and abnormal conditions. With our reading, Raf'at has proved his pessimism more profound, which is anxiety based on the recognition of spiritual poverty. This even drives him into the material horizon to establish a material rebellion using the possibilities of the condition. Having this in mind, one can see how unique his position could be, and he stands aside from this list of pessimisms.

Jalal links the pessimism about the established powers to altruism (philanthropy). Jalal indicates that being a pessimist about the powerful ones requires optimism about the powerless and the oppressed, which in general means people. He then describes the trends in Iranian literature at that time. These trends are the attention to local languages and cultures, being forced to acquire a political stance, and not claiming to write for your own shadow. Jalal's criticism gets serious when he writes: "This altruism is also a reaction to the attention of the people, which is gradually becoming the faith for pen, and substitutes any other faith."¹³³ This is the most critical point in Jalal's writing, with which we have to delineate Raf'at's relation. The new trends of the condition, in which faith is suspended, are the new sort of faith to which the middle class or even the poor can adhere. One of these trends is altruism. In our times, we can see the culmination of such trends in political correctness and cancel culture. Nevertheless, Raf'at's relation to this scheme is very problematic. Our reading of Raf'at proves it complicated. Raf'at's occupation with the spiritual hunger, anxiously looking for something to quench his spiritual thirst, and finally stepping into a materialist rebellion obviously makes him stand aside from such trends. Moreover, if there is any significance in Raf'at, it is for the very fact that he knew what it is to have faith and knew that his disastrous condition had suspended the faith, so any gesture to claim faith and to show off is deeply meaningless. Jalal seems anxious about this pretentious trendy altruism, as Raf'at was anxious about his disastrous condition. As time passes, the disaster appears to evolve, which makes it become more materialized and concrete and, at the same time, more spiritually pretentious. However, the disastrous condition suspending the faith and rendering one terrified and desperate have stayed the same.

¹³² Jalal Al-e Ahmad, "Chand Noktah Darbārah-i Moshakhkhaṣāt-i Kollīyi Adabīyāt-i Mu'āṣir" (Some Notes on the General Characteristics of Contemporary Literature), in *Arzyābī-yi Shitābzadah* (*Hurried Investigations*). (Tabriz: Ebne Sina, 1344), 60.

¹³³ Jalal, *Arzyābī-yi Shitābzadah* (*Hurried Investigations*), 61.

Moreover, one may remember the despair linked to spiritual poverty. One may also not forget Kierkegaard's formulation of despair, which was the condition where one wants to be another self or wants to be himself. Kierkegaard pointed out that one despairs over something. To depict this, Kierkegaard made an example of Cesare Borgia that he desired to be either Caesar or nothing.¹³⁴ Kierkegaard describes that "precisely because he did not get to be Caesar, he now cannot bear to be himself. Consequently, he does not despair because he did not get to be Caesar but despairs over himself because he did not get to be Caesar."¹³⁵ The point is that in such a state of despair, one desires to be something, and this is totally opposite of the author submitting to the idea of altruism for sustaining his presence in the scene. Raf'at is anxious about his position and despairs over being spiritually satisfied. That is the drive for him to begin his material rebellion. Such a profound drive linked to faith may not become that much mundane and banal. Furthermore, Raf'at's illness differs from what Kierkegaard formulated. Raf'at's sickness is unto death, and even, in reality, he is dead at the age of thirty. He dies in the material attempt to become Caesar, or better to say, to seize the material possibilities to mitigate the disastrous condition.

Conclusively, one may claim that the distinction which keeps Raf'at from slipping into the pile of altruist authors is faith. Such a claim still presupposes the suspension of the faith in the disastrous modern condition. However, even if the faith is suspended, one can still relate to that. This means that one must have a relation to the faith unless he has submitted totally to the disastrous condition. Otherwise, one's relation to faith is not suspended. It is problematic and impossible to be established. It may happen only via the virtue of the absurd. In the absence of the virtue of absurd, one has either submitted to the condition or tried to define his relation to this impossibility. This impossibility is the source of a profound disturbance that is not found in a well-known, recognized author. It may only be present in a forgotten author who was never recognized and faded into oblivion like a flying flare. It can cost one's anxious life.

¹³⁴ 'Aut Caesar, aut nihil' is the famous motto of Italian Renaissance Prince Cesare Borgia.

¹³⁵ *Sickness unto Death*, 19.

6. Conclusion

This dissertation was an attempt to make a whole out of a fragmented life and being, in a wholesome frame of a dissertation yet occupied with fragments. This could have been done by grounding our reading within two scopes: materialism and metaphysics. Interestingly, the emergence of modernism in Iran and particularly Raf'at's oeuvre happened to be well described by these two pivotal frames. Primarily, it could be deduced that our reading of Raf'at's oeuvre made it evade the general perception of modernity and modernism in non-European geographies as mere mimicry. Moreover, we also observed that Raf'at's oeuvre and his perception of modernity and modernism not only evade radical criticisms like westoxification, but also could prove themselves even as the predecessor of such ideas.

In exploring the image of the Titanic, it became clear that the historical human will, or as Hardy put it, the Immanent Will, made modernity and modernism possible both in the metaphysical and material sense. There is a passage in *The Brothers Karamazov* that brilliantly encapsulates this:

Once mankind has renounced God, one and all (and I believe that this period, analogous to the geological periods, will come), then the entire old world view will fall of itself, without anthropophagy, and, above all, the entire former morality, and everything will be new. People will come together in order to take from life all that it can give, but, of course, for happiness and joy in this world only. Man will be exalted with the spirit of divine, titanic pride, and the man-god will appear.⁴⁷¹

Firstly, what Immanent Will created was unavoidably a period just like geological periods. This well represents the material ground of such a condition. As we also saw in our reading, this was the historical human will that was doomed to find itself powerful and arrogant enough to make the Titanic or, in terms of our reading, the disastrous modern condition. However, this disastrous modern condition had its metaphysical aspect, which rendered everything void of its meaning that they only could be grasped as they are while they were on the verge of death. The man-god, in Dostoevsky's words, made a doomed disastrous condition for himself out of his genius and arrogance. This condition was unavoidable, just like the geological period. It was defined in substructure and superstructure, and there was no way to avoid it. Such a disastrous condition then was to be met with a strategy which, in the case of Raf'at, was a rebellious strategy that had a profound metaphysical ground as well as its material ground. Raf'at's scheme is primarily built around the idea of the decision in the moment of disaster or, in Chatterton's words, to compose one's mind. The ground for such a decision within Raf'at's rebellious scheme was to decide either to live or to die. Everything was capsulated in the moment of decision, as we saw in the case of Dehqan. "Each will know himself utterly mortal, without resurrection, and will accept death proudly and calmly, like a god. Out of pride he will understand that he should not murmur against the momentariness of life, and he will love his brother then without any reward,"⁴⁷² writes Dostoevsky. Interestingly, the very material depiction of Dehqan by Raf'at and his moment of decision very closely resembles such a metaphysical and profound moment. Thus, one can deduce that such a moment of the decision

⁴⁷¹ Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 551.

⁴⁷² Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 551.

within the disastrous condition of modernity is well settled metaphysically and materially within our reading of Raf'at's oeuvre.

Raf'at's depiction of Dehqan in his famous poem also proved itself to be doing the same. Ultimately, apart from his treatment of Dehqan both materially and metaphysically, Raf'at revolutionized the image of Dehqan. As we observed, this was unique and, at the same time, the most radical stance that one could take at that moment, both in the material sense and its metaphysical sense. The metaphysical aspect of Dehqan's image well illuminated the link that Dehqan's life had with the disastrous modernity and the moment of decision in which he was caught. Considering the materialist aspect, Raf'at was the one who revolutionized the image of Dehqan, proving himself with a serious rebellious scheme against the emergence of capitalism and Imperialist manipulations in Iran.

Such a rebellious scheme with its feet in material condition and metaphysics was doomed to be forced into oblivion. The image of flying flare enhanced us to study this oblivion and absence. Through the image of flying flare, the metaphysical and material ground of this oblivion were investigated more thoroughly, taking it to a more profound level. This could link the whole scheme of Raf'at's rebellious strategy and his particular presence in the modern Iranian atmosphere to the philosophy of history. The image of flare in Benjamin's writings paved the way for that study.

Studying the flare-like presence of Raf'at within the frame of philosophy of history could let us understand the consequences of the doomed disastrous modernity in a more theological sense and finds its link with the Messianic. We could trace the weak messianic power and its counterpart, the weak antichristic power, to better understand the flare-like presence of Raf'at and his fade into oblivion.

Such a state always manifested symptomatic signs, which were again perceived materially and metaphysically. The significance of the concept of anxiety in Raf'at's writing was clear before this reading. However, with this reading, we managed to link both aspects, metaphysical and material, with our previous investigations. This led us to situate the concept of anxiety on a more profound level. Ultimately, we could elevate his oeuvre to a more material level while digging into its metaphysical consequences. Such a reading proved itself valid. And this valid reading proved the serious link that Raf'at's oeuvre and his perception of modernity had with the leftist Marxist tradition. At the same time, this always suggested a metaphysical ground that could be easily linked to different traditions and thoughts. Particularly, Kierkegaard's formulation of anxiety, alongside Dostoevsky's representation of anxiety and anxious characters, made it possible for us to investigate the metaphysical aspect of this anxiety and its consequential significance to Raf'at's oeuvre and understand his perception of modernity.

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Appendices

This part provides the translation of a selection of Raf'at's writing. The translation of poems is in prosaic form and does not imitate the formal features of the original text.

A Literary Rebellion

The periodical "Zabān-i Āzād" (Free Tongue), on January 3rd of 1918, published a principal article titled "School of Sa'di." That article rebelled against the influence of "the high position of Sa'di," which had been dominant for ages in the Persian language territory. As was expected, the press based in Tehran, apart from their inclinations, united to defend the famous poet of Shiraz and aimed at the writer of *Zabān-i Āzād* with the bloody attacks of their written responses. Since the problem is about Sa'di, it's a literary one: and as it predicates the misfortune of the Iranian nation's decline to Sa'di and those of his school, it is a social one. Nevertheless, it is an important problem.

*

The main argument claimed by the rebel enemy of "School of Sa'di" is: "The root of the whole of our national and social misery and misfortune, is just dissonance and incongruity of the principles of national education and disorder of social formation, which since nine hundred years have nullified our nationality."

Pay attention: beyond these phrases, a very explicit sincerity, a sincere cry of someone in pain because of social illnesses is erupting. Listen carefully to the excited author: "The national principles of education and the order of social pedagogics in Iran, unfortunately, is confined to some few books which have attracted the thoughts of all classes of the country to their contents, and in the atmosphere of our classic and modern literature have gained a position even higher than holy books." You would find an exaggeration and extravagance in this phrase, though you may admit that this thought is somehow the truth... But this exaggeration is inevitable. When exploiting one cause and trying to bring it forward among different causes of one effect so the audience would see it, it is probably possible to exaggerate. But let us follow the rebellious author:

"The very eminent of these volumes is the oeuvre of Sa'di, which, here, I intrepidly want to declare as decadent oeuvre..."

There is no need to go further. In these few sentences, Sa'di's abnegator has declared the core of his idea; and whatever we call it rebellion, upraise, revolt, riot, it has happened. And it has passed. The arrow is flung. And now there exists no power on earth to stop this predestined happening. Now we are facing a real issue. There is nothing to do other than state our idea and comment.

The writer of "School of Sa'di" deserves appreciation and encouragement. He has expressed a very courageous statement, introduced a very vital issue to be discussed, and didn't quail and change his intention as a result of all attacks and disputes he definitely predicted already. Bravo! This rebellion was requisite. The political revolution of Iran needed such a supplement

and conclusion (closure). This upraise was waiting for a beginning... the writer of the article of *Zabān-i Āzād* has made the gesture to start. The youth can now attack the fortress of literary despotism and reactionism...

And they must attack. Because we must be the children of our own era. The sound of cannons, guns, and pervasive wars wakes an agitation in our nerves that couldn't be soothed or expressed by the mild, harmonic, solid, and old language of Sa'di and his contemporaries in their odes or "Litanies." We have needs that didn't exist in Sa'di's era. We suffer damage from different national and political trends that Sa'di could have never conceived. We feel a series of physical and spiritual defects in ourselves and in our atmosphere that Sa'di even couldn't write a letter about them. Finally, we live in an era where a thirteen-year-old school child who knows the science and technique is much wiser than Sa'di. Philosophy has paced a long way since Sa'di's time.

We will not follow the fervent abnegator of Sa'di in the details of his article. Because we cannot. The writer is mistaken and betrays his own revolutionary flag. We could know that he hasn't prepared a complete plan for his sudden rebellion or has started just with an improvised plan. He states contradicting thoughts. He writes:

"In your nomadic tent, in the corner of your rural winter house, or in the corner of the crowded coffee house of your own city, with a courageous tone, read aloud the following poems of your beloved and revered *Shahname*:..."

This didn't exist at first in the argument. What was told about Sa'di is true as well about Ferdowsi. With the rights that incentives of rebellion suppose for themselves, if we just neglected Sa'di's and others' competence to manage our modern thoughts - and we did so very fiercely that we condemned Sa'di for Iran's decadence - then we must neither be Ferdowsi. We must find new aliment for the new day. But we know well that the spirit of an old nation cannot go on with "new day, new aliment," it needs enough resources, and in this respect, Sa'di is nothing less than Ferdowsi. Basically, there is no competition between these two precious Iranian poets. When we need to stimulate the ancient heroic and nationalistic nerve, we will read Rostam's stories, and when tempted to philosophize and get spiritual joy, we enter Sa'di's *Golestan* and *Bustan*.

But when we want to renew, soothe, or fund our current pains, contemporary emotions, and new needs, we will be wandering around... In this field, we are deprived of any refuge. Our contemporary poets are nothing but faulty Sa'dis, insipid Ferdowsis, or tasteless Hafezes. They can neither conquer our hungry soul like as Sa'di's verse and prose does, nor soothe its scars with sincere condolences, nor calm its emotions with according expressions.

When we seek a leader for our wandering thoughts and misled steps, among all the complicated problems of our time, we find ourselves deprived and suspended... that's why we rebel.

*

Ask a group of hungry people plundering, looting, and destroying anything they face; "O comrade! Do you think this crazy revolt makes your stomach full?"

The crowd in love with the goddess of rebellion will never decrease their vehemence. Whether they find the supply or they will go on destroying.

Our spiritual poverty is the drive for this “rebellion.” Sa’di, Ferdowsi, Hafez, or any other of the past poets and literates will suffer the harms of this rebellion. Nothing will let them free. Their rescue is by the success of this rebellion. This rebellion will produce their supporter and rescuer. Those who are hungry for science and technique, poetry and literature, emotion and reason will find mental purveyance. And they will complete and pervade the mental and literary revolution, the political and social revolution.

Thus, for now, do not talk to us, the anxious pensive youth of this era of awakening, about Sa’di, Ferdowsi, or Hafez. Describe to us the meaning of life.

Introduce us to the route of redemption and salvation. Let our souls open their wings and our minds to have light and charm. Take away from our eyes the nightmare of decadence and destruction.

*

All the answers given to the courageous criticisms of the author of *Zabān-e Āzād* by the supporters of Sa’di are ignorant of these issues and atmosphere. One of those answers was published in *Nobahār* (22nd Rabi al-Avval) two days after *Zabān-e Āzād*’s article was published.

The author of this article, aiming to threaten and intimidate opponents of Sa’di’s school, started to write just like someone who is sure of support from a ready-to-attack majority, and started to wander around the battleground with threats and menaces.

The attack made by the “disciple of Sa’di’s school” at the beginning of his article on the “atmosphere” and blaming the “atmosphere” of Iran with such a derogatory tone is not acceptable to us. They do not have the right to deny the virtues of a nation that gave birth to Sa’di by its nature, in order to prove Sa’di’s high position. And it is very unfortunate to relate an honest revolutionary action, just like wretched political intrigues, to the corruption of “atmosphere.” Such an abusiveness is very impertinent.

By the statements of the disciple of the Sa’di’s school, one can understand: that this gentleman supposes the social realities with his geometrical information as identical. And claims some of his beliefs as certain historical truths, which they definitely are not. On the other side, one can never find in his writings, whether in their appearance or in their content, the competence needed for such certain unanswerable claims. The angry or zealous disciple of Sa’di’s school writes to the author of *Zabān-e Āzād*:

“Curse anyone or anything you wish! In healthy minds, there will only be regret towards you and hatred towards your statements” Such a delicate and incisive mistake!

These words belong to an adolescent who has never enjoyed literary and philosophical polemics and has never felt a bit of freedom of thinking and imagination. My sir! Why do you have such a wrong idea of healthy minds? Healthy minds will never regret the essay of *Zabān-e Āzād* or never hate its author.

Contrariwise, they will happily contemplate the thoughts of the author of *Zabān-e Āzād* in the name of freedom of thinking, even if it is against their own beliefs and thoughts. If they accept [his argument], they will happily acknowledge it, and if they are not persuaded, they will excitedly decline it without any compassion. They will enjoy the freedom of writing and

thinking, and they will be happy to solve an important social or literary problem of their revered land before the presence of their compatriots and public opinion. As you yourself have resorted, the “civilized world” requires so. One must examine and scrutinize opposing thoughts with patience and kindness toward truth, which makes him patient toward intellectual difficulties and patient in disputes.

I wouldn't like passing by this essay without showing my appreciation for a manly thought of “Sa'di's disciple.” He writes: “you and I want to say: If we are bad people, it is Sa'di and Hafez's fault. In other words, while being forced to confess our badness, we try to find someone to share the responsibility.” The mentality which made the disciple of Sa'di's school write this manly phrase – I am not afraid of repeating manly – is worth attention and praise. Anything signaling the revival of **a brave, courageous spirit of nationalism** must be praised and promoted.

“The reasons of a nation's decadence...” which makes a basic background in these essays is a lively issue. Its domain is vast. The quarrel arising over Sa'di's identity could let us enter this topic just from one point, and it is not possible to bring forward the generalities in such a situation.

As for the laziness and *Kalandari* spirit that the rebellious and revolutionary author of *Zabān-e Āzād* ascribes to Sa'di, the Zeal-of-master disciple mentions some of Sa'di's verses. Indeed, he doesn't do so to acknowledge the opponents. Whenever he wants to prove that Sa'di's thoughts were vaster and greater than his time, we will accept that. But if he wants to state that these thoughts today could be considered contemporary and redemptive thoughts, we will decline them.

Shepherd and wolf, tree and root, serf and king, and so on and so forth are not compatible with our today's nurture and mindset and scrape our ears. Just as our fathers' abacus cannot solve our geometrical problems, this jargon cannot translate our feelings at this moment. We feel a loneliness, solicitude, otherness [qorbat] right in the middle of today's world that couldn't be soothed by sonnet-writings and ode-makings of old people. We are sick and stressed. The cure to our pain and stress couldn't be found in these verses, which aged our ancestors.

*

We have discussed two main essays: firstly, the declaration of disobedience to old poets and writers published in *Zabān-e Āzād* under the title of “School of Sa'di”; second, an answer published in *Nobahār* signed by “disciple of Sa'di's school.” Both essays let us describe the main problem and define the major lines of arguments and then comment on the ideas if needed.

Apart from these essays, we have seen some other essays in other periodicals. By their content, thoughts, and style, they didn't worth more attention. On the other hand, as was promised, *Nobahār* published a comprehensive essay written by its famous competent editor on this topic, titled “Who is Sa'di?” we will dedicate this second and last part of the chronicle of “A Literary Rebellion” to study and scrutinize this essay.

Here in order to get the attention of the readers of *Tajaddod* to the main subject, we need to repeat our point of view.

In our opinion essay of *Zabān-e Āzād*, to a considerable degree, deserved admiration and encouragement and was published at a perfect time. This essay, among the subjects discussed

in the periodicals of Iran, fulfilled an empty position. And most of the claims of the vehement critic of Sa'di in *Zabān-e Āzād* on 23rd Rabi' al-Avval were justified...

In that volume of *Zabān-e Āzād*, the critic of Sa'di writes:

One of the [educated people] has sent a message: I suppose the date of the publication of "School of Sa'di" is the first day of the literary revolution of Iran. Since that day, I saw the angel of effort and action opening its wings in the sky of Iran.

One of the social scientists in the department claimed:

This is the first time for the press in Iran that they have done their job and guided the caravan of literary thoughts through the abyss of despair and lethargy toward the road of effort and ambition.

And that is true. That essay, with a couple of criticisms and objections, created such turbulence in the literary atmosphere of Iran that it will definitely be remembered even if it doesn't verify the mentioned claims.

We really don't know why in Tehran, following this subject was considered improper. Was it that they feared this literary subject might cause hate, antagonism, and disunion, so they prevented the critics from doing so? Anyway, it is unfortunate that still, in our press, there is not that much trust in intellectual thoughts, so it could go around such subjects with tranquility.

Contrariwise, we considered this event as a sudden fortunate occasion to benefit and enter into a useful discussion. From now on, at any expense, we must get familiar with the philosophical and literary polemics without political and party intentions. And we must admit, as everyone does, that "the sparkle of truth is the result of the collision of thoughts."

That is why in this polemic that we have entered with pleasure, based on our honesty and truth, we will express our opinions and also criticize others' opinions published in their essays.

As it is mentioned, Nobahār's essay "Who is Sa'di?" is one of the most important essays written on this subject. As it is obvious by the knowledge, popularity, and literacy of the belletrist who has written it, it is itself, in fact, a literary work that must be studied and scrutinized swiftly. Nobahār, to avoid referring to the powerful author himself, had already promised an upcoming edited version of (Who is Sa'di?): "The readers must wait for the department to independently publish a more moderate response according to the spirit of Sa'di and the spirit of 5th and 7th century literature and its influence on reality and finally the merits of Sa'di and his colleagues with a scientific study, to correct the mistakes of our very modern youth."

These words define the warp and woof (canevas) of the promised essay and, at the same time, inform us of its tone. Possibly we may later also discuss this part of the writing. There is no need to also say that "Who is Sa'di?" met the promises of the department even more than needed. The introduction of the essay, with the best techniques and well expressed in its tone and order, elaborates on Sa'di's identity and virtues. Then goes on with different chapters on different subjects like the influence of environment on intuition, natural and unnatural poems, the influence of Greek and Indian philosophy on Iranian literature, etc. If we didn't rush, we could have found the best examples of such phrases mentioned in the second chapter (Revolution, evolution, etc.). But we won't stop to watch and enjoy such literary techniques and delicacies of that essay. As we mentioned before, everyone would read *Nobahār's* essay

with an ethereal literary joy and a delicate spiritual pleasure. We would try not to forget the main disputed subject and show our readers what we consider contradictory to the contemporary truth of ourselves and in opposition to our today's belief among the writings' of *Nobahār*'s chief. Instantly, the supporter of (the School of Sa'di), as *Zabān-e Āzād* puts it, writes:

Now we may example two lines of Sanā'ī's verse to demonstrate the difference between literature and critic (who understands the literature):

Take sheep and bird to such a way that...

On another occasion, on the identity of "bal hum aẓall" (a Quran verse referring to whom they are worse than animals) says:

Don't fashion yourself as a donkey for the acceptance of masses

Because the masses' affair is not anything except donkeyness or donkeybeing

The masses accept cow as god

But they don't believe in Noah as prophet

It is worth making a point clear here...

When you see that such principles of judgment are used, you are forced to imagine that the basic subject to discuss is to demonstrate the knowledge and virtues of Sa'di and his peers.

But we shall never forget that the basic question of this polemic is to understand whether the thoughts and teachings of old poets, writers, and intellectuals are sufficient for today of a contemporary and modern nation or not.

In other words, do the old writers' poems and proses produce any new thoughts, impressions, knowledge, sensations, or anything new and virgin in us? They answer this question like this:

When we read these verses of Sanā'ī: "The masses accept cow as god / But they don't believe in Noah as a prophet," We enjoy, and we notice some delicate points in it.

If we would like to summarize these statements, it would be something like this: "the sensations and impressions possible with our current thoughts and knowledge, which are possible to be manifested under external influences, are manifested while we read these verses. By the sensations, impressions, thoughts, and knowledge we recorded in ourselves, we ornament these verses, interpret them and enjoy them!"

An interpretation that our ancestors did just as well as us. A pleasure that old people used to experience better than us. And when they are born in our hearts, they do nothing other than give us some hereditary blessings. They add nothing to us. Unless we are nothing ourselves, and we couldn't claim we have learnt our national language, national literature, national teachings. (Again, with this specific constraint that all these national things are not contemporary to us).

Let's put the cow aside: let's see if this literature could be of one-thousandth of the details and singular sensations of a Chatterton to the a-bit-modern youth of Iran.

Definitely, if there wasn't an excellent civilization beyond the borders of Iran, and our age was one in the Middle Ages, and the world was only the Iranian world, we could have confined ourselves to this limited literary wealth. Honestly, don't you feel any pain in your heart, when you find yourselves this far that we Iranians are from civilization?

Well, then, which poet, which verse could express this pain for you? For example:

O you that have passed your fifties and still are sleeping / unless you notice in these few days...

Is it enough? Is anyone ever interested in this thought and sensation?

Or this Qazal by Hafez and some of its appropriate lines: "I saw the green field of heaven and the sickle of new moon..."

Or another Qazal or another thousand times repeated Qaside, could they be helpful in expressing this pain or soothing?!

In order to clarify our thoughts, we could give more examples since it would be beneficial.

Have you heard about the marine circumstance that led to the shipwreck of the huge transatlantic ship called the Titanic? Imagine for a moment: the width of the surrounding ocean – an infinite dark sapphire space – formidable waves – silence... – being sure that the safe coast is a thousand kilometers away – the ship had hit something in the sea – the water goes up in the ship, and the ship goes down in the sea – the people of 20th century with the help of tools, trying to prepare what is needed to survive.

Who? – Only ladies and children! – There is no place for men – a young wealthy officer who was settled in a lifeboat, leaves that safe spot and gets back to the ship about to perish (the commands of captain are obeyed!...) – only ladies and children!! The music plays... - the daunting water has gotten to the knees of musicians... - passengers are busy praying: "nearer, my god, to thee!"

Above this frightening resurrection, some invisible metal cords (Antennas) – some electric sparkles in a hidden room of the doomed ship – wireless telegraph! – and in the cloudy horizon, the fugitive shattered smoke of the ships coming to rescue the Titanic from all four directions of the surrounding sea!

Compare one-hundredth of the thoughts and sensations caused by imagining this with a verse full of expressions like: (dark night, horror of wave, formidable vortex, etc.),¹ and then think again...

*

We must ask ourselves whether we have tried to explain something self-explanatory. In fact, do we need to come up with arguments to prove that our old writers and poets were talented and genius but naturally enough couldn't see what we see today and we have to have to get affected, impressed, happy or sad by them.

The answer to this question could only have two forms; either they have seen, or they haven't.

¹ Referring to a verse by Hafez

If they didn't see it, we must admit that the world is constantly changing. In the world of life and existence; revolution and evolution. Thus: Tajaddod² (Modernity), an always vital fresh Tajaddod, a Tajaddod not separable from life exists. Then we must follow the consequences of this "observation" of ours, and believe what our eyes have seen.

The fact that we had Sa'di and others like him in the branches of old sciences doesn't mean we don't need other Sa'dis. Of course, apart from whatever we say, these "other" Sa'dis, in order to become "other," have to be new and modern (Jadid and Motajadded). On the other hand, the fact that Sa'di was a great and honorable man (poet, literate, scholar,...) doesn't mean he was void of any defection or weakness; or he had never made a mistake or caused any bad influence in the time of his literary life and afterlife..

The freedom of thought – which is the most precious freedom – is due to not being limited to any consideration against reason and logic. Respecting Sa'di must not get to the point of giving him the place of God. Sa'di was Sa'di...; he was, to his own time, an intelligent man, a vigilant Iranian, scientist of his era, a benevolent poet, a stringent charming literate, a delicate prose-writer, a poet with technique, a Tajaddod-seeking philosopher. As in the Latin language, he had "enlightenment." He had read the works of Western literates. He had put the wise words in verse and prose with an eastern-behaved diletantism. And also, there was some other stuff that today makes Sa'di the object of honor and pride for Iranians. And these people, when hearing his name, they feel proud. And of course, this success is important, it is Sa'di himself; who doesn't have any rivals in the east in his scope of expertise.

*

To answer the question "Who was Sa'di?" Mr. Malek al-Sho'ara (poet laureate) writes: "Sa'di is the result of the teachings of Sanā'ī and Ferdowsī. He is the extract of wise expressions and spiritual teachings of scholars of Greece, Iran, India, Arabs, and others. And finally, he had been brought up after a series of revolutions and evolutions and the establishment of government under the influence of Caliph, in the youth time of a newly established government in Shiraz. If the individual revolutions didn't change him that much, probably the mysticism and Sufism would have been more powerful in his character."

This much, in defining Sa'di's identity and describing him, will satisfy that eastern immortal scholar with a kind of vexing him.

But in order to clarify a point to which we frequently referred in our essay, we will read some parts of Mr. Malek al-Sho'ara's criticism of the claims of Sa'di's critic again.

The virtuous author of *Nobahār* writes:

We never deny that among the writings of Sa'di, Hafez, and Mowlavi, there are some philosophies like those of Greek Sophists, Sufists, Indian Brahmans, and Arab ascetics.

Such a confession again turns the subject to one of its minor forms, which is determining the value of Sa'di's teachings. Let's follow the explanations of *Nobahār* precisely:

But we should see in which context the basis of Sa'di, Hafez, and Mowlavi's principles are situated. If the basis of their writings were these subjects, we wouldn't dispute with

² Literally means getting new, becoming new, being new.

the critic of Sa'di. But we see that these Sophistic, Etezali,³ fanatic, and ascetic contaminations were somewhat a two thousand years old habit and innate teaching of that nation and was and still is pervading. Thus, any writer perforce repeated and repeats those contaminations. Isn't it still the case among merchants, scholars, courtesans, and literates that they say, the world isn't worth that much, let it go, it is not important, anything god wishes would be, etc?

These claims, which are aimed to criticize the claims of the critic of Sa'di, definitely condemn some of Sa'di's teachings, and parallel their existence with the popular habits and common rituals of their contemporary time.

As you may read, Mr. Malek- al-Sho'ara adds: "if you say that these (this kind of beliefs of today's masses) are also the consequences of the teachings of Sa'di and Mowlavi, then you are wrong." Even if we don't claim it this vehemently, we will confine ourselves to just saying that any sort of "these" we observe in the writings of Sa'di and Mowlavi, we exactly observe the same in the language of masses and elites in our own environment.

– "You've made a mistake. Sa'di and Mowlavi were also, just like us, influenced by these teachings. And the time had taught them and us in the same class."

Well, very well. The fact that these teachings preceded Sa'di and Mowlavi, does not reduce the incompetency and filthiness of them, isn't it?

Thus, as we have the right to criticize the unknown promoters of them [such ideas], we also have the right to criticize the known and famous promoters of them. If a statement by a decadent old woman desperate for life must be condemned, then an outstanding poet or a privileged scholar uttering the same statement decorated with literary devices, cannot disavow the similarity to that old woman.

Due to the richness of the topic, in this judgment, we will dismiss some very convenient points of view for proving our claim. But we should point out that among the two blameful ones mentioned, definitely, the old woman is less guilty. What she says is limited to a few square meters of her room, and if it is drawn in the minds of some kids [in that room], it could possibly be wiped by reason and truth-seeking in the future. But what about the works of a poet or a writer? No one can ever work out the influences and consequences of these powerful spells!

In order to cover the deficiencies discovered in Sa'di, the wise author of "Who is Sa'di?" tries putting forward the nice verses of Sa'di on subjects like material life, the economy and political issues, the morals for life, way of living, hospitality, etc.

In its own place, we have compared part of Sa'di's verses to our sensations of today, and we have expressed our opinion about that, so there is no need to repeat it.

To pay our tribute to the god of truth-telling, we will quote one of Mr. Malek al-Sho'ara's very nice reasonable, and competent arguments gifted to the critic of Sa'di with a question mark and three exclamation marks:

Just like that, with all this passion of socialists against capitalists and war, still, the situation of the world is like this – what happens if nowadays socialists encourage states

³ A school in Islamic Kalam (philosophy) famous for its renunciation of reason.

to make wars, kill people, expand their territories, and confiscate the rights of weak nations?!!!

But we should know that here “socialists” stands for the Sa’di’s delegates, and “situation of the world like this” for “the situation of nowadays Iran in the sense of public morality,” and the above phrase with a freedom-movement goes out of the scope of what is discussed here.

In order to have completely read the precious essay of *Nobahār*, we must also read this last phrase:

I claim that: any tenet and principle that nowadays is more fresh and useful to the general state of living or public morality and there is a consensus over it by sociologists and natural philosophers, give it to me, and I will find it in Sa’di’s *Golestan* and *Bustan* or in Hafez’s verses...

If this claim was a true one, it was the worst eulogy for Sa’di. For if Sa’di wrote down all the “tenets and principles of the general state of living and public morality” for remembrance, he had tried a lot for nothing, and if he accepted all of them and wrote them to promote them all, he had gathered all the opposites and actually proved he didn’t believe in any of them.

This verse of Hafez is written at the very end of the essay, “who is Sa’di?”:

When you hear the speech of those speaking from the heart, don’t claim them as wrong
Because you are not a speech-recognizer (who understands real speech), the fault (wrong) is this

As a sign of thankfulness, since we will forget to criticize this verse, can we just ask what it means by “people of the heart”? Does the word heart is the same heart as we see in this verse: “My heart is getting lost, I swear to God people of the heart...”

There are some nuances here that can affect the meaning.

We wouldn’t continue these criticisms here, but just after giving the right to those youth who fight for modernity, the freshness of life, and Renaissance, just to soothe those who worship Sa’di, we may write:

“in the garden (Golestan) of wisdom, Sa’di’s oeuvres – as he himself put it – is a leaf, a green leaf; green by the freshness of an immortal spring.

Nowruz and Dehqan

1

Nowruz!... the time is moving
 The hammock of fortune, day and night in the heavens
 One night the precious fortune gets to the moon
 The other day the bliss is apparent in the sun...

This year "I don't have any worries," had told
 The nice peasant, covertly, to his descendants
 "the time is going on a way favorable to us
 Which will compensate the past for its paucity and wealth"...

O Nowruz! you came from the depth of beyond
 The hope revived,.. the heads raised to beyond
 The chivalrous peasant intended to rebel...

Nowruz!... How was it that the daughters of Jam¹ in Orumi²
 Were slaughtered by the Neinvai command of Assyrians
 The Azeri peasant again was made full of sorrow

2

The message of life was delivered to nature, happily,,
 When the sun stepped in the Aries,, always
 O king of day! Walk on this horizon
 May this lively feast be such lively till ever

The peasant watered the farm with blood
 And in the furrow of his heart, the seed of revenge was planted
 Nowruz! The season of discovery and green hope
 A moment of balance in day and night

¹ Mythical Persian King known as the first king of Iran.

² The city in northwest Iran. A massacre by Assyrians happened in this city at that time.

Nowruz! A special moment in eternity

The time of awakening and Tajaddod comes,,,

The start of being a hero and the end of fear and despair...

Nowruz! A new day in the aged horizons!

Peasant got iron sickle in his hand

Today – we must die or live!

Sa'diism

If you have stepped into the school of Sa'di – and we don't doubt it – you may know that he had specific fear of black hair, and this fear made him flee away to foreign lands. “The lightful soul of Sa'di, which is the candle of your sit,” which “is no use if you don't burn it,” currently has caused an explosion of literary Bolshevism in Tehran and caused the most literate errors in the center of Iran. The first hero, in a style somehow similar to one of Lenin, pulls up the flag of the rebel and says: “What is this oeuvre of Sa'di which has been the idol to worship for Persian speaking nations?” The pupil of Sa'di's school, who, despite others, is very satisfied with his master, roars this wise response: “first you need to strengthen your nerves!” and then says: “The oeuvre of Sa'di which includes different books and each has a specific spirit, you must read separately!” The romantic Romanesque author of Zaban-e Azad explodes the forehead of his audience with this furious sentence: “O pupil of Sa'di's school! I read your essay full of curses, and felt pity in myself...” and... wrote an essay full of more curses for you...

During this uproar, from the scene of Sa'di's school, the voice of a master is raised: “Are you going to remove the books of Sa'di and Mowlavi?” Master's voice addresses the young deniers of Sa'di: “What art or virtue have you possessed?” Then he shouts with blind eyes and deaf ears: “I claim any principle or tenet exists in Sa'di's Bustan or Hafez's verses!!!” On the other side, Mo'aven al-Saltanah reaches the noise-makers and invites them to Ferdowsi's Dabestan (school) to peacefully argue with Sa'di supporters there... Finally, in the name of literature's dignity, after hesitating a month or two, the request is approved... “School of Sa'di” was on its way when we were writing “literary investigations.” Do you want to know our opinion?

Tongueless

Unspeakable Hearables 37

There are some words that must be told and some others which must be heard. It is possible to say and hear at the same time. As women do. To the balance of practice, saying outweighs hearing, especially if the speaker is cunning and the listener is deaf. Although the speaking tongue is one thing, but hearing ears are two... But we must not be deceived by these truths and listen to these. The wise have said: How is hearing like seeing? And wise have also said: thousands of saying not worth half a practice! Since saying and seeing are both priceless to us, and we have nothing to do with wise people, we can say: How is hearing like saying.¹ But this is ambiguous and does not explicitly define if the hearing is worthier or saying. Thus it is better to say: “thousands of saying not worth half hearing!” But for a couple of reasons, this is not even possible to be told. But you have heard... And God is enough for witness.

Tongueless

The explanation is that if you didn't understand this, it is out of the subject.

¹ A witty play with a famous Persian saying: How is hearing like seeing? Which is used to refer to seeing as more valuable and truthful than hearing.

Interpretation of Love

I love you for the fact that
Your eyes are black as my fortune
I have fallen hard for both
I have no fear for kindness or anger of night...

Whether they be angry or kind
I would not talk about that;
Neither joy for bliss nor fear for pains
I've got neither hope nor fear of the world!...

But that gloomy image
In the melancholy of love and lunacy
Keeps appearing in my eyes all the time

The imagination which is worshiped by my love
Just like you having... - O daughter of the sun!
Is those black drunk eyes

A response to TajaddodKhah (Modernism-seeker)

The respectful author of the critique published in volume 76 compared some parts of our criticism to *Nobahar*'s statements and discovered a considerable mistake. If he didn't mention that he is awaiting a response, we wouldn't write this, and rather prepare the context for a new discussion for analyzing Sa'di. The clarifications we are about to provide, if it doesn't add up to previous discussions, at least can make some of the questions around Sa'di clear.

Comparing the final statements of Mr. Malek al-Sho'ara with our critical statements in an abstract out-of-context approach would definitely lead to inconsistency among *Nobahar*'s claim and its critique.

If the punctilious Mr. Tajaddodkhah used the same way of criticism in other parts of our article, he would have possibly found other instances of the same mistakes (!) in our statements. As much as it was possible, we have implemented required digressions in between our criticism and have kept diverging from the main scope for the sake of following the thoughts of authors, and we have informed a continent about it in order to prevent any misunderstanding.

The reason which caused us to focus on Sa'di himself in our writing of the Sa'di-like people was that we wanted to centralize the discussion on Sa'di and criticize a school by criticizing its eminent figures or, to put it in other words, we wanted to define the identity of a group in an individual and then probably understand a group's position in today's world by understanding his place in today's world.

This method is not faulty, and it was even better if the respectful author of the article "Who is Sa'di?" kept focusing on Sa'di just like he promised in the introduction rather than naming others and bringing them into the discussion.

The criticized statement of ours was meant to ignore Sa'di's peers and only criticize him and consequently deal with beliefs about the old writers which have been practiced over centuries.

There has been a belief among Iranians that Sa'di's book is inclusive of all desirable principles of the wise of old times and new times. Those who have, to some extent, felt the exaggeration in this statement would go on based on *Nobahar*'s claims and say: "it is possible to say that till now no Farsi book has been written with such perfection, simplicity, and modesty and it is unique for the lessons of behavior and oikonomia." Our criticism was just standing against these beliefs, for Sa'di's book is none of these, and even if it is, it is to some extent.

It is perfect from the point of view of old literature.

It is inclusive, for it includes most of the beliefs of Sa'di's time.

It is humble, for it is written with an eloquent language void of any literary mistakes.

It is simple, for it could have been complex. There is a kind of (behavior lesson) in Sa'di mixed with a kind of (oikonomia) which, in fact, is (unique).

Considering the behavior lessons of Sa'di's works, contemplating some anecdotes from *Geolestan* could make us needles for any further explanation. The first anecdote in *Geolestan* teaches us:

"Expedient lie is better than devilry truth." The fourth anecdote teaches that "the inherited criminal tendencies are not amendable by any pedagogy." The eighth anecdote tells us that the kings must relentlessly eliminate those who fear them: "the poor cat if had any wings / would have totally eliminated the sparrow's eggs off the planet." The ninth anecdote tells us that one's

inheritors are his biggest enemies. The fourteenth anecdote claims that the soldier who is not receiving his pay from the state has the right to retreat from battle. The fifteenth anecdote... but we have to look at the whole *Golestan* here. As for oikonomia, these verses are good examples:

When you see an incompetent person fortunate,

A wise man would surrender

If you haven't got a sharp, fierce claw

It's better not to fight with bad people

Anyone who fights with an iron-armed

Has wounded his subtle silver arm

Wait for the time that he is powerless

And then smash his head for your own favor

Sa'di's fanatics must not be zealous because of some generalities, the details of which couldn't be tested or analyzed. But some idolaters, as we mentioned, have elevated Sa'di to the position of God and feel ecstasy when hearing his statements. For them, Sa'di is the demiurge, and he has all the knowledge in his heart. Such a belief is the result of an adoration fit to the African fetishists, not the contemporary Iranian youth.

Our statement was written under the influence of these considerations and thoughts, and that is why we say: "If such a claim was true, it was the worst eulogy for Sa'di. Because if Sa'di had written down all the principles of public life and social ethics, he would have done a useless job. And if he believed in all of them and was intended to promote them, he has actually gathered opposites together and shown he believes in none of them."

In order to make it more clear, I will quote some lines from the famous literate, Hoseyn Danesh:

"The real subtlety in Sa'di's writing is not the result of the commitment to morals, rationality, or a specific school. It is the result of the fact that he penetrated into the very details of all modes and possibilities of the world and presented them with experiences and examples; from the banal sensual experiences to the sublime ones, the subtlest to the roughest.

Having this in mind, alongside the novelty of style and subtlety of expression unique to Sa'di's writing, one can understand why he had such a long deep impression on different people of different classes and guilds. And then one can discover why in about seven centuries he still is credited."

After what we mentioned, we find it no more necessary to go for the details of Mr. TajaddodKhah's claims. In fact, the discussion was deflected by those criticisms, and we put it back on track again. The mistake found by that gentleman does not require more discussion.

Modernism in Literature 2

In our first article in volume 27 that we published for continuation and refreshing this topic, there were some phrases that were subject to mistakes of printing and editing, so they were not adequately expressing what they had to. We will dedicate these lines to correcting and describing those phrases.

We said: “A nation’s literature is the mirror of their civilization.” If the Iranian civilization of the 14th century A.H. is worthy of praise and acceptance, so should their literature. Accepting Iran’s today’s literature as a literature appropriate for the time, is like accepting the prevailing political and social situation of our ruined and decadent country.

“Worse than this and more unfortunate:

“If going back to the literature of six centuries before this is a rational literary tactic, then going back to the civilization, principles of government, and social organization of life in six centuries before this would also be an acceptable civil and revolutionary tactic.”

Some of the authors in our day consider the status quo of our literature – which they think is just their own writings – to be out of reach of any criticism. There could be two different reasons for this ignorance. One could be their lack of any literary taste to be able to recognize the differences and subtleties, or they are not in any way familiar with any proper foreign literature to be able to understand their own errors and incompetence through comparison.

Some others consider the status quo inferior and disunited in comparison with the glorious old times, and they confess it. But those with this idea are not active practical literates, meaning they are not involved in writing poems. They don’t like the poems of their contemporary poets either. Their one and only goal is to revive the old times, and they all are taking care of Ferdowsis and Sa’di in their chests.

They don’t believe in renewing and modernizing the literary and intellectual activities of those times, rather they really believe that figures like Ferdowsi, Sa’di, and Hafez are such figures that can jump out of their deserted graves, and enlighten the current world of Iranians with their fossilized style of thought and beliefs.

According to them, the only relevant poem, thought, style, and language is the poem, thought, style, and language of those old literates. The latest rightful art and wisdom were theirs, and after that, anything written and thought was useless unless it is matching with their discoveries and inventions.

These people are the theoretical and visionary modern literates, while the first group claim being the practical modern literates.

The lines written at the beginning of this essay were aimed at these two groups of normal writers.

Those who sanctify and praise the old ghazals, which are always mixed with spiritual allusions, disclaim any reformation and modernism on their side. With this unconscious claim, they reveal that their modernism is just an imitative fancy attitude, and in essence, they are the children of old age, an age of ignorance, an age of isolation, an age deprived of international relations and communications.

These people are capable of riding their camel, with its inharmonious Asian dance walk, through Paris and all its manifestations of the age’s civilization and industry/art and still, when

coming back, believe that among all those works of thought, art, and wisdom there was nothing more interesting than the tone of the bell on their camel's neck!...

If we tried changing the taste and understanding of this group, we would have failed from the very beginning. But we believe that there is a select public, including conscious literate modernists and real youth, who are worthy for their unique soul and mind and are not affected by the cancer of despair and laziness. The public, which is used to the new civilization and considering their souls' needs, they are never going to be easily satisfied and are eagerly waiting for a cold drop of the thought and art drink to quench their regretful thirst.

And we are determined to cause a movement in this context.

Modernism in Literature 3

At the end of the second essay, we wrote:

“We are determined to cause a movement in this context; the context of literary modernism.”

Since the term “movement” was used and our audiences’ attention was directed toward the fast and forceful movements of flowing waters, and they are satisfied with comparing literary manifestations with the flow and stream of bodies of water, then we will continue with this comparison as far as possible.

Since ten centuries before the time being, there have been the ebullient springs of the poetic nature and initiative of Iranian poets and writers, which have caused a considerable amount of pen secretion to combine and join, gathered in the vast region of Iranian civilization.

Before this age, these springs of art and intelligence formed cheerful rivers, euphonious waterfalls, and rainbow-colored fountains in the cheerful pastures, green meadows, or endless hot deserts.

Getting far from their primary sources and going through long distances, among the events and accidents of life, has led them to pits and hollows in a domain that was revived by those springs themselves and caused them to stagnate there. With grandeur and glory, these springs and streams mingled like a vast sea and settled. They fell short of life’s movement and failed toward perfection. But with their original vitality, they continued to glow.

These springs and streams were the memorials of a vital, glorious civilization that were an “immortal literary treasure” for the future of a nation.

All around this inherited supply, dams of conservatism were made and turned this vital source of art and thought into a stagnated inert lake.

The vitality of Iranian literature died out and became dormant alongside immobility and quiescence. The fountain of youth turned into a swamp. A dead water that didn’t stop shining and emitting agile glowing flares.

We, the current progenies of Iran, are facing this vast sea, and its exciting water and fruitful chest still make us tempted and excited. The breeze blowing over its smooth, shiny surface reaching us, brings to our regretful senses the smell of a past extinct prospers.

And we are the thirsty inhabitants of a dry land whose only way to happiness is to visit this beautiful green scene.

Harmful ideas against our intellectual needs of the day grow up in the vastness of this sea. Its enormous humidity causes lethargy and decadence in our muscles. We fail to resist its deadly negative effects. Any promising fertile cloud which emerges on our horizons is attracted toward that magnetic centre and gives all its finite drops of felicity to that infinite sea, and vanishes itself.

Now it is not necessary to interpret these metaphors one by one and repeat ourselves all over again. The atmosphere and condition we depicted is the condition of Iran and Iranian literature. After ages of perfection and eminence, old Iranian literature has formed a placid classic mass and gained a unique high position in the eastern world. But in the darkness of political decadence and interregnum, this literature is deprived of its bounteous sources, which used to feed it continuously, and has forgotten to proceed in its new life.

This age of interregnum, lethargy, and idleness coincided with extreme motion and continuous development in the west. During the time of Iranian's sleep, other nations have progressed a lot.

On the one hand, the sciences, arts, thoughts, and philosophical ideas; on the other hand, socio-political organization, institutions, and principles have progressed a lot.

Now it is not possible anymore to get that old literary situation with its own thoughts and sensations and insert it into today's life. Between that past day and this available "today," there is a deep vale. Neither the thousand-year-old Ferdowsi can jump over it, nor can we reach centuries ago and use that situation for our current needs in a one-by-one manner.

Our literature has an empty spot. In our literature's historical life, a period of interregnum and idleness has happened and ruled, so we have to try to compensate for it. This period wasn't the outcome of decadence in technology, art, or poetics.

It was the result of the dark and chaotic situation in the country, blocking intellectual progress by not allowing the Iranian mind to mingle and encounter public opinion of world civilization.

The bounteous beam of international scientific relations didn't fertilize the deserted Iranian farm. This farm deprived of the sun of science, with its own potentials and capacities, brought up a crop but an empty frail one, a dry one void of immortal merits of science and technology. These ripe unripe embryonic products were eradicated in the pile of the old crops. And the empty space/spot was left just as "space" and "void."

*

Here, we will pursue the metaphors in the first part of this article:

Our old literature got far away from its primary resources and got condensed into a vast field in a manner of idleness and stagnation. It is settled and stopped in that wide bed.

We are facing a strong dam which we may call the conservatism dam, or the dam produced because of Iran's distance from foreign science and technique. This dam has imprisoned those dense waves of that pond.

When we say: "We are determined to cause a movement in this context," it is obvious that our plan and aim is to make a breach in this strong dam of stagnation. This plan seems to be simple, though we know that it would have consequences.

The dense waters stored behind the dam are very strong and powerful. And the deserts around it stretched on its other side are full of poisonous beasts and wild vermin. Thus, we are sure that with our first strike on this dam, we will find ourselves under constant attacks of the vermin and pests while the mud and sludge of the dam shower us.

But, we are ready.