

The Self
A Journey into
Cogito Ergo Sum

by
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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

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Masoud Eskandari

ABSTRACT

The Self is a series of photo-based videos within an autobiographical conceptual framework in five chapters. It visually illustrates my search for my lost identity and personality as a Persian immigrant artist, using a performative documentary art practice in a poetic and meditative space. After several years of unsuccessful efforts to settle in Canada and to be accepted in Canadian society, I felt that I had lost my self and ego. The concept of the artwork is to create an unconventional visually performative documentary that addresses the question, “Who am I?” This project represents the feeling associated with losing one’s self in a visually coded and semiotic artwork in which the audience is invited to decode the visual segments in order to determine the meaning. The main axis of the work is a series of recent self-portraits and personal identification portraits that are superimposed over pictures related to the history and culture of Persia and Iran with an emphasis on contemporary poetry, music, and mystical philosophy.

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PROLOGUE

I think, therefore I am.

As the title of my MRP suggests, my video art is a journey into the meaning of “I think, therefore I am.” This quote from philosopher René Descartes, originally "Cogito Ergo Sum," is at the heart of the subjective engagement of the self in a meditative space. The phrase "I think, therefore I am" is not just a quote or simple sentence from a thinker that we can refer to in our communications, it is the foundation of our epoch and is at the core of what it means to be human. History was transformed by this thought; a new age emerged by way of this very thoughtful phrase creating a new condition of existence based on a new perception of the meaning of the individual. Descartes is thus called the father of modern philosophy. Before him, the individual was not the first priority in human thought and philosophy. Thinkers and philosophers were mostly concerned with epistemology, ontology of metaphysics, and any subject other than the human individual. That's why it is called “ancient times” because philosophy was based on Plato's thoughts of Eidos and Mimesis. Eidos and Mimesis are two important terms that are the essence of Plato’s philosophy. Eidos is a Greek term that means ‘visible form’, ‘essence’ and ‘type.’ In Plato’s philosophy, the world of essence includes everything we see and experience as origins and essences; the world we are living in is a reflection, copy or picture of the world of Eidos. Everything is based on the ‘idea’ that even human beings and any subjective topics are an imitation of the idea or the world of Eidos. Anything in nature and even human-made things are a reflection of this essence. We see and touch a stone but it is not the real stone. It is the imitation of the stone in Eidos. We can feel beauty and like beautiful things and even draw as an artist or build something as a technician, something beautiful and even functional, but all of them are an imitation of Eidos. Mimesis is

that kind of human activity: any creation like painting and handicraft is a model for beauty and is Mimesis in a realistic form. In that world, the human had nothing to do except think and perceive the base of existence in the world of Eidos. Even human creation would refer to that world. So Eros (Greek God) was everything; all attention should be paid to him and everything made as precise as possible to have a better imitation and mimesis of Eidos. But in the modern world, humans and the individual came to the forefront of philosophical thought. The individual became the center of philosophical inquiry in the modern era. Modernism as a movement coalesced around the idea of the creature and the being, as opposed to the Creator and Being. As a result, the idea of an individual with a unique personality and other characteristics was elevated to a higher position in all areas of human thought, from philosophy, politics and art to sociology and science. Descartes' "cogito ergo sum" or "I think, therefore I am" prompted the construction of Western society on a new and strong philosophical foundation. Further development of the idea of entity and human existence continued until Nietzsche finalized this road of inquiry by announcing that "God is dead." This was the through-line to modern thought. In this way, Descartes brought attention to the word 'I' which became a problem both in terms of the word and its relationship to personal character. It was an idea that turned human thought upside down. Descartes was inviting humans to think about themselves – the person and individual -- instead of God or the imagined world of Eidos. From another viewpoint, he uses the first person pronoun "I" in the sentence, "I think, therefore I am," which points to the individual. By using it twice he emphasizes the importance of the self, because this individual is observing the self and is involved in the self through thinking individually and not with others. Therefore, this singular entity exists. Furthermore, the existence of an individual leads us to a higher level of understanding and expands the meaning of "I think," to include the concept of identity. By

involving the individual in the process of thinking and exploring the term of self, identity appears and becomes a problematic subject. The idea of *The Self* as a visual project emerged from this theoretical and philosophical framework as a way to creatively explore these ideas.

This phase of thinking naturally points to the other critical subject which is language. It is widely accepted that there is a relationship between language and thinking, borne out in research by linguistic scientists such as Benjamin Lee Whorf and Noam Chomsky. Whorf's idea is that language determines and forms the direction of thinking: "Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we can think about."¹ As a result, in different languages people have different ways of thinking as well as different subjects to think about. Even the principle of their thinking is different. That's why he contextualizes negative and positive thinking:

"Language is not simply a reporting device for experience but a defining framework for it. So if, from perhaps some unhealthy desire for sympathetic support, you describe your life in negative terms you will find that this will reinforce your mind's negative emotions and make you unhappy and even more susceptible to feeling unhappy in the future. By simply doing the reverse and focusing on why you are lucky and grateful things are not worse, you will strengthen and increase your mind's positive emotions and make yourself happy and even more likely to feel happy in the future."²

Thinkers have explored the relationship between language and thinking in many directions. Analyzing the subject of language as an issue in terms of migration opens many doors to better understand the situation of an immigrant's self in a new society. Chomsky addresses this relationship: "The fact is that if you have not developed language, you simply don't have access to most of human experience, and if you don't have access to experience, then you're not going to

¹ Carroll, John B., *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012): 68.

² Carroll, John B., *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012): 68.

be able to think properly.”³ This is exactly what happens to an immigrant especially from a completely different culture and especially with a language that functions with an opposite orientation. The result is extreme confusion and inefficient communication as the immigrant struggles to understand their new environment and relationships. It might also lead to anger, violence, and breaking the law. If the process of learning language and creating acceptance in a new society was shorter, those issues might happen less. The individual would be valued by society and assume an appropriate position thereby minimizing the social and personal damage. Otherwise, the immigrant confronts the possibility of losing the self.

For this reason, I omitted the translation of the Persian poems in the artwork, well aware that I would be exhibiting the videos to an English speaking audience. My goal was to confront the audience with an experience of being lost in an environment and then letting them struggle to understand what is being communicated, thereby creating the feeling of being a stranger. In this way, the installation functions to create a condition for English speaking viewers confronted by language not their own. This experience would potentially draw a connection to the experience of the immigrant.

For instance, in the first video a floating female voice makes a dramatic space and invites the audience to follow the pictures that are dissolving into each other in a movement of up and down as the male voice is reading a poem with a deep tonal voice. The female voice is at the background and the male voice is predominant. There is no female picture between all male pictures that showing a group of intellectual, well known characters. One more time I emphasize that this is the first video and the artist is an immigrant from a masculine society. Everything make sense and I tried to make a visual communicative space even with music and sound, except

³ Chomsky, Noam, *Language and Mind*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014): 42.

the poem which doesn't make sense at all for the English speaking audience. They hear some words that doesn't mean anything for them except the sound of reading the words. In a same method, I made the last video with the difference of having written poem and not phonetic in English from a female poet in a very masculine space, the pictures and the Monks chanting.

CRITICAL REFLECTION

Culture and Language

Persian civilization is one of the oldest civilizations in the world and like other civilizations, it has seen many changes during its history. Persian civilization was truly brilliant because of its language and writing. Writing was invented about 6000 years ago at the base of the Zagros mountain in Sumer in the Midwest region of Persia.⁴ Sumerians and Akkadians were the first people in the world to write instead of communicate just verbally. Once they invented writing, not only could they communicate through words based on simple grammar but they could also document their experiences and their observation of nature, society, and themselves. As a result, they formed the Sumerian and Akkadian empires and civilizations. Almost at the same time, Egyptians began to use hieroglyphics as a form of communication, based on drawing shapes of animals, humans, and things. But Sumerians created Cuneiform writing with an alphabet and grammar. It was a transcendental paradigm shift in human history. Even now some ancient documents are still visible on the mountains, in the form of large stones and smaller tablets. This creative and intellectual flourish continued until the Achaemenid Empire appeared when Persia experienced its golden age. Communicating and documenting with Cuneiform writing went into wide use, with literacy the first priority for the kings. But centuries later, Arab tribes attacked Persia and forced a new religion and language on the population. Persian culture and language

⁴ This region now traverses part of southern Iraq and western Iran.

became endangered as Persians were forced to learn Arabic in order to read Arab holy books.

After that, Arabic words entered the Parsi⁵ language and little by little their religion changed to Islam from Zarathustrianism.

That's why language and writing are the core of Iranian culture and poetry. As the transcendental form of language and communication, poetry plays an essential role in keeping the Persian language alive, fresh and separate from Arabic. The most iconic poet who rescued Parsi from Arabic and purified the language is Ferdowsi -- his masterpiece is Shahnameh and all Persians are beholden to him. Parsi should be written from right to left, which is the opposite of Latin or German-based languages like English. This difference in language and writing causes differences in thought and culture. Writing a language in the opposite direction is a large challenge for Persian newcomers to Canada. This is why I have contextualized the confusion between languages and the struggle to migrate from one culture and society to another.

Social Context

This project presents the self of an individual who was displaced and migrated to a country completely different from his homeland, in terms of culture, language, weather, religion, politics, music and art. After some years of confronting and challenging many social and personal problems, this individual felt that his identity had changed, leaving him in a vacuum between his previous life and an uncertain future. He realized that he had lost his dignity, so a serious question formed in his mind: 'Who am I?' He was lost in time and place. He couldn't solve any problems. He couldn't understand why he was not successful in Canada and why a new society

⁵ Four letters that exist in Persian are not in the Arabic language -- P, Ch, Zh, and G. The correct name of in the Persian language is Parsi, not Farsi, but it is known as Farsi because of the dominance of Islam and the Arabic language in Persian culture after the invasion of Arab tribes. For this reason, I will use the term Parsi in recognition of original, pre-Arabic Persian identity.

wouldn't accept him. Why wasn't he able to support his family? Why he couldn't find a job, earn money and feel good about himself -- all things he had left behind in order to find a better situation in Canada. So he had questions that he couldn't find answers to. This was an individual with great dignity and pride in his past but with a bad feeling about himself in the present. He started to hate himself, feeling that he had wasted all those years fighting for human rights, equity, women rights, freedom and a better life for everybody. In fact, it was not just the story of one person but the story of a generation of immigrants from an historic land that had become a problematic country in the last 40 years; a generation that grew up in a country experiencing the transformation from feudalism to industrialism, from tradition to modernism, and most importantly, the transformation from monarchy to a republican regime. After all the tensions and harsh events before, during and after the Islamic revolution of 1979 this generation figured out that it had been fooled by its politicians. They were upset, frustrated, depressed, isolated, passive and fighting amongst themselves. This generation had lost its past, couldn't find its present, nor see a future. This generation had experienced a cultural revolution that included closing all educational institutions and forbidding studies in higher education, as well as all social and political activities. They were surrounded by violence, an eight-year war, thirty years of sanctions, arrests, torture, and jail, until migration was their only remaining choice. *The Self* is the story of a migrant people whose pride and dignity was destroyed, whose higher education was not considered valuable in their new land, whose successful careers at home only translated into minimum wage jobs in Canada. That generation now was in a confused, conflicted, and polarized state: they no longer knew who they really were. So the question of "Who am I?" and the "I" is both a collective as well as a personal "I" is a question facing an entire migrant generation; a question that needs an answer.

Contextualizing the Theory of Self

The theory underpinning this project is rooted in my interest in literature, linguistics and philosophy: specifically, the work of Descartes, Merleau-Ponty and the Existentialists. The most important consideration for me is the role of philosophy, particularly mystical philosophy, in Persian/Iranian culture and history. These interests are not easily discerned, but it was logical from my point of view that my artistic practice would be strongly influenced by these schools of philosophical thought, as well as poetry.

It is critical to understand the relationship between philosophy and poetry in Eastern culture, particularly Persian culture. These two disciplines are active throughout Persian history. They not only had an influence on each other but also enriched and deepened the perception of the world, existence and metaphysics in human thought and also addressed essential questions related to ontology and existentialism. In the case of Persian culture and art, the specific role and position of ‘image’ should never be underestimated. Image and imagery are the core of this culture, its philosophy, and its poetry. Persian poetry is a challenging mix of words, metaphors, assimilations, and imagery which is used to illustrate the visible and the invisible world, and to point to the root of existence. In this philosophy, everything in the visible world has a corollary in the invisible world. In the other words the relationship between physics and metaphysics is communicated through image and idea; the Persian poet illustrates an idea through imagery which comes alive in the reader’s mind to stimulate existential thinking. That’s why Plato’s philosophy has had a strong and critical influence on Persian thinkers and poets from ancient times through to the present day. His philosophy is widely accepted and has been taught for centuries. Continuing that Platonic influence, Plotinus brought mystical philosophy to Persia and had a profound influence on the development of mystical poetry in Persia. This deep cultural

heritage of language, poetry, and imagism is evident in my art practice. My video art in general and *The Self* project in particular are more than a collection of images and music.

Using this theoretical framework as a foundation, I wrote a poem which became the basis of my art and imagery:

I am who I am
my imagery is about nothing
I make images of anything
image of nothing and everything
everything comes out of nothing
I see everything through nothing
I am nothing, you are everything
things are being
I am Being
I am my image
I am who I am

I included this poem in my first thesis presentation as an introduction to myself, with the goal of representing my point in the diaspora and its metaphorical reflection in the visual arts. The poem has also been part of my journey from documentary photography to conceptual art. “I” as an individual and as a “being of being” and also “I” as self and as “Being or being”⁶ could all potentially be the focus of my research and art practice. Nevertheless, I concentrated on the second part, the self, to go more deeply into the nature and essence of an individual that represents my current reality. By producing metaphorical and meditative visual works I created a personal world, not only a world of “being” but also the world of “Being;” in other words, not only the world of what is but also the world of what could be or should be. In fact, in this process, I tried not only to represent and perceive the real self but also to represent the self — a persona, a recently experienced version of myself.

⁶ Heidegger, Martin, *What is Philosophy?* (New Haven: College and Univ. Press, 1956): 57.

So theoretically my work is more than documenting an Iranian-Canadian living in the diaspora. It is not just a presentation of a man who had a brilliant past interrupted by trauma who is now struggling to reconfigure his life. It is the culmination of a process of analyzing, realizing, conceptualizing and creating myself through images, sound, and poetry. All of the influences described above helped me to understand and illustrate the self but also to create a new version of the self. By perceiving the real meaning of the death of God as the death of the concept of an ancient creator and then focusing on the “Being of being,”⁷ a new kind of God came to the fore: this version is not a single source of omniscience, but is instead an internal force unique to every individual. As God becomes individualized and innumerable multiplied, the Self is born and the question, “Who am I?” becomes paramount. All five videos in *The Self* were designed to address this question and search for possible answers. The dialectic between the unique subjectivity of the Self and the objective individual struggling with a loss of identity ebbs and flows through all the videos in the project.

Forming the Work

The format of *The Self* took shape in my mind when I visited Wendy Snyder MacNeil’s photography exhibition *The Light Inside* at the Ryerson Image Centre in April 2016. The exhibition was a collection of her portraiture and street photography in two parts: the first was street photographs of Boston and the Haymarket; the second was portraits and identity-related photographs. This was the part of the exhibit that got my attention. The portraits of family members and friends, especially the photographs of hands and handwriting, represented their relationships, their identity, and their gender. The identity series was beautifully curated with a compelling juxtapositions of portraits which influenced me greatly. The series of photo portraits

⁷ Heidegger, Martin, *What is Philosophy?* (New Haven: College and Univ. Press, 1956): 57.

and identification cards interrogated identity as well as ancestral backgrounds. The photographic and printing aesthetic also deepened the meaning of these images: printing on thin paper using the palladium process was key in this regard; the palladium print works by eliminating the silver halides, leaving just pigments on the archival paper, thereby increasing the longevity of the print. Producing photographic prints through this method conveyed the idea of the family ancestry. It beautifully represented the idea that the heritage will survive as long as those prints. This is an iconic approach for an artist who wants to honour their ancestors and indelibly present the horror of their shared history. The pictures of identification cards as well as the detailed pictures of hands represented the same historical, geographical, and ethnic information as the portraits. All of them referenced the importance of ancestry and heritage across generations. Conceptually, the entire exhibition was very well arranged and curated to emphasize dignity and identity. That's why I found it influential.

This exhibition reminded me of my Persian ancestry and raised a question in my mind about my own history: specifically, about my perception of myself as a Persian artist who had a brilliant life history and successful career but had yet to find acceptance in a new society, and who was still struggling to support his family. This idea of being unsuccessful in a new community led me to think about dignity and pride, race, language, religion and other aspects of confronting a new culture and a new society. These themes and concerns became subjects for my imagery.

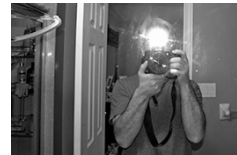
These ideas are communicated visually through a video installation in a process similar to producing a book. Like many books, the video installation is divided into chapters, with each chapter representing a portion of the whole story. I chose the chapter approach for the videos to reference the idea of a book, since books are an established form of documentation and literature.

The chapters enabled me to create an artwork which uses visual language and literacy to make connection between images in order to communicate hidden meanings while encouraging the viewer to create new meanings based on their own perceptions.

METHODOLOGY

Idea and Practice

Building on my visit to Snyder MacNeil's exhibition and on my understanding of Suzy Lake's self-portraits, I began a process of taking self-portraits. For the first time I became my own subject; not only the external image of me became my subject but also, and more importantly, my inner image, my personal and my cultural identity. One more time I turned to Persian music, literature and history. I knew that the project couldn't just be a series of self-portraits, that it should interrogate the different aspects of life that an immigrant like me is confronted with. But the challenge was in determining how to illustrate these intangible and immaterial subjects in a series of photographs. It seemed that to convey the message and make a body of work that could contextualize the problematic term of identity, I needed something more than just photographs as still images printed on the paper.



At the beginning, it was just single self-portraits with a straight gaze at the camera, but very quickly it turned to unusual pictures and even combinations of different pictures. Standing in front of the camera looking straight at the lens was an incredible experience, like looking in the mirror. I didn't recognize the person I was seeing. He was a stranger, with an unshaven face and wrinkles, not athletic but also not fat, not fresh-faced with young skin but people still called him handsome. Who was this person in these pictures? What was he doing in Canada? He was the

father of a very smart daughter but he wasn't a good father. He was the husband of an incredibly nice woman but not a good husband. Who was he? Why was this useless entity alive? All of these questions were feeding my photography and driving me to take more pictures. This method helped me to deepen my investigation into personality and character, so I moved directly toward the self and identity in diaspora.

In general, my photographic method is to produce images carefully, precisely and consciously. I strongly believe that photography is not an accidental procedure. It is a rational process in which the photographer uses his technical and aesthetic knowledge consciously and wisely. Before taking a picture I know what I want and what my photograph should look like. I made many single and separate self-



portraits as well as collages and mosaics. I carried a small camera everywhere and began taking many pictures in different locations. The goal was to end up with collages to help me work towards more complex artworks. The initial plan was to shoot images for collages and mosaics, rather than just playing with photographs



randomly afterwards to make collages. In this process, I made a series of grid photos based on the concept of confusion and loss. With the camera in a static position, I captured images with my body rotating through several positions in a circle. By repeating these still photos, I simulated the turning movement and illustrated the concept of confusion. My colleagues and professors encouraged this direction in my practice and I was assured that it was the right track.



Uncalled for and surprisingly, my grid photographs were similar to Arnaud Maggs' work, even though there was an essential difference between them. In his grid photographs, time and people's gestures are the central points. Maggs' typological grid photographs are not only a study of types and figurative symbols, but also they demonstrate a personal representation of human identity. In my opinion, his photographs are visual records revealing a fascination with archives and historical documentation and even they convey an



interpretation of time: in every moment in which we look different, from any angle, the time has passed and we are changed; in each moment we are a different person. Repetition of one's portrait in four directions when the object turns 360 degrees in the whole roll of film, is conceptually emphasizing the issue of time. But in my photos there was a story and a narrative, there was an invisible but readable text and message. Furthermore, his work is mostly about others and mine is about myself referring to the discussion of outsider and insider.

For instance, this series of photo-collages was telling the story of a person who was struggling and wandering, drowning in a situation that he couldn't understand. There is movement in two directions, horizontal and vertical, a characteristic of Cuneiform writing in ancient Persia; as well, the ideas of death and drowning are readable from top to bottom, while confusion and repetition read horizontally. At the same time, I worked on some personal and passport photos and ID cards to make a photo collage or superimposed photos with the purpose

of illustrating ancestry and identity background, but even that was not enough. Each time I stood in front of the camera, I thought about my identity and dignity: fears from my past, ambiguities from my present, and the haze of possible futures visible in each photograph, and later reflected in my artworks. Until then, I didn't even stand in front of mirrors very often, so it was difficult to concentrate on my face, trying to recognize the person staring back at the camera.

Thinking like a visual artist and not just a photographer, working on the subject of identity and the self, helped me to move from a thirty-year practice of street photography to conceptual



and performative art. I was aware that I was walking into the new field.

Reviewing Suzy Lake's conceptual photography and performative art led me to pursue a conceptual approach to my own art. As a mentor, Suzy

Lake was a great influence on my thought and practice. Her body of work encompasses self-portraits, the story of her generation, social and political affiliation, as well as questions around identity and social influence. As she

has written on her website: "The provocation that began the identity series rests in the struggle between true identity, decorum, and role-playing at a time of social change."⁸ Social and political situations and the demand for change are repeated themes in her work. For example, in the series *Choreographies* which included her performance as a puppet, or *ImPositions*, in which she poses bound with rope in a dark, small space, she interrogates social inequality, especially as it relates to women. In many of her works she uses the body to represent identity in different forms of performance. She elaborates on this in the artist statement for the series:



⁸ www.suzylake.ca/artist-statement#1.

By extending the portrait to encompass a full body, notions of identity shift into their relationship to the world. In this body of work, the bound or restrained figure becomes a metaphor to question notions of control.

In *Choreographed Puppets*, the power dynamics foreground a victim/oppressor relationship, yet the resonance of the work rests on the figure's attempt at stabilization and/or self-protection. The struggle reveals an inherent dignity to prevail despite 'an against all odds' situation.⁹

Even in the celebrity series, Lake was challenged to represent the influence of heroism on American society, specifically how pop celebrities and rock stars had been introduced to American youth as role models and heroes. What's also interesting is that she followed the same mosaic pattern and repetitious grid format as Arnaud Maggs and other artists.



In the end, the photo collage and grid photography approach didn't satisfy me; clearly I wanted something else, something new. Conversations with Gerda Cammaer and Richard Lachman made me think about motion pictures and the world of video, sound, and music. By way of first explorations, I made a short animation in Cammaer's class about common gestures of world dictators using a grid arrangement along with a matching music track from Roger Waters. In Lachman's class, I animated photographs in long strips across the screen using Klynt, an interactive media software. I connected those ribbons of



⁹ <http://www.suzylake.ca/1461524-artist-statement#1>.

images to text and music from an underground Iranian rock band to create a full-screen compilation of messages. That experience was a turning point for me in moving from still images to motion picture and video.

Lachman's course in interactive documentary opened my eyes to a new world of creativity and production. The software used to make interactive visual art offered a new set of tools and methods with which to create documentary and conceptual art. Mixing still images with sound and music would certainly help me achieve my goal of presenting a more influential and thoughtful story. This was the critical point at which I began to create a series of video art segments based on still images mixed with sound and music to make a poetic and performative work. In fact, the resulting mix of animated still images with sound and music became a way to make a connection between photography and cinema.

Still and Motion Picture

It was important that this connection be reflected in my work to indicate my movement from a photographer producing still images as groups of separate photographs or as series of sequences to a multimodal video artist using a variety of elements (including still photographs) to communicate my ideas. Adding to the difficulty of communicating this connection between still images and film, there was no video footage or moving pictures included in the segments; this was partly because I didn't want the project to become a narrative documentary film. As well, the animation didn't flow naturally from one image to the next, so a conventional look and feel of motion was absent. To solve this issue, I decided to bring the self-portraits into a single frame but with a temporal dimension. When still images are projected, one frame after another, each a fraction of a second, the eye and the brain stitch them together, supplying a sense of movement. In the fourth chapter, for example, flipping an image of a Sufi dancer and repeating

the two images continuously in a time-based manner created a sense of movement and dance. This process of achieving a subjective result by analyzing and combining data or objects is transcendental thinking. Immanuel Kant's transcendental philosophy provides a rational legitimization of this process, as his concept of transcendence describes the act of rising to a state beyond sensory experience. Our thoughts and perceptions are formed by our experiences as well as by our connection to the three-dimensional world. When we confront any phenomenon in the world, we perceive that phenomenon by referring to our knowledge, data or previous experiences, and then analyze the phenomenon based on logical principles. This is what happens with the Sufi dancer sequence in Chapter Four or with the demolition of the single self-portrait in different ways to represent subjective perception of death in Chapter Five.



I had a number of still photographs that I wanted to include in the segments, but I wanted to show them in a “moving picture” format. By doing that, I could construct a specific, personal and unique world of visual poetry, full of metaphors and signs characteristic of Persian poetry. Time was an important concept throughout the project. I wanted to create a paradox between “time-less” photographs and time-based videos. This paradox would not only be evident in the form of presentation but more importantly in hidden metaphoric meanings of the self. So I added Persian poems to the self-portraits to combine visual and literary texts and to combine the visual



metaphors in photographs with the literary metaphors in Persian poems.

Neither photography nor poetry was directly illustrating each other, but they

were communicating with each other, exchanging metaphors, dissolving into each other,

destroying their absolute and traditional meaning and creating new meanings by

perceiving interrelationships between image and text. For instance, in the first

video, “Consciousness,” the poem began with the phrase, “Who am I?” while

illustrating the personality of a lost character. The image progressed in an order

based on a sine trigonometric function, in which a line rises to a high point above

the axis then falls to a low point below the axis equidistant from the axis. In the

image progression, a picture with normal resolution (high point) pixelated little by

little and transformed into a heavily-pixelated image (low point) which then

reverted to a picture with normal resolution; this circulation repeated the sine

trigonometric function over and over. This principle of movement, change and

transformation was also applied to my identification portraits and the portraits of

known and influential people in contemporary history. The same visual and literal interpretations

of the sine movement order were evident in Chapter Five. But the final part of this chapter was in

colour with an English translation of the Persian poem added to the projection slides. As the

conclusion to the entire artwork, these changes emphasized the transcendental nature of the

underlying meaning and message. With black and white and grey pictures I created a neutral

atmosphere that encouraged the audience to concentrate on the picture itself and connect to the

performance. The colour picture at the end, as well as the shape of the TV screen, presented an



interpretation of media and mass communication technologies which attract people with their beauty in ways that are similar to how other aspects of post-modern society damage personality and identity. Planting a question in the viewer's mind and involving them in the process of creating or perceiving meaning is the most important part of a sophisticated and creative artwork. The appearance of English text and colour were the strongest tools in this process with which to do that.

TECHNICAL PROCESS

Image

I tended to use simple technical methods to avoid distracting viewers from the central concept. Although I am a professional photographer with decades of experience with a wide variety of cameras and lighting equipment, as well as extensive knowledge of darkroom techniques and digital post production, I am new to film and video, its equipment and its methods. I used Adobe Premiere Pro software for video production and learned it by trial and error. As with other graphic design software, I am self-taught in Premiere Pro. For photo manipulation, I used Adobe Photoshop.

I used three types of photographs in this project. The first type was self-portraiture. I captured these portraits at home in two groups; the first group was in the bathroom, taken with a DSLR camera and an 80mm lens, as well as an attachable flash pointing at the wall to create a diffused light and relieve harsh shadows on the wall (Chapters Three and Five); I took the second group of self-portraits outside on the porch, my face intentionally blurry with the wall behind me in focus (Chapter Two). Most of the photographs were taken in colour then converted to black and white in Photoshop with some light adjustments but no retouching. This enabled me to have more control over the tonality of the final pictures. The second type of photographs was a set of

scans of ID cards and educational documents. I used them in the first chapter. The third type of photos was the collection of photos of honorific characters and Sufi dancers used in Chapter Four. They were collected from the internet and superimposed on scratched self-portraits. All images were placed on different video tracks in a timeline laid out in Premiere Pro.

Sound

Sound and music were the most difficult part of the project for me because I had absolutely no experience with these media. More trial-and-error and self-teaching through the internet, including www.lynda.com, were necessary. All sound and music editing was done in Premiere Pro with some sound correction and polishing in Adobe Audition. I recorded my voice at home with a Zoom recorder and a lavalier microphone then adjusted it in Audition with reverb effects and set final volume and equalization levels in Premiere Pro. The music was downloaded from the internet with some works created in Premiere Pro. Ultimately, the sound design became as important in my artwork as the images. It was no longer just “sound,” it was a way to use sound design to create images in the audience’s mind and involve them more deeply in the overall presentation. The sound and music helped create a meditative environment in which the audience could absorb mystical meanings from the imagery without understanding Parsi. Building on my awareness of the relationship between beauty and the sublime — how the sublime creates an impression on the mind of great beauty — I aimed to make a sound design that haunted the heart while impressing the mind.

Venue

Choosing the type of venue was a challenging process. Would a gallery or a cinema be the best venue for



presenting the artwork? Each had its advantages and disadvantages. From one perspective, my video art was like a documentary film, just not a narrative one. It could easily be shown in a cinema with a large screen and quality sound, appropriate conditions for my work. But it would only be shown once in a cinema and this kind of work is best seen two or three times to understand the connections and discover its range of meanings. As well, multiple viewings are rare in cinemas and people are generally not willing to watch non-narrative, mystical artworks in that setting. On the other hand, a gallery space would give the audience a comfortable environment with enough time to experience the artwork more than once. They would have as much time as they wanted to connect with the mystical concept and to digest the complex artwork. A gallery space would also give the audience the privacy of a quiet, meditative environment. The only limitation is that a gallery screen is generally smaller and sound is not as large and enveloping.

Most all of the professors did not support the cinema option so the decision was made to use a gallery space. The Image Factory gallery at Ryerson University was an excellent space for such video art from a creative point of view. The size of the room and its rectangular shape provided enough depth to project the images at a large enough scale to fill the entire wall. I covered all four walls with black fabric and used a white vertical frame as a screen on the projection wall. I used the vertical projection frame creatively in the video portraits as a reference to traditional portrait photography. Ultimately, this poetic and meditative gallery environment helped access the performative aspects of the artwork, something I couldn't achieve in a cinema space.

Unfortunately, because of its remote location in the Image Arts Building, I had very few visitors. The Image Factory has low visibility in its isolated location and is not easily accessed by the public. Gallery hours are restricted to daytime building hours which meant little traffic during

the quiet spring term. The timing of the DocNow Festival should be changed to a time of year when there can be more visibility for the artwork. Even for film students, the June screenings at the HotDocs Cinema didn't attract many viewers.

Problems in the Process

It was a difficult process to produce such a complex, meditative and performative artwork, from taking self-portraits and collecting identification documents to working on sound and music. This project was my second experience with video-based artwork. In the first project, I was the art director and idea generator and collaborated with an operator who executed the work technically. In this project, I combined both artistic and technical roles, working on my own with unfamiliar software. It was a big technical challenge for me to learn Adobe Premiere Pro, Audition, and Final Cut Pro, as well as sound recording techniques to make a video. It took a long time to learn the tools and software before I could combine the sound and music tracks with the images. Sound and music created a huge opportunity to explore my idea of using sound as a strong image making tool. This shift played a big role in the entire series of videos. In fact, sound and music became the main way to create meaning in the audience's mind. So the music, voice tracks, and sound effects were recorded and chosen carefully. Many hours were spent to make an influential and impressive sound design. Ultimately, the sound played a large role in dictating the venue.

The language barrier between Parsi and English was another problem in terms of communicating with the audience. Language barriers are the most important and challenging subject for any immigrant coming from countries in which their language operates in a opposite orientation. Parsi is a right to left language whereas English operates left to right. This creates a huge difference in thought structure, beliefs, perception of the world, and in reading the overall

culture. Newcomers need to clear this barrier if they hope to integrate into the society they've chosen to come to. This can be a huge struggle. Until it is resolved, the person perceives the world through signs and images, and decodes them back into his/her own native language.

I have suffered from this problem. During the production of the final project, it presented itself more than ever. This was one of the reasons that I decided to omit English text or translation of the poems in the final cut of the videos, so that an English-speaking audience would be confronted with the same experience and would try to decode the images, symbols, and Parsi characters back into their own language. The other reason was to let the sound and the tone of voice work along with music as tools for creating visual space and communication with the audience. This combination of images with voice and music in an unknown language helped to create a mental picture and realize the meaning of imagery. The third reason for this decision was to keep the audience focused on the projected images and the sounds without being distracted by subtitles. Nevertheless, the problem remained that they had to understand the meaning of the poems and somehow see the translations. Translating poems in any language combination is difficult and requires expertise. I could only find a translation of the poem by Nima Youshij used in the second video and the poem by Rumi used in the third video. I translated the poem used in the first video. In order to fulfill the goal of making the translations accessible to the audience, I decided to make a brochure which they could read before or after experiencing the artwork.

DOCUMENTARY RELEVANCE

Self and Others, Mirrors and Windows

The subject of Self and Others is one of the most critically important subjects in many different social, historical and psychological fields. It has been a problematic subject for thinkers

from Plato to Freud. Later philosophers have developed this term and explored the different aspects and perceptions of self and its relation to individual and society or others. Currently, the discussion of the relationship between insider and outsider perspectives is one of the most contentious in documentary and art. In someone's mind self is the subject that needs to be noticed and with a psychological approach can be controlled and transferred to an extremely beneficial subject for society leaders. Adam Curtis in his compelling documentary, *The Century of the Self* (2002), which was based on extensive and in-depth research on the subject of insider and outsider perspectives in relation to the self. He explored it as a problematic subject throughout the twentieth century, problematic in terms of relation between self and mass democracy, how to control people's self and replace it with selfishness, how to make benefit of this replacement by making them satisfied with false desires. The first episode of the documentary is based on his theory on mass democracy and after introducing Edward Bernays, Freud's nephew, he describes the mass control:

“showed American corporations for the first time how they could make people want things they didn't need by linking mass-produced goods to their unconscious desires. Out of this would come a new political idea of how to control the masses. By satisfying people's inner selfish desires, one made them happy and thus docile. It was the start of the all-consuming self which has come to dominate our world today.”¹⁰

But the subject of the Other always lives in parallel to the self, like black and white in colors. Black doesn't make sense without white and vice versa. Simply, the Self is aligned with the Insider while the Other is aligned with the Outsider. In terms of photography and images making, maybe John Szarkowski's metaphoric approach to self and other can be the best example to understand this relationship. In that point of view self is engaged with mirror and other with window. Mirror is a gate to have a journey in self and through window we see the world. Mirrors

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnPmg0R1M04>

and Windows had been organized around Szarkowski's thesis that such personal visions take one of two forms. In metaphorical terms, the photograph is seen either as a mirror--a romantic expression of the photographer's sensibility as it projects itself on the things and sights of this world; or as a window--through which the exterior world is explored in all its presence and reality. In the discussion of self and self-portrait, the camera plays the role of the mirror, but a mirror with a memory. A mirror as an object reflects light and the picture of a body; but mirror as a subject can even reflect the picture of a person's character, including mental, subjective, and metaphysical aspects. In another interpretation, we are the mirror of ourselves and a mirror is the entrance to the internal world of a person. Through the metaphorical meaning of the mirror, the artist can have journey into the unconscious persona and ego. The best example in this case is Francesca Woodman who undertook a very deep journey to her ego and self through her beautiful photographs and using mirror as an object.

I am an insider in *The Self*, as an individual who lives in diaspora, in relation to Iranian immigrants and displaced people. So *The Self* is a mirror that reflects the personal and social problems of immigrants in new society. Although in general, the work is personal the majority of psychological and social issues that are represented in the project are common with members of the Iranian community.

Self-Portrait and Authorship

Capturing self-portraits and setting them in an exhibition is a difficult task. The self-portrait is not just a picture of a face or body, it is not the photograph of appearance: it is the image of the essence, the personality, the internal being and identity of a person. It is the imagery of whatever is personal; it is the story of pain and suffering, of mysteries and hidden characters. As a result, it is not easy to exhibit these kinds of images and let others walk into an artist's personal world

where they disclose many things that had been hidden for years. From another perspective, exhibiting self-portraits and revealing the characteristics of the self leads to the death of the artist, and a kind of birth of the audience. This means that once an art is produced and from the time of production, it starts its own life independent from the artist and it is up to the audience how to interpret the concept. It is possible to have different interpretation in the number of audience. This idea was explored in the 20th century by thinkers like Roland Barthes who said that, "... the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author."¹¹ I think the subject of authorship was very well described by Barthes, and theorized effectively by Michel Foucault when he said: "What difference does it make who is speaking?"¹² It seems that this thought applies to any subject except self-portraits. In a self-portrait, it definitely matters who is speaking or whose self-portraits form the artwork. This makes sense when we refer to the discussion of the individual and humanity, which I addressed earlier. On the other hand, the nature or specific character of self-portraits in any medium makes authorship an undeniable feature. The artist is the author: authorship cannot belong to anybody else; it comes with the artwork. Other artworks may have different authors. For example, an artist may take a photograph of the exact still life photographed by Irving Penn; or an artist may make a very precise copy of a painting; but no one can make a copy of Lee Friedlander's or Suzy Lake's self-portraits. Authorship is embedded in the art of self-portrait. Even Cindy Sherman's self-portraits which represent the portraits and character of others or celebrities in post-modern time are portraits of her who lives in and represent a very complex and problematic post-modern world. The authorship lives with the artwork and the artist just represents the problems.

¹¹ Barthes, Roland, "The Death of the Author," trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image, Music, Text*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977): 148.

¹² Foucault, "What Is an Author?" trans. Josué V. Harari, in Paul Rainbow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984): 101-120.

But this discussion leads to another issue which is appropriation in art. On the MOMA website, appropriation is defined as:

“... the intentional borrowing, copying, and alteration of preexisting images and objects. It is a strategy that has been used by artists for millennia, but took on new significance in mid-20th-century America and Britain with the rise of consumerism and the proliferation of popular images through mass media outlets from magazines to television.”¹³

Someone may repeat and copy what Marcel Duchamp did with a toilet bowl or copy Andy Warhol's portraiture of Marilyn Monroe, but no one will reproduce the exact copy of Cindy Sherman's photographs. Sherrie Levine is an appropriation artist who has reproduced a significant number of copies of many artists including Edward Weston and Alexander Rodchenko, but she never made an appropriative art of a self-portrait artist. That's because of the characteristic of self-portraits in art. Self is single, unique, stuck to individual and from one to the other differs. Self-portrait cannot be copied and reproduced. For instance, if I want to copy and reproduce the self-portraits of Suzy Lake as an appropriative work, I have to put Suzy Lake in front of my camera. Then it cannot be called self-portrait, because I am taking her portrait. If I take the exactly same position and gesture with all details of her self-portraits but from myself, then it will be my self-portrait not appropriation of her self-portraits. When we look at a Walker Evans photograph, it is obvious that Evans put a great deal of effort and consciousness into that artwork by posing people, composing the frame, choosing lighting conditions and locations, selecting the film negative, and choosing printing and image manipulation settings. But when we look at Levine's copies of Evans' photographs, we know that it doesn't reflect that effort and his choices. It still reflects Evans's work with all of those procedures to make those photographs. So what is the result? To deny the work is Levine's work.

¹³ https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/pop-art/appropriation.

Documentary and Performance

Bill Nichols created six modes of documentary storytelling in his iconic book, *Introduction to Documentary*. *The Self* uses two of those modes: Performative and Poetic Documentary. It is poetic because poetic documentary presents a subjective interpretation, and individual characters and events remain undeveloped in favour of creating a particular mood or tone: “The poetic mode sacrifices the conventions of continuity editing and the sense of a very specific location in time and place that follows from it to explore associations and patterns that involve temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions.”¹⁴ My approach to the subject of *Self* is absolutely subjective and the environment I have created is strongly poetic and personal. As Nichols states, “The poetic mode began in tandem with modernism as a way of representing reality in terms of a series of fragments, subjective impressions, incoherent acts, and loose associations.”¹⁵

The Self is also largely a performative documentary because the artist is not just behind the camera but also in front of it. The performative mode is by definition relatively low budget, and in the case of Broomfield and Moore’s work, self-financed, allowing the filmmaker to produce a more personal piece, less influenced by entertainment or market values. Though the end result may not necessarily be less discriminatory or subjective, the performative mode is always honest on a personal level, intentionally or otherwise. The performative mode is often regarded as the most ‘honest’ of the six modes because it emphasizes the filmmaking process itself, often chronicling the documentarist’s subjective journey. The performative documentary maker is no longer the invisible hand and voice behind the camera in this mode.

The performative mode emphasizes the artist’s involvement with the subject. In this way, the artist provides a wider political and historical context through a representation of his/her own

¹⁴ Nichols, Bill, *Introduction to Documentary*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001): 102.

¹⁵ Nichols, Bill, *Introduction to Documentary*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001): 103.

experience. Instead of having an expository approach, the performative artist plays the role of showing and telling a story with raw emotion. In the performative mode, the artist performs their relation to the world rather than taking an observational approach in which the camera is treated as a window onto the world. A good example for this documentary mode is *Tongues and Untied* by Marlon Riggs, in which he enacts a gay black American identity.

Stella Bruzzi discusses the importance of the performative mode and its direct relation to the spirit of the 21st century and post-modernism.:

“Within such a realistic aesthetic, the role of performance is, paradoxically, to draw the audience into the reality of the situations being dramatized, to authenticate the fictionalization. In contrast to this, the performative documentary uses performance within a nonfiction context to draw attention to the impossibilities of authentic documentary representation.”¹⁶

In the same manner, I as the artist in *The Self* am enacting the role of myself as the subject in a very poetic way, with Persian characteristics, to perform the person who is struggling with his identity and who has less dignity in a new community that doesn't accept him. As Bruzzi reminds us, “... documentaries are a negotiation between filmmaker and reality and, at heart, a performance.”¹⁷ So in the same way, *The Self* is a performance and negotiation between me and myself, because I am “reality” to myself, addressing problems of identity, reality, subjectivity, and memory. This approach can lead viewers to reflect on the construction of the self and the relation of a self to a wider history referenced in the work.

Although Nichols has separated the modes of documentary and has provided a certain definition for each one, in practice, there are no sharp borders between modes used in a documentary film. A documentary can use two or three modes to take advantage of the central characteristic of each mode and then dissolve the lines between the modes in the film, essentially

¹⁶ Bruzzi, Stella, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 2006): 185.

¹⁷ Bruzzi, Stella, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 2006): 186.

floating from one mode to the other during the production and post-production process. Even Nichols acknowledges the blurring of their distinctions: “The characteristics of a given mode function as a dominant in a given film: they give structure to the overall film, but they do not dictate or determine every aspect of its organization. Considerable latitude remains possible.”¹⁸ In the performative mode, there is more freedom for creative work in terms of visual abstraction and narrative. The performative mode is deeply personal and is particularly appropriate for telling the stories of artists from marginalized social groups. It also offers the chance to represent unique perspectives without being obliged to argue the validity of their experiences. This is an approach that is very well-suited to *The Self*. For example, in the second video, the blurry face captured in various angles and gestures contrasts the sharply-focused background and draws out the subjective and performative aspects of the story of a person who is dying, according to the poem being recited:

Hey people
who are on the shore, happy and laughing,
someone is dying in the water,
someone is constantly struggling

It is a subjective approach to representing an individual who is suffering and struggling with his situation in society. This poem illustrates a society in which the level of injustice is high and in which a minority of people are trying to make a better and more just society while a majority of people are just observers, passive and continuing their daily routine. In addition, when it says, “who are on the shore, happy and laughing,” it draws a picture of a society in which some have too much and some have nothing. The artwork then becomes an objection to unfair and unjust social relationships and the lack of humanity in society. It becomes the cry of a typical person, anybody asking to be rescued from drowning. Of course, “water” is not water; it is a metaphor

¹⁸ Nichols, Bill, *Introduction to Documentary*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

for the margins of society where anyone can suddenly find themselves; the margins of society that require constant effort to escape.

CONCLUSION

For me, *The Self* was more than a major research project to finish a Master of Fine Arts program; it was an intense process of looking in the mirror and seeing the reflection of my personality. It was a journey that required me to disconnect from this world to travel into the world of the self. To make this work I used meditation and abandoned the surface of life to travel along the road of personality and character. I experienced extreme honesty and tried to be brave enough to bring up the hidden pieces of the self. That's why "I think, therefore I am" is a serious and important phrase in terms of researching the subject of the self. Analysis and discovery are required to understand the self, to learn how it lives with and within us, and how it connects us to both internal and external worlds. Through this process of thought and reflection, we confront the self and quickly realize it is impossible to contemplate existence without a self. By thinking deeply about the self, I performed in front of the camera and represented my unique self. At the same time, I recalled my cultural ancestry and used the metaphors and language of that culture to place myself within the history of the Persian nation. This nation has survived proudly in human history because of its language and poetry regardless of attacks on its language, culture and territory. Persian poetry was the core of my performative documentary and I used image, sound, and music to build an exploration of self on that foundation. Through this documentary-based video artwork, I revealed a part of my self and contextualized typical conditions of immigrants struggling to retain their own language and culture while starting new lives in countries with completely different linguistic and cultural traditions. *The Self* invites the audience to accompany the artist on a journey to find the self through history and poetry and to experience the cultural challenges that immigrants face on a daily basis.

10305 words

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APENDIX

Translation of Poems

Chapter 1, Consciousness

Poem: Who am I?

Poet: Mohammad Reza Heidarzadeh

Who am I?	Miserable, painful and infirm one Lubricious, peddler, poor man
Who am I?	Tired and far from caravan Passerby hopeless, hopeless far from fellows
Who am I?	Born in shout with permanent pain Frenzy poet, a homeless portrayer
Who am I?	A fortune of unfortunate and tired one A crazy lover, rejected from beloved ones
Who am I?	A nightingale unsheltered far from home A heart broken, beaten by gardener's rock
Who am I?	A lodge without door, roof and bower A nest covered by leaves in the fall
Who am I?	A Carnival in the giant wave A lost star in the infinite sky
Who am I?	A shivery shadow of wandered spirit In sorrow of lost love, always in shout
Who am I?	I don't know, don't ask me any sign I'm a shivery dead in the living society

Chapter 2, Contradiction

Poem: Hey People

Poet: Nima Youshij

Hey people, sitting on the shore happy and laughing;
someone is losing life in the water.

Someone is constantly struggling
on this massive, dark and harsh sea.

When you are boozy of attaining enemy,
when you think in vain
you're helping an incapable person to make a capable one,
when you tighten belt on your girdle
how shall I tell you?
someone is sacrificing his life in vain!
Hey people...
sitting on the shore, having cheery stall!
worn cloths and food on table;
someone is calling you.

Tired but fighting to heavy wave
with ripped eye of terror and open mouth
has seen you shadows from afar
swallowed water down the deep blue water
more impatient each moment
puts out of water
Sometimes head, sometimes foot.
Hey people!
He has eyes on this old world from afar,
shouting and asking for help
hey people, calmly watching on the shore!
wave knocks the quiet shore
slumps over, like a drunkard on bed
fully unconscious
walks yelling and roaring
and this shout comes from afar:
Hey people ...

And the sound of wind more heart-rending,
and his shout more freeing

through near and far waters
still in ear these voices.
Hey People ...

Chapter 3, Being or being

Poem: Who am I?
Poet: Molavi (Rumi)

What's to be done hey Moslems, as I don't recognize myself;
I'm neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Zoroastrian, nor Moslem.

I'm not the East, nor of the West, nor of the land, nor of the sea;
I'm not of the nature's mine, nor of the stars in Heaven.

I'm not of earth, nor of water, nor of air, nor of fire;
I'm not of empyrean, nor of dust, nor of existence, nor of entity.

I'm not of India, nor of China, nor of Bulgaria, nor of Saqsin;
I'm not of the kingdom of Iraqi, nor of the land of Khorasan.

I'm not of this world, nor of the next, nor of Paradise, nor of Hell;
I'm not of Adam, nor of Eve, nor of Eden, nor of Heaven.

My place is placeless, my trace is traceless;
'Tis neither body nor soul, as I belong to the soul of the beloved.

I have dispensed with duality and seen the two worlds as One;
The One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call.

He is the first, he is the last, he is the outward, he is the inward;
I know none, other than 'Ya Hu and Ya Man Hu'.

I'm intoxicated with love's cup, have lost both worlds;
I have nothing to do except carousing and revelry.

If once in my life I spent a moment without you;
From the moment and time I repent of my life.

If once I could be with you for a moment in this private;
I would take both worlds down and dance in triumph forever.

Chapter 4, Honorific

Lyrics: Rumi

Music: Davood Azad

He is the first, he is the last, he is the outward, he is the inward
That's right.

What's to be done hey Moslems, as I don't recognize myself;
I'm neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Zoroastrian, nor Moslem.

He is the first, he is the last, he is the outward, he is the inward
That's right.

I'm intoxicated with love's cup, have lost both worlds;
I have nothing to do except carousing and revelry.

He is the first, he is the last, he is the outward, he is the inward
That's right.

If once in my life I spent a moment without you;
From the moment and time I repent of my life.

He is the first, he is the last, he is the outward, he is the inward
That's right.

Chapter 5, Annihilation

Poem: Later on

Poet: Forough Farrokhzad

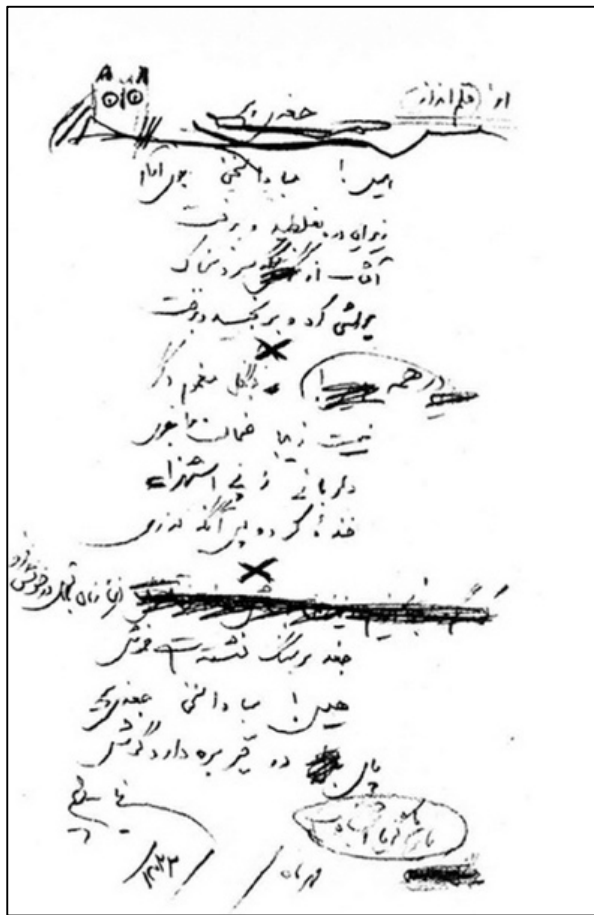
My death will come someday to me
One day in spring, bright and lovely;
One winter day, dusty and distant
One empty autumn day, devoid of joy.

My death will come someday to me
One bittersweet day, like all my days;
One hallow day like the one past
Shadow of today or tomorrow.

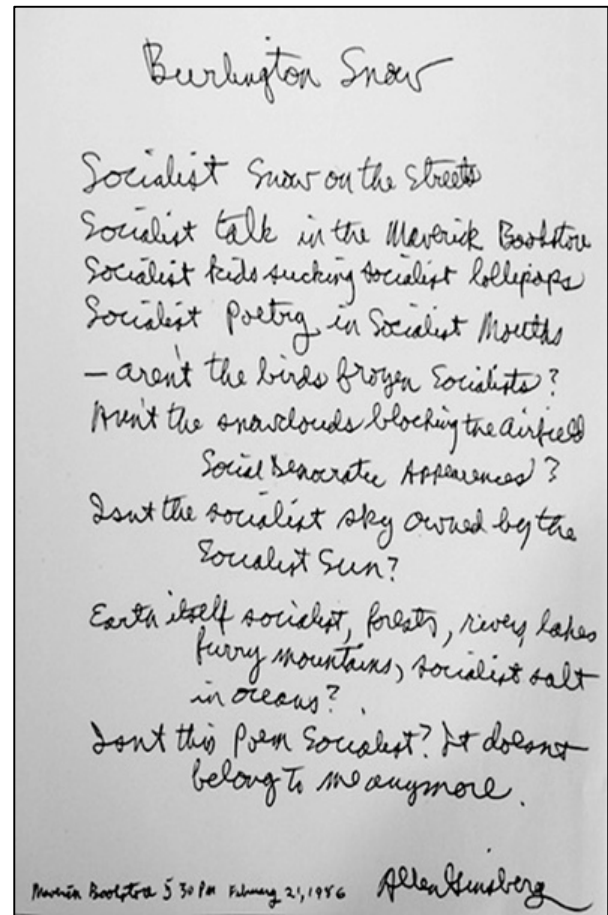
My eyes tune to half dark hallways
My cheek resembles cold, pale marble;
Suddenly sleep creeps over me
I become empty of all painful cries.

Slowly my hands slide over my notes
Delivered from poetry's spell;
I recall that once in my hands
I held the flaming blood of poetry.

The earth invites me into its arms
Folks gather to entomb me there;
Perhaps at midnight my lovers
Place above me wreaths of many roses.



Handwriting of Nima Youshij (1895-1960)
father of modern Persian poetry.



Handwriting of Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997)
lead figure of Beat Generation and creator of
Beat Poetry.