Women Poets Iranica
A Research Compendium

Ruzā Jamālī's Innovations in Contemporary Persian Poetry

Farzad Baloo*
Associate Professor
May 12, 2025

https://poets.iranicaonline.org/scholar/farzad-baloo/

*Farzad Baloo is an Associate Professor in the Department of Persian Language and Literature at the University of Mazandaran. His research specializes in the intersection of literature and philosophy, with a particular focus on linguistic and intellectual traditions in Persian literary discourse. Baloo has an extensive publication record, including several books, such as Rawshanfikran-i Irani va maʾalah-yi zaban (Iranian Intellectuals and the Issue of Language), and more than 60 research articles in Persian and international journals.

Introduction

Over the past century, modern Iranian poetry has witnessed various poetic movements, some of which were short-lived and gave way to other poetic trends. A significant distinguishing feature of modern Persian poetry, in contrast to its classical counterpart, is the emergence of an inclusive literary landscape that has fostered greater opportunities for female poets to emerge and gain prominence. This shift can be attributed, in part, to the influence of contemporary global perspectives. An examination of modern Persian poetry's trajectory reveals a progressive increase in the literary contributions and recognitions of women poets. In this context, "modern (Persian) poetry" specifically refers to Nīmāʾī poetry and its post-Nīmāʾī forms.

Furūgh Farrukhzād (1313-1345/1934-1967) stands as the most prominent figure representing the female movement in Persian poetry. Following Farrukhzād, despite many ups and downs, modern Persian literary tradition continued to evolve, introducing numerous women poets to the field. The 1979 Revolution, subsequent turmoil, and the onset of the Iran-Iraq War shifted the focus of modern Persian poetry towards revolutionary and Islamic ideologies, as well as war-related themes. During this period, some female poets like Tāhirah Saffārzādah (1315-1387/1936-2008), made significant contributions, addressing revolutionary, social, and mystical themes in blank (free) verse and Nīmāʾī poetic forms. After the war, and gradually with the

political, social, and cultural changes of the 1990s, various poetic movements emerged, and a significant number of female poets entered the literary scene. Among them were poets like Ruzā Jamālī, Rūyā Taftī, and Pigāh Ahmadī.

Ruzā Jamālī (b. 1356/1977) is one of the most distinguished poets of this generation, associated with the so-called "Poetry of the 1990s." She was a member of Rizā Barāhanī's (1314-1401/1935-2022) renowned poetry and fiction workshop. Jamālī has maintained a dynamic presence in Persian poetry, with her body of work evolving through various phases since the 1990s. This study focuses on classifying and outlining the evolution of Jamālī's poetry, from language-driven poetry to narrative forms, and eventually toward philosophical poetry infused with eco-feminist features.

A Brief Reflection on the Poetic Movements of the 1990s

To provide a clear picture of Ruzā Jamālī's place in the Persian poetic landscape of the 1990s, it is crucial to situate her work within the broader historical and cultural context that shaped it. As hermeneutic theory suggests, a full appreciation of Jamālī's poetry as an individual contribution requires its integration into the larger poetic movements of the 1990s as a collective whole. Likewise, a thorough understanding of the poetry of the 1990s cannot be achieved without a careful examination of Jamālī's contributions, alongside those of other significant figures of the era.

The early 1990s witnessed a vigorous expansion of translation efforts that introduced theoretical, philosophical, and critical works into Persian. Postmodern concepts such as deconstruction, polyphony, textual interpretation, critiques of modernity, and themes of meaninglessness and irrationality—central tenets of postmodernist philosophy—began to influence the literary sphere, sparking a wealth of intellectual debates. Concurrently, major global and domestic socio-political transformations,

including the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, economic policy shifts, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dismantling of apartheid, and the waning influence of the New World Order doctrine, profoundly affected Iran's cultural and literary dynamics in the 1990s.

The poetry of the 1360s/1980s can be viewed as a transitional phase, bridging the gap between the idealistic, socially committed poetry of the 1320s-40s/1950s–70s and the individualistic, deconstructionist, and non-committal poetry that emerged in the 1370s/1990s. Two key linguistic and thematic features characterize 1360s/1980s poetry: "A heightened focus on colloquial language and its varied functions in poetic texts, and a narrowing focus on 'grand ideas' related to political ideologies, often shaped by the socio-political circumstances of the time."[1] In contrast, the 1370s/1990s witnessed an explosion of transformative trends, as Iranian poets of this period sought to unravel complex themes such as love, death, and faith, which had previously been regarded as sacrosanct. They approached these themes from a deeply personal perspective, rooting their explorations in lived experience rather than universal or ideological concepts. In summary, while the poets of the previous era viewed themselves as the voice of society, a role bestowed upon them by their social position, the poets of the 1370s/1990s sought to engage in dialogue with society.[2]

As literary critic ʿAbd al-ʿAlī Dastghayb notes, the social conditions of the time fostered a climate of intense tension and disillusionment for young, passionate, and creative individuals. Confronted with deep-rooted societal crises and instability, many turned inward, retreating into their personal worlds. [3]This shift gave rise to a simpler, more conversational poetic style that reflected personal experiences and daily life, devoid of grand ambitions to change the world or idealized notions of unattainable goals. Personal sensibility and everyday events took center stage in their poetry, which captured moments experienced over time.[4] Consequently, the poetry of the 1370s/1990s emerged

[1]Bihzād Khājāt, Munāzaʿah dar pīrāhan: Bāzkhānī-yi shiʿr-i dahah-yi haftād [Conflict in the shirt: Re-reading the poetry of seventies/nineteens] (Tehran: Nashir, 1381/2002), 91.

[2]Rizā Chāychī, Dāmī barā-yi sayd-i pārah abr [A trap for catching the cloud torn piece] (Tehran: Shirkat-i Ārvīj-i Īrānīyān, 1383/2004), 131.

[3]ʿAbd al-ʿAlī Dastghayb, Az darīchah-yi naqd: Guftārʹhā va justārʹhā-yi intiqādī-yi adabī [Through the valve of criticism: Speeches and inquiries of literary criticism] (Tehran: Khānah-yi Kitāb, 1386/2007), 867.

[4]Dastghayb, Az darīchah-yi naqd, 865.

as a product of both these socio-political transformations and the translation of key Western texts, particularly in the humanities. During this period, works such as Yadullāh Rūyāyī's (1311-1401/1932-2022) Labrīkhtahʹhā (Overflowings) (Paris, 1370/1991) attracted a cohort of technically proficient poets who lacked a clear sense of purpose. Although the enthusiasm for Rūyāyī's work, Labrīkhtahʹhā, waned after a short period, discussions on form and language, influenced by Russian Formalism, continued to shape literary discourse throughout the early 1370s/1990s. Rūyāyī, a staunch proponent of Russian formalism, catalyzed the translation and publication of works on this subject in Persian.

Influential texts, including Shafīʿī Kadkanī's expanded edition of Mūsīqī-yi shiʿr (The music of poetry)[5] and Bābak Ahmadī's Sākhtār va taʿvīl-i matn (Structure and interpretation of texts),[6] further advanced discussions of formalism, structuralism, and deconstruction. In 1374/1995, Rizā Barāhanī's Khitāb bih Parvānahʹhā (Address to the butterflies), with an extensive afterword titled "Why I am no longer a Nīmāʾī poet," marked a significant milestone. The first part of the collection included a selection of Barāhanī's postmodernist poems characterized by linguistic and conceptual deconstruction. In the second part, Barāhanī critiqued Nīmāʾī and Shāmlūʾī style poetry, articulating his theory of the linguistic essence (linguisticality) of language. The publication coincided with the rise of a new poetic movement, fueled by the global proliferation of postmodernist theories in literature and philosophy. Furthermore, Sayyid ʿAlī Sālihī's "Shiʿr-guftār" (Spoken poetry) served as a launching point for many of the linguistic transformations in 1360s/1990s poetry. This development signaled a new horizon among some young poets, with a nascent movement taking shape. While the poetry of this decade displayed remarkable diversity and cannot be confined to a single school or trend, Barāhanī's workshop remained central, especially due to its approach towards poetry and language. The theory of "linguistic essence" formulated by Barāhanī formed the intellectual foundation of this influential poetic center.[7]

[5]Muhammad Rizā Shafīʿī Kadkanī, Mūsīqī-yi shiʿr [The music of poetry]. Tehran: Āgāh, 1370/1991.

[6]Bābak Ahmadī, Sākhtār va taʿvīl-i matn [Structure and interpretation of texts]. Tehran: Markaz, 1370/1991.

[7]Mahdī Abbāsī Zuhān, "Tabārshināsī-i nazarīyyah-yi zabānīyyat-i zabān," Rūznāmah-yi Bahār ["The genealogy of linguistic theories of language," Bahar newspaper] (Shahrīvar 14, 1392/September 5, 2013): 5.

Various Poetic Currents of the 1990s

During the 1370s/1990s, Persian poetry was characterized by three distinct currents:

A) The Continuation of Imagistic and Neo-Romantic Poetry from the 1360s/1980s

Imagistic poetry focused on the creation of fresh and vivid imagery, often prioritizing this over other poetic elements. Poets like Rizā Chāychī and Kasrā ʿAnqāʾī exemplify this approach, which emphasized crafting striking images, sometimes at the cost of broader poetic potential.

B) Formalist and Language-Oriented Poetry of Barāhanī and His Disciples

Influenced by poststructuralist and postmodernist ideas, this trend emphasized several key features:

The prioritization of linguistic plurality, where language itself becomes the essence of the poem, with words often attaining an autonomous "nature."
The unexpected and abrupt use of words to disrupt traditional linguistic coherence.
Fragmentation of meaning.
The disruption of narrative, linguistic logic, and even imagery, to delve deeply into the nature of language itself.[8]

C) Mainstream Poetry of the 1370s/1990s

The central current of 1990s poetry was defined by its innovative transformations, which can be summarized as follows:

A rejection of romantic, epic, and mystical language and expressions (except in parody), in favor of a more personal tone and diction.
The dismissal of grand ideological concepts and a "super-ego-

[8] ʿAlī Taslīmī, Guzārahʹhāʾī dar adabīyyāt-i muʿāsir-i Īrān (Shiʿr) [Propositions on contemporary literature of Iran (poetry)] (Tehran: Akhtarān, 1383/2004), 206.

istic" worldview.
The incorporation of multiple voices and pluralism, encouraging the reader to actively engage in the interpretation of meaning.
A move away from most basic forms of imagination, such as similes and metaphors, and a reduction in rhetorical flourishes.
A departure from formalized language, incorporating "the margins into the text" to challenge dominant linguistic norms and uncover overlooked aspects of everyday language.
A pronounced emphasis on intertextuality.
Bold linguistic and rhetorical experiments aimed at exploring new creative horizons.
A focus on simplicity in poetic form, utilizing everyday scenes and experiences woven into a deeply personal and emotional fabric.
The development of diverse, new forms of poetry.
The use of bitter, nervous, and grotesque humor as a stylistic device.[9]
Ruzā Jamālī and Her Poetic Innovations

Among the many female poets who emerged in the 1990s, the most prominent are Nāzanīn Nizām Shāhīdī, Garānāz Mūsavī, Farishtah Sārī, Nasrīn Jāʿfarī, Ruzā Jamālī, Pīgāh Ahmadī, Mihrnūsh Qurbān-ʿAlī, Āzar Kīyānī, Shīvā Arastūʾī, and Āfāq Shūhānī. Among them, Ruzā Jamālī made her avant-garde debut in Iran's literary community with her first poetry collection Īn murdah sīb nīst, yā khiyār ast, yā gulābī (This dead body is not an apple; it is either a cucumber or a pear) in 1377/1998.

Jamālī's subsequent poetry collections include:

• Dahan-kajī bih tū (A mockery at you) (Naqsh-i Hunar, 1377/1998)
• Barāyi idāmah-i īn mājarā-yi pulīsī qahvah'ī dām kardah-am (I've brewed some coffee to continue this crime story) (Ārvīj, 1380/2001)
• Īn sāʿat-i shinī kih bih khāb raftah ast (This hourglass which

[9]Khājāt, Munāzaʿah dar pīrahan [Conflicts in the shirt], 112-13.

has fallen asleep) (Chashmah, 1390/2011)
• Buzurg-rāh masdūd ast (Highways blocked) (a selection of poems, Būtīmār, 1392/2013)
• Jang-i sāybirī (Cyber war) (Būtīmār, 1395/2016)
• Īnjā nirū-yi jāzibah kamtar ast (Here gravity is less) (Mihr va Dil, 1398/2019)
• Īn rasm-al-khatt-i fārsī nīst (This is not a Persian script) (forthcoming).

In addition to her poetry, Jamālī is active in playwriting and literary translation. Her works include the play Sāyah (The shadow) (Būtīmār, 1394/2015) and Shiʿr-i Bīrītānīyā dar qāb-i ustūrah (British poetry within the framework of myth) (Būtīmār, forthcoming). Her critical essays are compiled in Mukāshafātī dar bād (Revelations in the wind), where she examines the poetry of modern poets like Ahmad Shāmlū, ʿAlī Bābāchāhī, Nāzanīn Nizām Shāhīdī, Rizā Barāhanī, Yadullāh Rūyāyī, and Hāfiz Mūsavī from a formalist, deconstructionist, feminist, ecological, and postcolonial perspective. Many of these essays had been previously published in scholarly literary journals such as Jahān-i Kitāb, Ādīnah, Kārnāmah, ʿAsr-i Panjshanbih, Bīdār, Barrasī-yi Kitāb, Miʿyār and Dunyā-yi Sukhan.

Over nearly three decades of literary activity, Jamālī has explored diverse poetic styles. Her engagement with translation, along with her familiarity with world poetry and literary critical theory, has enabled her to unveil fresh horizons in each of her collections. Through rigorous study, creative experimentation, and innovative poetic ventures, Jamālī has enriched her oeuvre, broadening the scope and depth of her poetic expression.

Innovations in the Realm of Language

In this context, "language" encompasses aspects such as rhythm, tone, structure, and form. Features including lexical chains (sg. tatābuʿ-i izāfāt), multilingualism, diverse linguistic tones, metaphor creation, and the transcendence of binary oppositions all

fall within the broad spectrum of linguistic production. Ruzā Jamālī, inspired by Rizā Barāhanī's theory of linguistic essence, has surpassed these foundations to establish her own distinct linguistic style. Particularly in her first two collections, Īn murdah sīb nīst, yā khiyār ast, yā gulābī and Dahan-kajī bih tū, Jamālī employed deconstructionist approaches, manipulating Persian syntax and morphology, while also innovating in the selection of titles for her works. This deconstructionist approach extended beyond these initial collections and continued to influence her later poetry.

Tatābuʿ-i izāfāt (Chain of Additions or Lexical Chain) in New Linguistic Combinations

Jamālī employs this literary technique as a tool to create novel linguistic combinations, juxtaposing seemingly unrelated words to generate fresh images and meanings unprecedented in Persian poetry. For example:

Tell the window to dream of the essence of the apple, its lantern's glow upon the moth.[10]

Or:

O recurrent, compound continuum!

Upon my body, the shiver of your tickling whispers unfolds.

A piece of your bread, my final slice,

Falls from your form, trailing behind your hands.

I scrape your color once more, for the sake of a single time.[11]

Through this linguistic innovation, Jamālī creates unique combinations and vivid poetic images while maintaining the poem's internal rhythm. This creates an aesthetic ambiguity, opening

[10]Ruzā Jamālī, Īn murdah sīb nīst, yā khīyār ast, yā gulābī (Tehran, Vīstār, 1377/1998), 12.

[11]Jamālī, Īn murdah sīb nīst, 40.

new worlds to the reader.

The Flow of Dāls (Signifiers)

In classical Persian poetry, rhetoric traditionally focused the madlūl (signified, concept), a paradigm that persisted even in many modernist movements prior to the 1370s/1990s. However, in the poetry of the 1370s/1990s, particularly in Jamālī's work, there is a shift toward a focus on the dāl (signifier). This paradigm shift reflects a transformation in the conceptualization of meaning, as exemplified in the following:

Clarification for a fugitive dāl

The present tense a mīm in all past tenses.

The one I speak of begins with a dāl.

The first part of my face resembles two similar things.

From the crooked madlūl [signified] emerges this: the one I speak of begins with a dāl

A charm with no justification,

Steals the heart from this door,

Don't complicate things, take the easy path,

It's a hand or hesitation—whatever it seems, it isn't.[12]

Jamālī's poetry introduces a linguistic system that reflects her unique worldview, in which her signifiers (sg. dāl) do not correspond to a fixed signified (sg. madlūl). Instead, her signifiers move freely across a realm detached from conventional meanings, flowing seamlessly from one to the next:

[12] Jamālī, Dahan-kajī bih tū (Tehran, Naqsh-i Hunar, 1377/1998), 13.

The woman says: Bind the magic pencils to pieces of the moon.

I recite incantations to the smoke and fire ascending from the pencil,

I bind tulips to my dream and the moon to the petunias,

A violet lays an egg in the sea.[13]

In other words, Jamālī, like other avant-garde poets of the 1370s/1990s, was influenced by Barāhanī's linguistic theories and by new linguistic innovations. Therefore, in contrast to classical rhetoric, which views language as a mere medium for conveying meaning, Jamālī embraces a new ontological perspective in which language itself generates meaning. In this new understanding, meaning is not fixed but instead shaped through the fluid interaction of language, allowing for an abundance of interpretations in the reader's mind. In her very first book of poetry, Īn murdah sīb nīst, yā khiyār ast, yā gulābī, Jamālī demonstrates this new approach to language, employing words to create a realm free from the constraints of external conventions, whether from past poetic traditions or the rules and norms of the outside world. In this context, the apple is understood as a general symbol, capable of taking on various forms and meanings:

We sob, but the apple is a cucumber.

We make a request:

And the apple renounces its red color.

We wait for the apple that doesn't die.[14]

The meanings are either intangible and abstract, or the defamiliarization is so far

[13]Jamālī, Īn murdah sīb nīst, 7.

[14]Jamālī, Īn murdah sīb nīst, 24.

removed from the ordinary that it paves the way for diverse and multiple interpretations:

We sat, suspended in the stillness of the air,

Threading the needle, unceasing

My mind consumed by the task of gathering paradise's layers,

And stitching them upon shards of my own Urdibihisht.

It seems as if we've been together for five hundred years,

And since the day I was born,

Etched in time on that wild tree,

Both framed in our essence, unfurling

With shirts of our being, spreading far and wide,

In a moment when anxiety's grip,

Has rendered us still, a pulsing beast,

Tearing my edges clean from the earth,

And binding me to you.[15]

[15] Ruzā Jamālī, Īn sāʿat-i shinī kih bih khāb raftah-ast (Tehran: Chishmah, 1390/2011), 13.

Using Kitchen Tools in Poetry

As Nīmā Yūshīj (1274-1339/1895–1960) asserts, a word on its own, isolated from its context, holds no inherent aesthetic value; rather, what matters is its position within the context. This perspective challenged the traditional classification of words as noble or common, literary or non-literary, categories rooted in ancient aesthetic criteria and value systems. For modern poets,

these distinctions became irrelevant.

Interestingly, the language of Jamālī's poetry is influenced by the rhythms of everyday life. Her poems are rich with modern colloquialisms, proverbs, idioms, and, notably, vocabulary associated with femininity.[16] In this context, kitchenware and other domestic objects, which are meaningfully connected to the poet's feminine identity, appear in her poetry, including bleach, ammonia, pitcher, fork, knife, water, potato, apple, cucumber, pear, pepper, and so on.

One person said: The government will always bear the stains of bleach.

Another asked: Then what is ammonia for?

The third responded: Speculation is not our task.

The fourth took a cross-party stance.

It was a space.

Nuclear.[17]

Additional examples include:

She, perfumed with the scent of hay,

Strode confidently through the pleasant squares of this grand city

Mingling with thugs, beggars, and those clutching potatoes in their hands

They shouted at a group of my friends.[18]

I remain suspended from a pitcher

[16]Qudrat-Allāh Tāhirī, Bāng dar bāng: Tabaqah-bandī, naqd va tahlīl-i jaryān'hā-yi shiʿrī-i muʿāsir-i Īrān (Tehran: ʿIlmī, 1392/2013), 356.

[17]Ruzā Jamālī, Buzurgrāh masdūd ast (Mashhad: Butīmār, 1392/2013), 177.

[18]Jamālī, Buzurgrāh masdūd ast, 176.

At peace with the sky that was once swallowed by a great whale

And when it was already far too late, you waved to me from the bay

I remain suspended from a pitcher, and it is simple

I lost.[19]

And I was the mute legend of the clash of spoons and forks at dinner.[20]

The ceremony is conducted in this manner:

Fork, knife, and plate

The ceremony ends now.

Pear is served, it's good for a cough.[21]

A little pepper makes me more poetic

A little pepper.[22]

Creation of Novel Metaphors

In classical poetry, double-entendre was a hall mark of poets like Hāfiz, which imbued their work with a rich, suggestive quality. In Jamālī's poetry, this tradition of ambiguity is evident not only in metaphorical stanzas but also in entire poems that function as extended metaphors. For example, in her Sabad-i Kālā (Commodity basket), the poet alludes to themes like the Cold War, cultural influence, political crises, and economic instability:

[19]Jamālī, Buzurgrāh masdūd ast, 101.

[20]Jamālī, Buzurgrāh masdūd ast, 179.

[21]Jamālī, Īn murdah sīb nīst, 25.

[22]Jamālī, Dahan-kajī bih tū, 65.

1

Empty-handed, we returned; my spongy doll and I

In the nearby street, cacophony reigned supreme

A sabotage precise, yet improper

Cybernetic, chaotic!

Cyberattacks shattered my brain

Brain cells weaponized, I must confess

From my skull, an ancient memory stirred,

And my pupil transformed into missiles like that.

Oh, if only you could comprehend

You, with empathy of a stoic tree

Or like nature's law, wild and unbent!

A bitter peach, hastily,

Devouring history from both ends,

Nervous, agitated, even wearing his clothes inside out!

2

The Hayrān pass lies nearby; did you take a wrong turn?

Hush. Hush. Slow down. Slow down.

I was right here, my handbag by my side

You were marked, perhaps by mistake,

Tight, locked into my brain

Just one attack from either the western or eastern border is enough to destroy me

I stand here on the highway, targeted from all directions – west, east, north, and south

I store yesterday's memories in my mind

And I hide the tractors or bulldozers in a sealed package!

3

I said the day before yesterday:

This year is the year of a chaotic economy

This year is the year of potatoes.

4

But a few moments later:

I had been isolated

The negotiations had ended

It had already begun to deteriorate, slowly sliding downhill; the Premier League

It seemed to shatter into pieces in the final blow

The path is seemingly unclear

Were you asleep?

A few seconds later:

Seven years must have passed since its date

Where are you?[23]

In addition, Jamālī creates new metaphors and imagery that transcend conventional poetic language. Examples include "the pain's pigeons," "my teeth's land," "Lot's borders," "the wind's angle," "my words' mother," and "your hands' blue veins."

The pain's pigeons

Have stolen parts of me

Shattered my split lips,

Torn apart

I draw the beak, I draw the call

No more.[24]

Winning or losing doesn't matter

From my teeth's land

A whale has risen.[25]

It is a whale that I have put to sleep

I cast its threads into the ocean

And I have crossed Lot's borders![26]

[23]Ruzā Jamālī, Īn rasm al-khatt-i fārsī nīst (forthcoming).

[24]Jamālī, Dahan-kajī bih tū, 59.

[25]Ruzā Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-i īn mājarā-yi pulīsī qahvah'ī dam kardah-am (Tehran: Ārvīj, 1380/2001), 27.

[26]Jamālī, In sāʿat-i shinī kih bih khāb raftah-ast, 63.

The wind's angle was not right

Or the movement of the hands was unforeseen.[27]

Swear by my ill worries,

I have lost my words' mothers and am now an orphaned poem!

Without a dot, I need your compassion.

With a dot, I am complete,

And I grieve my completeness.[28]

From my hands, blue veins

Or are you more tired than the water?

Tell me, with which hand should I cut your veins from the earth?[29]

The decorative pendant was a metaphor for administrative positions

They were lined up there by Ninth Street

Inevitably wearing the pendant around their necks

And like a monkey, perched atop that hill,

He delivered an endless speech.[30]

Linguistic Play in Poetry

Ruzā Jamālī, drawing on her academic background in dramatic literature, adopts a narrative style in her poetry that often borders on dramaturgy. Her works exhibit a broad spectrum of lin-

[27]Jamālī, In sāʿat-i shinī kih bih khāb raftah-ast, 45.

[28]Jamālī, Dahan-kajī bih tū, 47.

[29]Jamālī, Dahan-kajī bih tū, 31,

[30]Jamālī, Buzurgrāh masdūd ast, 177.

guistic forms, including colloquial and literary Persian, as well as English. This multilingualism and hybridity are especially evident in her poem Shahr-i Mamnūʿah (The forbidden city), where she integrates formal, literary, and colloquial Persian with English terms, such as "deconstruct," referencing Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction:

Dear ruin, tarnished with gasoline,

Motor oil and brake pads

Dim ruin, my dear ruin,

Tarnished with lead, deconstructed on the Sadr highway bridge,

Which will never be completed.

What? I can't hear you.

What are you saying? Speak louder.[31]

It was a bad day.

We were residents of a neighbourhood whose confused inhabitants we didn't know.

The syntactic structure of streets that followed one after another in succession,

Like the fire of a machine gun.

The pathology of winding squares,

The misreading of transmitters covered in dust

Reset the receivers that have never received anything.

[31] Jamālī, Buzurgrāh masdūd ast, 167.

In the city's perspective, everything I had written and crossed out was lost.

The syntactic structure of sentences was jumbled, needing correction

The speaker was drowsy, I refused to publish

The journalists yawned a moment ago,

As though in a tin can

A filmmaker from the Canary Islands shook my hand

Photographed parrots and asked about my eyeliner brand.[32]

Jamālī deconstructs conventional perceptions of femininity by questioning and subverting linguistic constructs. Her poetry often portrays women defying traditional roles, as seen in the surreal and defamiliarized depiction of a woman who can "fry her legs with some potatoes at 89 degrees Fahrenheit" or in the line "I washed the broken plates in the humidity of the kitchen."[33]

In alignment with Derrida's concept of différance, Jamālī titled one of her poems Tafāvut (the Persian term for différance). This philosophical term, central to Derrida's work, signifies the perpetual deferral of meaning and challenges binary oppositions such as speech/writing. It refers to the simultaneous notions of "difference" and "deferral," emphasizing the impossibility of fixed meaning:

Tafāvut

This word isn't short

You can't determine its defining feature

[32]Jamālī, Buzurgrāh masdūd ast, 175.

[33]Jamālī, Īn murdah sīb nīst, 19.

When it cannot be diverted in any direction

When it stays stagnant.[34]

Interplay of Poetry and Painting

Much like Suhrāb Sipihrī (1307-1359/1928-1980), Jamālī's familiarity with visual art informs her poetry. Drawing inspiration from Cubism, particularly in her early poems, she incorporates geometric shapes and visual analogies into her writing. For example, in one poem, she creates a volumetric analogy between a cat and a pear:

O cat, your eyes resemble beans

But I wish to compare you to a pear.[35]

Elsewhere, she uses paradoxical imagery to describe her head as a "circular triangle" with "unknown edges":

I have a strange shape

My head is a circular triangle.

With unknown edges

In other examples she states:

Half a moon and one and a half diamond-shaped fatigue

Cried out in the cross (11 degrees west)

Rolled to the right

Wept in the north.[36]

Or:

[34]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-i īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 50-51.

[35]Jamālī, Īn murdah sīb nīst, 31.

[36]Jamālī, Īn murdah sīb nīst, 17.

[37]Jamālī, Īn murdah sīb nīst, 42.

[38]Jamālī, Īn murdah sīb nīst, 39.

Please pay attention to the edges that fell

The ladder that dropped

And half of tomorrow

Wave goodbye!

My little poem has short legs.[37]

Or:

Only by you, by your end, I am bound

To more than you

On your tangent I become half

To even less than you.[38]

Despite her linguistic innovations, Jamālī's poetry has faced criticism. Merely deviating from conventional logic of language does not guarantee better poetry. Some, like Bihzad Khājāt, a renowned poet of the 1370s/1990s, offers a critical assessment of her poetry: "Jamālī's poetry is intensely self-centered, lacking both conventional aesthetics and the emotional and imaginative structure necessary for poetry." He cites the following to illustrate his point:

An ant pulled out its four eyes,

And placed them upon a tile.

Why have you crumpled the grass in my left pocket?

Have you stuffed me?

Your pipes, your words, and your images repel one another violently.[39]

Innovation in Narrative Style: Multivocality and Decentering in Poetry

In an article titled Asr-i dimukrāsī-i adabī va shiʿr-i chand-sidā'ī (The age of literary democracy and polyphonic poetry), Jamālī outlines her theoretical framework regarding the elements of polyphony and decentering in poetry. She distinguishes between a poem's content and thought, as well as between multiple voices in action. In contrast to other modern poets, Jamālī regards her work as the embodiment of polyphonic poetry:

In the poetry of Furūgh Farrukhzād or Ahmad Rizā Ahmadī, all poetic subjects have identities that transform (the poet's) thought and ideology. Of course, in the works of Furūgh Farrukhzād, Ahmad Rizā Ahmadī, Sipihrī and others, we only observe the polyphony of thought and content, but there is no trace of polyphony in action.[40]

Jamālī then elaborates on her concept of polyphony:

Polyphony in action becomes possible through the prominence of language. It is the distinct language of different characters that brings polyphony to life in novels and plays. In poetry, where differentiation is more limited, it is the unified core of a poem that simultaneously reveals multiple voices. We may not explicitly sense a change in narrators in a polyphonic poem, but ultimately, it is the poem's aesthetic intricacies that offer a new understanding derived from these poetic elements. The poet employs linguistic tools such as semantics, syntax, and music through which polyphony can be realized in a poem.[41]

Jamālī's long poem, Barāyi idāmah-i īn mājarā-yi pulīsī qahvah'ī dām kardah-am exemplifies a polyphonic and decentered narrative approach in contemporary Persian poetry. In this work,

[39]Khājāt, Munāzaʿah dar pīrāhan, 132-133.

[40]Ruzā Jamālī, Mukāshafātī dar bād (Tehran, Hasht, 1400/2021), 23.

[41]Jamālī, Mukāshafātī dar bād, 23-24.

Jamālī departs from Barāhanī's linguistic theory, crafting an innovative structure and content in poetry. The poem eschews a singular theme, instead weaving together various motifs such as love, gender, crime, death, and murder. These fragmented narratives run concurrently, intersect, and diffuse into multiple voices. The language shifts to fit each theme, ranging from narrative-detective to lyrical and report-like forms.

The narrative element plays a central role, with the poem adopting a structure reminiscent of drama. This approach draws parallels to Nīmāʾs earlier efforts to incorporate dramatic elements and structures into Persian poetry, although his attempts found few followers. The idea of poetry resembling a play, with multiple characters, was largely unprecedented in Persian literature, where traditionally a singular lyrical, epic, or mythological voice dominated. In this work, however, perspectives and narrators frequently shift, giving rise to a range of diverse voices.

Subheadings of the poem, such as "Weekly report," "Shortcut to an unknown periphery (The crime I revealed)," "Interlude for a few short minutes," "Negative," "Fingerprints," "A woman saw my future in tea leaves; fearing my future, I shot her," and "Labyrinth walls (the squares of the world after the narrator's death)," exemplify a wide spectrum of narrative styles. These range from detective fiction and lyrical storytelling to Brechtian distancing techniques and postmodernist approaches.

Barāyi idāmah-i īn mājarā-yi pulīsī qahvah'ī dām kardah-am draws on and interacts with a vast array of range of literary and mythological traditions, encompassing ancient Greek tragedies, Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment, Shakespearean drama, detective fiction of the past few centuries, Sādiq Hidāyat's The Blind Owl, mythological references, Biblical texts, and even folkloric beliefs. At its core, the poem critiques societal violence against women and the historical dominance of patriarchal narratives. It explores themes such as silencing women's voices, the suppression and murder of women poets, and the

broader marginalization of women throughout history. Jamālī, in dialogue with generations of women in history who, as according to Beauvoir, were relegated to the status of the "second sex," seeks to reclaim their silenced voices and restore their dignity. This dialogue with the past is vividly expressed in the following lines:

This woman is a descendant of Hind, the liver-eater.

I've come to avenge your blood.[42]

The virgin of the rocks, the virgin seated upon the stones, is herself stone.[43]

You played well, but

Ophelia is dead in the water

This is the end of the play.[44]

Now, we will explore some of the intertextual dimensions of this poem. The line "Burying this dead body is forbidden" appears three times in the poem (on pages 24-27), evoking Creon's decree in Sophocles' Antigone, when Antigone grapples with where to bury her brother.

The woman who reads the future in tea leaves—"A woman saw my future in tea leaves; fearing my future, I shot her"—recalls Madame Sosostris from T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land. This character serves as a mystical, authoritative, and ominous figure, bridging the themes of fate and fortune-telling.

Hidāyat's The Blind Owl portrays a pessimistic view of a seductive and deceptive woman; with the author dismantling her character. Jamālī, however, counters Hidāyat's male-centric, nihilistic perspective by reimagining the narrative with a female-centered focus:

[42]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-i īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 15.

[43]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-i īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 27.

[44]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-i īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 43.

I am ready for dinner,

And for playing this role too,

Though my long skirt snags on the heels of my shoes,

I remember you well.[45]

The world is a short-legged woman, driven to madness,

Say, speak, confess!

They've banished me to an unknown shore,

A stone plunges into the water

And there's a short way to the basement

It's the screams of a woman

Screams of a woman

Screams of a woman.[46]

The narrator is a pragmatic woman, not a passive one. Unlike the narrator of The Blind Owl, who "dismembers' a woman's character, Jamālī's narrator takes action against a man:

It's the man I sent tumbling with my heels

I crushed him!

A man sprawled across the ditch

Like discarded refuse—I crushed him!

So where shall I bury your dead?[47]

[45]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 14.

[46]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 19.

[47]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 26.

Jamālī also invokes the tragedy of Kerbela, aligning the poem's themes with the mourning of Imam Husayn and the plight of the surviving women and captives. The poet references rituals of grief, such as Shām-i gharībān (The evening of the strangers), and alludes to the Quranic verse 27:62, "Who responds to the distressed when they cry to Him, relieving their affliction, and Who makes you successors in the earth?" that seeks divine relief for the oppressed:

And dusk fell. (It is Shām-i gharībān: Now light the lamps one by one, take up the lanterns…)

Oh mountain, speak! If I am lying, let your voice be heard…

Graves for bitter memories,

A fate too heavy to bear.

I've turned to stone now.

I ask nothing from you.

A life of bitterness,

A grave as vast as my heart,

And trees that chant "who responds" (amman yujību).[48]

She, who holds the pulse of the world's vein in her hand, shares a bond with Hind, the liver-eater.

Here is a woman who laughs at you and the whole world,

And shares a common bond with the Hind, the liver-eater.[49]

A sigh echoes from a woman in Phoenicia, summoning David to play the role of Shulammite for her, while she transforms into

[48]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 29. Quran 27:62 begins with the phrase amman yujību, meaning "who responds."

[49]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 41.

[50]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 42-43.

Hagar, who took her son to the sacrificial altar at Abraham's command:

The ruins of Baalbek caught fire before my eyes

You became David, and I, Shulammite

Dead, dead, dead pigeons…

A small grave is dug here; it's for a child—our child's grave.

The weight of this grave grows heavy on our hearts

You are torn from your place, falling to the ground

Its weight echoes in my ears, passed down through generations

I dug his grave beside the Darband trees, opened my heart, and the sky was crosshatched

We are the relief of this dream

You sacrificed Abraham's son, and I was the childless Hagar.[50]

The concept of sacrifice in Jamālī's poetry retains its ancient connotations, intertwined with names like Salome and Shulammite, which are associated with this theme in various stories. Salome, the woman who demanded John the Baptist's head, is portrayed here as a figure akin to the "liver-eating" Hind. This name contrasts in character with its alternative form, Shulammite, the woman who sang Solomon's Song of Songs or the young virgin who warmed King David's bed in his old age. At the play's conclusion, she appears, in contrast to Ophelia, as Prince Hamlet's true lover:

You played well, but

Ophelia is dead in the water

This is the end of the play.[51]

The poet presents a situation from multiple narrators' perspectives, and those narrators do not tell the story in the same way. The murderer, the victim, and the narrator sometimes intertwine, and sometimes distance themselves, denying or confirming different aspects. Consequently, a sense of meaninglessness pervades each line of the poem, with the multiple voices each carrying a moment of truth:

Winning or losing fades to nothing

What matters are my veins, the earth's strange prophet

Now I've drunk the very marrow of this land

They fire at my shadow, yet

The woman who doesn't die, not even beneath God's curse.[52]

Jamālī's conception of the poetic self defies traditional notions of a fixed, singular center. Each time, an 'I' takes the centre stage, only to be decentred in the next line of the poem:

Goodbye to the last shadow I once held,

A dizzy eternity that cast me out.

A dead woman's silhouette, the apocalypse unfolds in her form,

On Judgment Day, my hair will cry out.[53]

Based on the multilingual and polyphonic nature of the poem's narrative, the narrator and the author fade into the background. The poet's subject evolves from an inner 'I' and 'we' towards

[51]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 43.

[52]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 30.

[53]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 40.

an outer 'I' and 'we,' expanding to include the others who live in our society and world:

Winning or losing fades to nothing

What matters are my veins, the earth's strange prophet

What matters are your weak spots (carotids), which are on my neck.[54]

The narrator/subject is in a constant state of formation, offering an ever-evolving subjectivity akin to Deleuze's concept of the "becoming" subject:

The night of my murder—it was nothing but coincidence

The night of my murder—they've pulled a shroud over my eyelids

The night of my murder—it was nothing but coincidence!

They fire at my shadow, yet

The woman who doesn't die, not even beneath God's curse

I wear the skin of a hyena![55]

Distancing Effect

The distancing effect (Verfremdungseffekt), originally developed by Bertolt Brecht for theater and overlapping with the concept of metafiction in postmodern narratives, is also employed in postmodern poetry. This technique challenges classical perceptions of poetry and storytelling, dissolving the boundaries between poetry and non-poetry, or between story and non-story. The poet or writer interrupts the narrative to directly engage with the audience, offering commentary on the process of cre-

[54]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 26.

[55]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 23.

ation. As a result, the roles of poet and narrator are marginalized, allowing the reader to assume a subjective function. For example:

At this moment, the reader may close the book for a coffee break.

This interlude is merely a moment for the reader's mental respite.[56]

Intermission for a brief moment

[At this moment, the reader may close the book for a coffee break.]

[This interlude is merely a moment for the reader's mental respite:]

A thief, a murderer, and a detective are three angles of an undefined triangle,

And the narrator has quietly slipped away.

[From the perspective of the police, you, the reader, are now a suspect,

The one narrating this murder.]

This dismembered corpse and the blood spilling from your veins—

This is the event I have decreed!

I testify that I picked up the utility knife that night.

Just a glass of water was on the table.

[56]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 21.

It's an ambiguous clue,

Your fingerprints remain in my veins.

And if you, the narrator of this story, are truly the murderer,

Then the criminal has already escaped.

[You will continue this inevitable event,

If you reopen the book!][57]

Part of this line has been deleted, and the narrator is confused by this inevitable occurrence.

Snow has fallen on their footprints,

And their fingerprints have been stolen:

The solution lay in a crossword puzzle.

The puzzle was incorrectly designed,

A portion of this line was erased,

And this is no longer the key to the mystery…

But there's still time for a cup of coffee.[58]

[This is the final line of a story that was erased, lost, wiped out, and obliterated.][59]

[The stage lighting isn't enough!][60]

Jamālī employs the distancing effect in poetry collections such as Dahan-kajī bih tū, Īn rasm-al-khatt-i fārsī nīst, and ʿAlaf-i haft-band (Knotweed). In the following example from Da-

[57]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 21-22.

[58]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 32.

[59]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-yi īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 33.

[60]Jamālī, Barāyi idāmah-i īn mājarā-yi pulīsī, 38-39, 43.

han-kajī bih tū, the narrator reflects on their anxiety over the coherence of poetic lines, the death of "the words' mother," and the orphaning of the poem:

The dotless dot of this line is anxious. Why doesn't it end?

I am distressed by the binding of these unfinished lines.

How can I hold onto their final letters?

A collection of components of my ear,

The unfamiliar sounds of these words, on

A diagonal of desire, I have pressed—firmly;

It stumbles without a mark at the end.

From the anxiety of binding—

The anxiety of binding—

Anxiety—

Swear by my ill worries,

I have lost my words' mother and am now an orphaned poem!

Without a dot, I need your compassion.

With a dot, I am complete,

And I grieve my completeness.[61]

In poems such as Sarakhs (Fern), Bih khatt-i Suryānī nivishtam (I wrote in Syriac script), ʿAlaf-i haft-band, and Īn rasm-al-khatt-i fārsī nīst, Jamālī reassesses Iranian history through

[61] Jamālī, Dahan-kajī bih tū, 47.

Stephen Greenblatt's theory of New Historicism. She creates dramatic, polyphonic poetry that incorporates elements of historical reconstruction. Jamālī attempts to revive and reconstruct silenced voices of various social classes and groups, employing a diverse range of linguistic registers, including colloquial, academic, narrative, dramatic, and cinematic languages. For instance, in Īn rasm-al-khatt-i fārsī nīst, which explores the theme of geographical determinism in the Middle East, Jamālī navigates through Iranian myths and history. The narrator traverses through time and space, assembling puzzle-like fragments. The language alternates between journalistic-reportage and historical-mythical tones, creating a layered and multifaceted narrative. This collection also incorporates humor while exploring Iran's political geography, weaving a tapestry that stretches from the Arvand and Karun rivers to the Persian Gulf, Caspian Sea, and the Oxus River, reconstructing an Iranian identity rooted in historical memory. In other words, this poem crystallizes the re-creation of both greater Īrānshahr (The Realm of the Iranians) and a local Iranian perspective:

From the day Yazdgird was slain

And his body cast into a river's embrace,

The women of Īrānshahr have secluded themselves in this mill, spinning,

And they spin,

And they spin.

No fire burned again.

No priests remained.

Look at the ruins of Īrānshahr,

See how many libraries turned to ash,

How many squares were reduced to rubble,

Did you see? The child never reached the Mount Qāf?
No Kāvah appeared—

A thousand years gone.[62]

In the poem Bih vaqt-i Greenwich (Greenwich mean time),[63] Jamālī addresses the U.S. invasion of Iraq through a postcolonial lens. The poem is polyphonic and theatrical, frequently referencing terms like "oil wells" and "geographical coordinates," creating a semiotic framework that evokes "Greenwich Mean Time," a place where the clock is perpetually behind.

Innovations in Expressing Social Concerns

By distancing herself from language-cantered poetry, Ruzā Jamālī has established herself as a poet profoundly engaged with social issues. She has not confined herself to a purely individual perspective or monologic poetry. It can be confidently stated that much of her poetry is composed in relation to the needs and pains arising from her social world:

I am Sarakhs,

A fatherless land,

Borrowed,

A scorched town,

Forbidden,

Contaminated with various diseases, plagues, charlatans, lies, and manipulations.

[62]Jamālī, Īn rasm al-khatt-i Fārsī nīst.

[63]Jamālī, Īn sāʿat-i shinī kih bih khāb raftah-ast, 17-21.

To which part of this land have you devoted yourself, my brother?

This land is entirely burnt; half of it is a grave,

The other half is tainted with lead.

To which part of this land have you devoted yourself, my brother?

This land is entirely burnt; half of it is a grave,

The other half is tainted with lead.
I am Sarakhs,

The wild goddess of thorns and filth,

Upon the sorrow of the curse you have woven into my land…

I excavated the mountain, my brother, what have you done?[64]

From Ontological Tendencies to Ecofeminist Concerns

Jamālī's later poetry collections depart significantly from her earlier works of the 1370s/1990s, which were more influenced by language-oriented poetry. Her recent poetry adopts a more philosophical and ontological character. For instance, her collection Īn sāʿat-i shinī kih bih khāb raftah ast draws inspiration from a wide array of classical Persian texts, including the Dīvān of Shams (Poetry collection of Shams), the works of Shaykh Ishrāq, historical chronicles such as Tārīkh-i Jahān-gushā (The history of the word conqueror), Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī (Bayhaqi's history), and Tārīkh-i Ṭabarī (Tabari's history), as well as literary masterpieces like ʿAjāyib al-makhlūqāt va gharāyib al-mawjūdāt (The wonders of creatures and the marvels of creation), Nāsir Khusraw's Safar′nāmah (Travelogue), Khurāsan's literary heritage and the history of ancient Iran.[65] Additionally,

[64]Jamālī, Buzurgrāh masdūd ast, 180.

[65]Bahā al-Dīn Murshidī, "Īmān bih kīmīyāgarī-i zabān: Guftugū bā Ruzā Jamālī," Farhīkhtigān, (Tīr 8, 1394/June 29, 2015).

Jamālī incorporates insights from post-deconstructionist theories, particularly ecofeminism, to present a feminist narrative of natural phenomena and environmental catastrophes, while simultaneously engaging in ontological reflections on existence and time.

In these later works, linguistic play gives way to an emphasis on intuition and revelation. Archetypal themes, such as death and rebirth through natural cycles, the metaphysical contrast to worldly existence, the cycles of wildlife and animals, and the interplay of history, geography, and nature, define her poetic world. For example, in the poem Rīshah′am (My roots), Jamālī portrays a poet whose intellect and language are preoccupied with the complexities of existence:

My roots—

You saw how the Milky Way agitated me.

I was plowing the murky path of existence with my tears.

I cling tightly to the essence of cloves and chicory roots,

Finding a binding connection to the Ganges River.

From my roots to the circular core of the Earth,

On its horizontal axis,

Soft, light soil grows,

Its lava blinds your eyes an hour later.

And you have cooked the entire tropical land

In frozen vessels,

Running vertically all the way.

You've solidified this wounded volcano,

With your wrist,

Fixing the Earth,

With fingers that are only steeped in vinegar and mint."[66]

Jamālī envisions another land—one deeply tied to nature and its preservation. Her commitment to the environment is evident in the following poems:

Like nettles, I cling to the Earth,

Bound to its tumultuous heat,

As its particles disintegrate.[67]

Īn sāʿat-i shinī kih bih khāb raftah ast addresses themes of environmental crises, such as cancerous cell proliferation, global warming, deforestation, torrential rains, and other ecological issues. The dialogue between light and darkness evokes traces of Illuminationist philosophy (hikmat-i ishrāq), while the integration of dramatic personas into nature contributes to a remarkable work of ecofeminist (woman-nature relationship) literature.

In poems such as Bar īn mantiq-al-burūj-i istivā'ī-am (On this equatorial zodiac), Tabīʿat-i bījān (Still life), Nahang (The whale), and ʿArūs-i daryāʾī (The jellyfish), Jamālī interweaves themes of womanhood, nature, and existential reflection. For instance, in the poem Zavāyā-yi īn qāb (Angles of this frame), she embarks on a distinctly feminine retelling of Umar Khayyām's quatrains, weaving a modern exploration of existential enigmas such as life, death, and humanity's transient existence on Earth.

[66]Jamālī, Īn sāʿat-i shinī kih bih khāb raftah-ast, 53.

[67]Jamālī, Īn sāʿat-i shinī kih bih khāb raftah-ast, 10.

She juxtaposes the mysteries of the cosmos with timeless questions about the nature of existence:

1. Years have gone by since that day,

When I looked at my aged face in the mirror.

Years have gone by since that day,

My secrets are revealed to the pebbles

And the swelling sands of the shore

Years have gone by since that day!

2. This is the story of my hidden veins, a secret you'll never unveil!

3. The bull I've nursed at my breast for years,

And I, tightly wedged into this frame.

4. I knew finding the reason wouldn't be simple,

This occurrence defied the natural flow.

We were oblivious to its mysteries,

A rare phenomenon indeed,

Inexplicable by nature's laws.

For years, we've been lost in its enigma.

5. In this borrowed land, a remnant of Ābaskūn island's vastness,

Without guidance, we've wandered into dead-end alleys.

Only faint traces remain on the map,

Yet to draw this curve, no compass is needed.

6. Horses sing ceaselessly in my blood,

These horses, my blood-bound companions.

These forms are tied to that curve's radius.

A tree stands still,

Rooting itself on the terraces.

7. We can't stop the game of clock's hands,

There's no return to the shattered seconds.

The days I've stacked one after another,

And the knights have fled my game, one by one

8. The straw mat on which you once slept,

I've grown too accustomed to this dull house's stillness.

Wasn't something meant to pull away from the earth's center

And bring you back to me?

9. A century has washed over you,

While we remain, anchored in this house…

10. The dimensions of the past have shifted,

And it's not just limited to the ceiling's color.

New characters embraced us as the inhabitants of this land,

While our own fled like fugitives from this soil.

And we grew accustomed to this city's stillness. [68]

[68] Jamālī, Īn sāʿat-i shinī kih bih khāb raftah-ast, 22–27.

Conclusion

Ruzā Jamālī stands out as one of the prominent poets of the 1990s and the post-1979 revolution era in general. Over three decades of poetic activity, she has experimented with various styles, ranging from language-centered poetry to pure poetry. Through this journey, she has carved out a distinct identity in the poetic landscape, with critics noting that her poetry has developed its distinct style. Her deep study of classical Persian literature, combined with a thorough familiarity with world literature, drama, and tragedy, particularly through her translations of renowned global poets, has secured her a unique position in the literary world. Femininist themes and women-centric poetry are hallmarks of Jamālī's work. Engaging in intertextual dialogue with both Persian and global literary traditions, she strives to resurrect the silenced voices of oppressed women. In her poems, she often embodies the voice of women from various historical periods, both past and present, thereby restoring the dignity and place of women in the face of male-dominated historical narratives. The 1990s saw Jamālī's poetry take on a more philosophical bent, with increased focus on reflections about the mysteries of existence and death. During this period, her exploration of womanhood became intertwined with themes of earth and nature, further enriching her poetic landscape.