

# The Rhetoric of Imagism in the Cinepoetry of Jean Cocteau and Abbās Kīyārustamī: A Comparative Study

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*This article examines the shared Imagistic principles of two poet-filmmakers in the experimental genre of cinepoetry. On the one hand, Jean Cocteau, the French poet-turned-filmmaker, epitomizes the Imagistic experimentations of a French filmmaker with the narrative framework of poetry to create a “page-based” movie. On the other hand, Abbās Kīyārustamī, the Iranian filmmaker-turned-poet, typifies the cinematic aesthetic of modern Persian poetry to offer visual images that rely entirely on the creative engagement of the reader. The rhetoric of Imagism, that short-lived modernist movement of the early twentieth century, is what these poet-filmmakers similarly employ in their cinepoetic study cases, namely *Tempest of Stars* (1997) by Cocteau and *A Wolf Lying in Wait* (2005) by Kīyārustamī. Following a comparative approach to their common Imagistic foundations such as economical wording and phrasing, cinematic adaptation of visual imagery, rigor and clarity of vision, the poetic prerogative of subject matter, the avoidance of vague and ambiguous descriptions, and the writerly approach to the rhetoric of the poem, this article proves that Cocteau and Kīyārustamī are respectively the epitomes of Imagistic cinepoetry in French and Persian literature.*

Keywords: literature and film / intermediality / French poetry / Persian poetry / Cocteau, Jean / Kīarostāmī, Abbās / cinepoetry / imagism

## Introduction

Comparative literature, whether cross-medial or inter-literary, relies on language to indicate the correlation between the similar techniques or resources of two works of art. The intermediary role of language lies in

developing a synthetic writing practice reflecting the correlation between two different signifying systems. One example of such writing practice is when the audiovisual techniques of cinema are employed in the narrative framework of poetry. The practitioners of this cross-medial language require a receptive reader who can grasp two means of communication, the interconnection of which results in presenting concrete and visual images of the objects taking metaphorical expression in the linguistic domain of poetry. The roots of this interconnection go back to the cinematic transformation of visual imagery in many pre-cinematographic works of art, from Virgil's *Aeneid* to Cubist paintings. As Christophe Wall-Romana explains, the inheritance of these works for the synthetic language of poetry and cinema is "an invaluable understanding of how audiovisual spaces organize experience into meaning" (Wall-Romana 8). What these audiovisual spaces present is the double nature of a writing practice depending on the visual ecology of poetry to create a page-based movie. Although such critics as Ying Kong believe this double nature devalues the privileged logos of poetry by adopting "cinematic techniques such as montage, flashbacks, fragments, juxtaposition, and snapshots to make poetry as both visual and audio arts," in the experimental genre of cinepoetry the thematic and technical presence of cinema give place to the figurative usage of the filmmaker's camera at the poem's service (Kong 29). In cinepoetry, "[t]he screen becomes the page, a close-up turns into a metaphor, or conversely, [and] the irregular spacing of words on the page is meant to evoke the movement of images on screen" (Wall-Romana 3). The cinepoet employs these experimental techniques by juxtaposing the poem's concrete images in series appealing to the reader's cinematic perception. As Kong argues, this perception stems from the cinematic techniques that, before cinepoets, such Imagists as e. e. cummings, Ezra Pound, W. C. Williams, and Wallace Stevens employed in their poems. Kong believes these poets have developed Imagistic verse "into a little movie, in its visual and audio form, to challenge the older mode of perception based on sound" (Kong 31); that is why their visual images can be read as multiple shots of a page-based movie. Beneath this cross-medial layer that, Kong argues, modernism's cinematic mode has added to Imagism's reception, one can, however, search for the rhetorical contribution of Imagism to the experimental genre of cinepoetry. This rhetorical contribution is the point of departure for this article to compare the shared Imagistic techniques of two famous poet-filmmakers, namely Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) and Abbās Kīyārustamī (1940–2016), whose Imagistic poems are respectively the epitome of

cinepoetry in their homelands. By screening the multiple shots of their page-based movies, this comparative article gives an Imagistic analysis of their selected cinepoems in the light of their relevant experiences on poetry and cinema.

### **Jean Cocteau: The French poet-turned-filmmaker**

It is argued that the origin of cinepoetry lies in both the cinematic techniques of Imagist poems and the poetic conventions of avant-garde movies, but Wall-Romana believes cinepoetry has transcended the thematic and technical interconnection of these poems and movies. He contends this transcendence is formed “on the common basis of a creative spectatorship taking the imaginary resonances of cinema as fodder for a new kind of writing” (Wall-Romana 4). One example of such creative spectatorship can be traced in the cinepoems of Jean Cocteau, the French poet and avant-garde filmmaker, in the early twentieth century. According to Neal Oxenhandler, the significance of Cocteau’s cinepoems lies in “narrow[ing] the gap between the profound intellectual concerns of literature and the filmy world of the screen” (Oxenhandler 19–20). In fact, Cocteau narrows this gap by creating his spectatorship based on his prior experiences with poetry and cinema. Some critics believe these experiences help him pursue a subversive approach to the privileged logos of poetry. Pei-lin Wu, for example, detecting the Surrealist technique of the automatic writing method in Cocteau’s movies, contends “[f]or Cocteau, the mouth should not produce words by way of the brain but directly through the hands” (Wu 200). This automatism Wu perceives in Cocteau’s cinematic productions, in Arthur Evans’s opinion, however, falls under Cocteau’s broader definition of poetry. Refuting the above-mentioned claim about Cocteau’s subversive approach to poetry, Evans asserts poetry for Cocteau “stands for an ‘artistic creation,’ regardless of genre or form” (Evans 163).

Similarly having accepted Cocteau’s broader definition of poetry, Oxenhandler states that Cocteau “insists in his poetry on purely verbal and syntactical manipulations” (Oxenhandler 14). According to Oxenhandler, Cocteau pursues these manipulations on the assumption of his poetic license as an avant-garde artist who “prides himself on his lack of allegiance or ‘engagement’ to any school, cause, or principle” (14–15). Nevertheless, Cocteau’s pride in the originality of his poems can be proved wrong in reference to his subsequent experiences with cinema. This biographical suggestion is helpful to not only construe the visual

images of Cocteau's cinepoetry but also trace its evolution in the light of his filmmaking experiences. For a poet like Cocteau who, according to Oxenhandler, "thinks in images more directly than in words," the experience of filmmaking offers "an ideal medium" to add a visual appeal to the narrative of poetry (15). This visual appeal is enhanced with the aid of the camera serving as a supplement to the cinepoet's eyes to snap the shots of his page-based movie. In Cocteau's cinepoetry, the camera's role is expanded to not only snap but also arrange and juxtapose the series of his shots in front of the moviegoer reader of his poem. Desmond Stewart in his analysis of Cocteau's *Léone* (1945) gives an interesting description of the way Cocteau juxtaposes his camera's shots.

According to Stewart, in Cocteau's cinepoetry "there is a connecting theme," a "dream" in Stewart's opinion, that displays Cocteau's juxtaposed shots like "a thin thread on which plump beads are strung" (qtd. in Neame 146). Alan Neame, in response to Stewart, argues what is more important than the connecting theme between Cocteau's images is the way Cocteau as an Imagist follows the thread to string them. According to Neame, it is "the actual choice of bead-images made by" Cocteau that indicates his directing role to weave the thread of his shots, serving each as an image apiece in his cinepoem (Neame 146). Neame further argues that the "indefinite length" of Cocteau's cinepoetry, unlike the short haiku-like poems of Imagists, is part of his "exercise in free association" (146). By free association, Neame confirms Wu's claim about Cocteau's automatic writing method, which is hypothesized based on Cocteau's restless poetic spirit. Although this restless poetic spirit makes it hard to prove Cocteau's association with any modes of poetic diction, the basic tenets of Imagism he shares in his cinepoems are the cornerstone of such studies as this article and that of Stewart to offer Imagistic reading of Cocteau's poems. In the continuation of Stewart's attempt to introduce Cocteau's *Léone* as an Imagistic piece, this article investigates the rhetoric of Imagism in another poetry book of Cocteau, *Tempest of Stars* (1997), to classify him as an Imagistic poet, yet in comparison with his Iranian counterpart, Abbās Kīyārustamī.

### **Abbās Kīyārustamī: The Iranian filmmaker-turned-poet**

Unlike Cocteau who started his career with poetry, Kīyārustamī entered the realm of art first as a painter and later on as a photographer and filmmaker. The prior experiences of Kīyārustamī, however, never distracted his artistic attention from the source of his cinematic

inspiration, that is, poetry. His interest in poetry, according to Godfrey Cheshire, goes back to his university years during the 1960s when “the Iranian version of modernist poetry reached a peak of iconoclasm and influence [...] among the young, educated, and cosmopolitan” (Cheshire 11). Influenced by the innovative approach of this iconoclasm, Kīyārustamī takes advantage of the flexible framework of the imported medium of cinema to promote his own stylistic innovation of Persian poetry. Concerning Kīyārustamī’s stylistic innovation, Ḥātereh Šeybānī refers to “his aesthetics of simplicity” that, she thinks, results from his “tendency to look at the world with his specific gaze” (Šeybānī 518). Indeed, Kīyārustamī, like all cinematographers, directs his specific gaze at the world with his camera’s help, but to show his simplistic aesthetics he needs to treat cinema as a text, thereby suggesting a poetic language for the medium of cinema to make its voice heard. According to Sārā Salḡūqī, since “the history of Iranian cinema is deeply implicated with literature and poetry,” Kīyārustamī’s intertextual approach to the poetic language of cinema can be innovative only if he “performs a *remediation* of the two media” of poetry and cinema (Salḡūqī 521). By remediation, Salḡūqī means how the medium of poetry functions within that of cinema, in which Kīyārustamī has been successful, from Šeybānī’s viewpoint, due to the expanded role of the camera in his poetic cinema.

According to Šeybānī, Kīyārustamī’s “camera functions as revealing fresh eyes clear and cleansed enough to grasp the reality that the audiences’ eyes failed to see before” (Šeybānī 512). Šeybānī’s comment on the novel approach of Kīyārustamī’s camera corresponds to Oxenhandler’s inference about the differing outlook of Cocteau’s camera. As Oxenhandler argues, Cocteau’s camera “finds the unexpected angle” and becomes “part of the intimate life of the actors” who “Cocteau encourages [...] to be the phantasms of the unconscious” (Oxenhandler 17). Indeed, the way Cocteau asks his actors to rely on their unconscious to play their parts is similar to Kīyārustamī’s method to impart his dialogues to his amateur actors. Kīyārustamī believes in “[o]n-the-spot creation of dialogue,” that is, to give the actors a few visual clues about the scene to help them improvise their dialogues (Kīyārustamī, “Taste”). The advantage of this method is engaging in a constructive dialogue with the actors, quite like the way in his cinepoems he asks his reader to juxtapose the shots of his page-based movie. The reader’s role in creating Kīyārustamī’s visual imagery is what Michael Beard, his translator, certifies when he claims Kīyārustamī’s cinepoems “invite” the reader “to distinguish between photography

and the images of poetry” (see Kīyārustamī, *A Wolf* 10). Beard’s deliberate choice of the verb “invite” signifies Kīyārustamī’s cyclical strategy to engage in dialogue with his reader in the meaning-making process of his poem’s visual imagery. Involving the reader’s memory to keep in mind the cut-off shots of his imagery, Kīyārustamī offers his reader a make-believe adventure to not only recall his visual images while reading but also organize them in the form of a well-plotted movie.

The expanded role of the reader is what Kīyārustamī perceives as the “untapped” potentials of Persian poetry, according to Aḥmad Karīmī-Ḥakkāk (Karīmī-Ḥakkāk 58). As a cinepoet, Kīyārustamī demonstrates the cinematic potentials of poetry by asking his moviegoer reader to grasp his final metaphor, which, as Karīmī-Ḥakkāk argues, implies “that of a poem as a single film frame and the book as a movie” (58). This metaphor indicates what Kīyārustamī employs while drafting his poems, that is, to treat each poem or image apiece as the single shot or the frame of his page-based movie. Although Karīmī-Ḥakkāk admits that Kīyārustamī “conceptualises poetry and film as ontologically one and the same,” he does not take pains to prove Kīyārustamī’s short poems as the epitome of Persian cinepoetry (58). Further, despite arguing about Kīyārustamī’s association with Imagism, Karīmī-Ḥakkāk does not elaborate on the applicable tenets of Imagism in Kīyārustamī’s poems. His inference about Kīyārustamī’s Imagistic and cinematic perspective is, however, the cornerstone of this article to analyze Kīyārustamī’s selected cinepoems in comparison to those of his French counterpart, Cocteau, investigating what they have in common in the experimental genre of cinepoetry.

### **The rhetoric of Imagism in Cocteau’s selected cinepoems**

*Tempest of Stars* (1997) is a collection of Cocteau’s cinepoems, selected and translated by Jeremy Reed whose “choice of the poems,” as he admits, is “idiosyncratic” (see Cocteau 5). Idiosyncrasy, Reed argues, is an inseparable part of Cocteau’s cinepoetry, inherited from “the splinter language, sense dissociations and syntactical disjunctions that characterise his early poetry” (5). To give a comprehensive account of the essential characteristics of Cocteau’s cinepoetry, Reed has economically—in an Imagistic way—selected those poems in which Cocteau adds a cinematic perspective to the rhetoric of Imagism. This cinematic adaption of Imagism serves to categorize Cocteau as an Imagistic cinepoet, based on the principles of this modernist movement. For example,

one of these principles is the use of vernacular language along with the “[d]irect treatment of the ‘thing,’ whether subjective or objective” (Flint 199). Considering this principle, since Cocteau uses plain, simple, and colloquial speech, his cinepoetry is an Imagistic exemplar of the common language verse. Moreover, the next Imagistic principle, illustrated in Cocteau’s cinepoetry, is the avoidance of “word[s] that [do] not contribute to the presentation” of the poem’s imagery (Flint 199); this avoidance, in 1915 Imagist anthology’s preface, includes “vague generalities” as well (*Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology* vii). Indeed, Cocteau, quite in favor of the direct treatment of imagery, is a non-descriptive poet who employs imposing language with eclectic and artistic clarity. In his practical application of Imagism’s principles, Cocteau elicits the comprehensive and ubiquitous concept of Symbolism, and, like other Imagistic poets, seeks refuge in the figurative meanings of his visual metaphors. The close reading of his metaphors calls to mind Pound’s statement that “an ‘Image’ is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” (Pound, “A Few” 200). Having this statement in mind while poring over Cocteau’s cinepoems, the reader realizes that each metaphor is equal to an image portraying a clear and direct perception of analogy. The following cinepoem crystallizes this analogy in the reader’s mind:

The tracery of dog roses  
 is a truly mischievous ghost,  
 your boots are swallows  
 announcing thunder. (Cocteau 53)

In these lines, Cocteau refers to the correspondence of a feeling aroused by the instant glimpse of the etched windows of a derelict hut with a decorative interlacing of “dog roses.” He, in fact, portrays a spooky scene dating back to Gothic architecture in Paris. According to Amy Lowell, one characteristic of Imagistic poems is “[s]uggestion”; by suggestion, Lowell means “the implying of something rather than the stating of it, implying it perhaps under a metaphor, perhaps in an even less obvious way” (Lowell 247). Regarding Lowell’s suggestion, in the anterior poem, the image of “your boots are swallows” describes a sensation by possible implication, in which “swallow” is metaphorically adopted as the symbol for a departed soul (Cocteau 53). Beneath the surface layer of this metaphorical symbol, Cocteau is suggesting that the sound of the wanderer’s boot on the ground represents a ghost strolling and soaring around the abandoned shanty like a “swallow.” Likewise, by underscoring the emblem of thunder, a frightening occurrence beyond

human control, Cocteau suggests that death is an inseparable part of the natural order of the poem's persona.

As illustrated above, Cocteau never employs "superfluous word [...]" which does not reveal something" (Pound, "A Few" 201), but implements the "exact words" that, he thinks, will carry his impression to his readers (206). When Cocteau presents such images as the "boots are swallows" and "[t]he tracery of dog roses," there is no descriptive view in his presentation (Cocteau 53); in fact, drawing on Pound's Imagistic prescription, Cocteau never wants his reader to "expect to be acclaimed [...] until he [the reader] has *discovered* something" (Pound, "A Few" 204). Cocteau facilitates the reader's process of discovery by shunning abstraction in his visual imagery, despite his economical wording that insists on the direct and tangible presentation of images with the description as few as possible; for instance, he concretizes his image of an "abandoned hut" for his reader as part of his Imagistic strategy to avoid abstract images (Cocteau 53). Another example of such succinct description in the abovementioned cinpoem is the way Cocteau avoids presenting his Gothic deserted house with a horrific scene; he, instead, makes use of such visual images as "tracery of dog roses," swallow-like "boots," and the "thunder" to convey his horrific impression (53). In presenting his visual images, Cocteau seems to follow Richard Aldington's hint about the "language of common speech," by which he means "the exact word, not nearly exact, nor the merely decorative word" (*Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology* vi). The below-mentioned lines confirm Aldington's hints on Cocteau's common language:

Here, the red earth is antlered with vines  
like a young roe-deer. The hung linen  
breezily signals, welcomes the day. (Cocteau 15)

In this cinpoem, Cocteau intends to convey his subjective impression about the relationship between youth and love, so he cuts the whole idea down to the bone and condenses unnecessary words. Following Pound's advice, he avoids "adjective, which does not reveal something" (Pound, "A Few" 201); however, such adjectives as "red" and "young," he has selectively used, help visualize his authorial impression. Further, another principle mentioned in the 1916 Imagist anthology's preface is that "[i]magists deal but little with similes, although much of their poetry is metaphorical" (*Some Imagist Poets: An Annual Anthology* vi). The logic behind this preferential treatment is that "while acknowledging the figure to be an integral part of all poetry, they [Imagists] feel that



the constant imposing of one figure upon another in the same poem blurs the central effect” (vi). Indeed, this Imagistic strategy is evident in Cocteau’s cinepoetic lines mentioned above where he is not merely juxtaposing but superimposing the image of passionate love to a vineyard ornamented by red grapes. Carrying both emotional and intellectual forces in his cinepoem through associating the “red earth” and “young roe-dear,” Cocteau portrays the intensification of his love, energy, vigor, and excitement for his reader (Cocteau 15). In addition, one of the contractual rights of Imagistic poet, according to 1915 anthology’s preface, is “absolute freedom in the choice of subject” (*Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology* vii). This freedom is exercised in Cocteau’s cinepoetry by, for example, visualizing the abstract image of love in light of the concrete image of roe-deer. This free choice of subject is under the influence of another Imagistic principle, that is, presenting concrete imagery to “produce poetry that is hard and clear” (vii). The hardness and clarity of Cocteau’s Imagistic cinepoetry can be traced in this stanza:

Tree, bird-bowl, Bengal light  
 between the islands.  
 The sun makes the city’s tramways sing.  
 The sky’s a sailor perched on the rooftops. (Cocteau 57)

In this single stanza, different Imagistic manifestos are crisply and cunningly crammed. As Cocteau believes in concise and economical use of exact wording, he feels content with such visual images as “[t]ree,” “bird-bowl,” and “[b]engal light” to describe the setting of his short cinepoem. He presents his ideas without using marginal and superfluous words; his Imagistic strategy aims at conveying pure and unambiguous impression to his reader by making the image of a new morning with a blue and cloudless sky in a hotel off the coast of an island in Paris. Cocteau’s imagery brings about an additional insight into his reader’s mood, thereby stimulating his writerly sensation. As a poet-filmmaker, he snaps spectacular shots from his surrounding world, based on his own sensation and impression, injecting them to his reader in the form of visual imagery. For example, in the anterior cinepoem, the reader sees the blue sky as a “sailor” sitting on the “rooftops”; the “sailor” represents an amorous lover and “rooftops” stand for peaceful life (57). These similes and metaphors reveal that Cocteau’s poetic world is admittedly a subjective one; his images are sharp, direct, and to-the-point, never originated from an obsolete inspiration. Furthermore, his inspiration is never obsolete, for he follows Pound’s

advice to “keep the language efficient [...] accurate, [...] [and] clear” (Pound, ABC 32). The following stanza is the finest instance of such accuracy and clarity without the sanction of ambiguity:

Narcissus, drowned within himself,  
doesn't like the winter ice.  
The English write verse  
compact as the growth of their lawns;  
often their swimming blazes like dragonflies  
between two waters and two sheets;  
and the swan that sleeps with its chin on its arm  
is whiter than Swiss snow. (Cocteau 57)

To Cocteau, the flower of “[n]arcissus” not only portends the resurgence of spring but also personifies the human being whose face is “drowned within himself.” The resurgence of spring, according to Cocteau, occurs when the distorted roots of daffodils in winter recover in the spring, signifying revival and hope in the audience’s eyes. In this stanza, Cocteau, by presenting such images as “[n]arcissus, drowned within himself,” “their swimming blazes like dragonflies,” and “swan that sleeps with its chin on its arm,” portrays the momentary situations in which the reader is captivated and forced to stand still, observe, and ruminate (57). To gain a full exactitude, Cocteau formulates the style of precision, metaphor, and the economy of word. For instance, in such images as “the swan that sleeps with its chin on its arm / is whiter than Swiss snow” and “their swimming blazes like dragonflies / between two waters and two sheets,” (57) Cocteau exerts imagery amplifying the concreteness of his poetry. Another Imagistic viewpoint in this cinempoem is included in the selection of a proper image through which he directly goes to the point and the impression he proposes to the reader, that is, highly intellectual. His purpose by doing so is to shun the ambiguity and vagueness of the sentimental enterprises; similarly, the strictness and aridity of his visual images are quite noticeable in the following stanza:

Flame, little goldfish of the Chinese lantern.  
The orchestra's below, and a wind off the islands  
catches fire, bringing out redoubtable Lions  
hidden in that fragile bowl. (57)

In these lines, Cocteau tries to pictorialize such images as “[f]lame,” “goldfish,” “Chinese lantern,” “a wind off the islands,” and “redoubtable Lions” for his reader without any explanation or description, for, he believes, images can express more than the language. What Cocteau

means is expressing by displaying because he believes the images can only carry what language cannot present. For example, by intersecting the different senses of hearing in “orchestra’s below,” smell in “[f]lame,” and sight in “a wind [...] [that] catches fire,” Cocteau sends multiple images to the reader’s mind to visualize his authorial impression. To reach that goal, Cocteau uses the language of the common speech in such a way that his reader surrenders his visual world to the world of Cocteau’s.

### **The rhetoric of Imagism in Kīyārustamī’s selected cinepoems**

*A Wolf Lying in Wait* (2005) includes the haiku-like cinepoems of Kīyārustamī in response to the Imagistic trend of Persian poetry in translating words into visual images. Kīyārustamī’s success in the continuation of this trend is to the extent that, as Beard claims, while leafing through his cinepoems, the reader is “likely to forget altogether it is words rather than visual images” (Kīyārustamī, *A Wolf* 11). The reader’s drowning in Kīyārustamī’s visual imagery indicates the power of “image” that the rhetoric of Imagism grants him. According to Pound, the image can give the reader a “sense of sudden liberation [...] from time limits and space limits” (Pound, “A Few” 200). Such liberation in grasping the poet’s imagery is celebrated by the readers of all Iranian Imagistic poets; however, what distinguishes Kīyārustamī’s reader from that of those disciples of Imagism in Persian poetry is a cinematic aesthetic. This cinematic aesthetic helps the reader to visualize the blurred link between the distinctive and variant images of Kīyārustamī’s cinepoetry. With the aid of this aesthetic, the reader realizes that Kīyārustamī’s visual images do not share any thematic clue, and their out-of-order exhibition is part of the poet’s Imagistic strategy. In fact, Kīyārustamī is engaged in the pursuit of the Imagistic strategy Pound proposes for his followers to work like a scientist; Pound believes, an Imagistic poet, quite like a scientist, should first begin “by learning what has been discovered already” and then go “from that point onward” (Pound, “A Few” 204). Indeed, Kīyārustamī introduces the visual discoveries of his cinepoetry in an out-of-order exhibition so that the reader, instead of looking for any thematic coherence between the images, takes time to discover Kīyārustamī’s poetic rhetoric. Kīyārustamī’s rhetoric, quite agreeable to the point of view of Imagism, categorizes him as an Imagistic poet, for, as Amy Lowell argues, “any one who writes poetry from the same point of view might be said to write Imagistic verse,

to be an Imagist” (Lowell 235). To prove Kiyārustamī’s cinepoetry as Imagistic verse, it is necessary to pore over the diction of his cinepoems according to the principles of Imagism.

At the top of the list Aldington creates as Imagism’s credo in the preface of *Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology* (1915), “the language of common speech” is introduced as the first principle (vi); such language, according to Lowell, “excludes inversions, and the *clichés* of the old poetic jargon” (Lowell 241). Inversion is what Kiyārustamī avoids in the structure of his cinepoems; for example, “I want a larger share / of my solitude / from you,” (Kiyārustamī, *A Wolf* 36) and “I divine / the taste of heavenly fruits / from the dusty cucumbers of / the neighbouring field” (43) are two haiku-like cinepoems in which Kiyārustamī has deliberately kept the word order of a declarative sentence. In the latter example, the comparison he makes between “heavenly fruits” and “dusty cucumbers” reveals his simplistic aesthetic in preferring a rural, corporeal pleasure over a utopian, spiritual one. He expresses this preference by employing “the *exact* word” which, “determined by the content,” as Lowell argues, is able to convey his visual “impression to the reader” (Lowell 242). Exactness, according to Lowell, can be assessed as the extent to which the poet’s chosen word “appears in relation to the *whole*” (242; emphasis added). This “whole” in Kiyārustamī’s cinepoetry often refers to the long shot that he depicts for his reader via the visual imagery of his poem. Accordingly, the reader requires a panoramic view of Kiyārustamī’s imagery to ascertain, for example, why he has chosen the color “golden” for the eyes of his fictional eagle:

Sunrise  
 reflected in the golden eyes  
 of an old eagle  
 perched on the carcass  
 of a white colt. (Kiyārustamī, *A Wolf* 49)

In this cinepoem, the subtle point is that the golden color of the eagle’s eyes matches that of the sun, visualizing the same impression Kiyārustamī has received in watching that specific sunrise for his reader as well. Another example of Kiyārustamī’s exactness in choosing words quite visual in his reader’s mind is: “A blue mountain / a white poplar / jolts one awake / at the crack of dawn.” (53) Kiyārustamī’s reference to a specific species of poplar, “white poplar,” and, a mountainous region in Australia, Blue Mountains, is to visualize the shot of a spectacular dawn in winter. The panoramic view of this image, furthermore, is devoid of any clichés that, according to Lowell, are “so worn by use as

to convey no very distinct impression to the reader” (241). Indeed, the worn-out clichés of traditional poetry are scarce to find in the natural and original language of Kīyārustamī’s cinepoetry, for he pointedly avoids visual metaphors incomprehensible for his reader. His reliance on comprehensible metaphors asserts T. E. Hulme’s claim that “[v]isual meanings can only be transferred by the new bowl of metaphor” (qtd. in Crisp 83). To transfer his visual meanings to the reader successfully, Kīyārustamī attempts to be sufficiently persuasive in not only the diction but also the figurative language of his cinepoetry. Figurative language, due to the rhetorical emphasis of Imagism on “persuasion [...] [as] an issue of comprehension,” needs to be comprehensible and plausible for the reader (Hamilton 474). Such comprehensibility and plausibility in Kīyārustamī’s cinepoetry are evident in the implicit comparisons he draws between his abstract and concrete images. For instance, the abstract image of “[a] mysterious dread brewing / inside an adobe hut” is accompanied by the concrete image of “[w]ild rue seeds in the fire” (Kīyārustamī, *A Wolf* 63). The plausibility of this analogy between “dread” and “rue seeds” is up to the reader to grasp after linking the crackling of fire to the inner emotion of the poem’s persona. As Pound asserts in his essay “Vorticism,” “every emotion and every phrase of emotion has some toneless phrase [...] to express it” (463), so the reader, if desperate to hear the hushed tone of Kīyārustamī’s abstract image, must trace the concrete image coming in parallel with the abstract one. Another example of such parallel in Kīyārustamī’s imagery is the following cinepoem in which the concrete image helps the reader to visualize the abstract one:

The glow-worm:  
 the longest night of the year  
 The early morning exhaustion. (Kīyārustamī, *A Wolf* 115)

In this poem, the reader, to conjure the abstract image of “exhaustion,” needs to visualize the concrete image of the presence of a “glow-worm” in “the longest night of the year.” Kīyārustamī’s Imagistic conciseness makes the reader identify the exhausted persona with the wakeful “glow-worm” avoiding sleep to grasp the beauty of a long night. This conciseness makes Kīyārustamī selective and, more importantly, “creative” in his choice of concrete images; being “creative” is what Pound suggests in writing Imagistic poems (Pound, “Vorticism” 464). Pound contends that the Imagistic poet “must use his *image* because he sees it or feels it, not because he thinks he can use it to back up some creed or some system of ethics or economics” (464). Indeed, Kīyārustamī’s selec-

tive choice of image is not because of his blind adherence to Imagism's creeds but because of his insistence on depicting the concrete images that, he thinks, will facilitate the reader's comprehension of the abstract ones. Yet, what hinders this comprehension is the "creative" role he assigns for his reader, drawing on Pound's ideas, to explore the relations of the poem's images. As Pound argues, "[a]ll poetic language is the language of exploration" (466); however, in Imagistic poetry, this exploration is not carried out for the meanings of an image. For, according to Pound, "[t]he image is itself the speech," self-contained enough to convey its meanings and independent of the reader's exploration for finding its underlying meanings (466). Similarly, in Kīyārustamī's cinepoetry, this self-containedness and independence of images are implicitly acknowledged in the rhetorical questions the reader is asked to visualize the aesthetic of the poet's imagery. For instance, Kīyārustamī asks his reader, "[w]hat is the meaning of / the seashore / next to the fear of the waves" (Kīyārustamī, *A Wolf* 127); the addressed reader, after visualizing this image of "seashore" besides "waves," realizes the futility of Kīyārustamī's question. Reminding his reader that there could be no meaning outside his poem's imagery, Kīyārustamī asserts Pound's claim that "[t]he image is the word beyond formulated language" (Pound, "Vorticism" 466). Another example of Kīyārustamī's rhetorical questions is the following cinepoem:

Who can guess  
 the taste of a cherry  
 which is half yellow  
 and half red? (Kīyārustamī, *A Wolf* 138)

In this Imagistic piece, Kīyārustamī displays not only the independence of his imagery from the reader's perception but also the necessity of such perception in agreement with that of the poem's persona. Such agreement between the perception of persona and reader is reached in the pursuit of Pound's advice not to "mess up the perception of one sense by trying to define it in terms of another" (Pound, "A Few" 206). Indeed, in the above-mentioned cinepoem, Kīyārustamī insists that the gustatory imagery of the cherry cannot be grasped by the reader who has never tasted one. Never taking pains to depict a mental picture for his reader to visualize such gustatory imagery, Kīyārustamī accepts Pound's restriction on being "viewy" and "descriptive" (Pound, "A Few" 203); by this restriction, Pound means that the comprehension of the visual aesthetic of the poet's imagery ought to be left to the

reader. This delegation of responsibility in visualizing the link between the poem's concrete images emblemizes another characteristic of Imagistic poetry that, according to Peter Crisp, "tending toward stasis" (Crisp 82). Such tendency, Crisp argues, is due to the poem's lack of "action inducing a change in a person or object" (82). Crisp's hypothesis about the static display of visual images ignores the reader's creative role in animating and advancing the poem's imagery. However, in Kiyārustamī's cinepoetry, the reader's role in exploring the relation between the poem's static images is of great significance. This cinepoem shows this well:

A hungry wolf  
in the snow  
the sheep  
sleeping in the pen,  
a sheep dog  
guarding the door. (Kiyārustamī, *A Wolf* 171)

Three static images of a "hungry wolf," a sleeping "sheep," and a guard "dog" need to be animated by the reader to construct the simple plot of the poem's imagery. Confirming Crisp's hypothesis, this cinepoem snaps three individual shots, the exploration of their relationship is, however, left to the reader. Kiyārustamī's dependence on his reader's exploration affirms Lowell's belief that Imagism "refers more to the manner of presentation than to the thing presented" (Lowell 244). This manner of presentation, Lowell argues, requires the reader's active role to accompany the Imagistic poet in conveying the overall mood of his poem. According to Lowell, this overall mood should not be ruined by "high-sounding, artificial generalities which convey no exact impression" (245). Similarly, in Kiyārustamī's cinepoetry, generality is often rejected in favor of the particularity of the focus of his camera. The following cinepoem illustrates how the eyes of Kiyārustamī's persona give a close-up view of the poem's image:

I dip my face  
Into the cool spring water  
Keeping my eyes open:  
Ten little pebbles. (Kiyārustamī, *A Wolf* 90)

In this poem, the persona's eyes represent Kiyārustamī's camera that, whether giving a panoramic or close-up view, requests the pleasure of the reader's company. Such Imagistic poems, Flemming Olsen argues,

“describe momentary situations, and their images capture the reader’s attention, forcing him to stop and reflect” (Olsen 15). One example of these momentary situations, in the anterior poem, is the brief pause of Kīyārustamī’s camera to display a close-up view of a few pebbles, thereby causing a moment of hesitation for the reader. Finding the poet’s camera an “unobtrusive recorder,” (14) the reader realizes that Kīyārustamī’s “choice of subject is nothing out of the ordinary” (Olsen 17). Although Kīyārustamī has “absolute freedom in the choice of subject,” according to Imagism’s basic principles, he chooses the rural setting of his homeland to reinforce his natural, inartificial language (*Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology* vii). This homeland, now that Kīyārustamī as an adult has returned to, has no longer the rural and simplistic aesthetic of his childhood. He, through the honest voice of his persona, admits “[w]hen I returned to my birthplace / the river had become a stream / and no children / were bathing in it”; he continues in the next poem that “I find [sic] my childhood playground / occupied / by iron girders and quicklime” (Kīyārustamī, *A Wolf* 93). Although the passage of time has detracted from the rustic beauty of his homeland, Kīyārustamī vividly remembers the rusticity manifested in the modest lifestyle and simplistic perspective of rural people. Fully aware of the timeless beauty of his homeland, he declares in a poem: “[i]n my identity card / there is a photo / that attests / to the passage of time” (138). Indeed, inside Kīyārustamī’s identity card his homeland has inscribed the “[s]implicity and directness of speech” that, according to Lowell, can be detected in all Imagistic poems (Lowell 246). Such simplicity that Kīyārustamī has definitely learned from the rural context of childhood, in his cinempoetry, as well as his poetic cinema, is also narrated from a child’s perspective.

## Conclusion

According to Pound, “that part of [Imagistic] poetry which strikes upon the imaginative eye of the reader will lose nothing by translation into a foreign tongue” (Pound, “A Few” 205). Pound’s claim about the adaptability of Imagism’s principles among different languages refers to the import-export trade of world literatures relying on the intermediary role of translation. Central to the comparative analysis of this article is the affirmation of Pound’s claim about the adaptability of the tenets of Imagism across time and place in analyzing the cinempoetic experimentations of two poet-filmmakers, namely Jean Cocteau and



Abbās Kīyārustamī, with the ideas of Imagism to prove them to be the epitomes of Imagistic cinepoetry in their national literatures, respectively French and Persian. The step-by-step approach of these poet-filmmakers to the experimental genre of cinepoetry reveals the two-fold aesthetic of this genre that requires a cinema-goer reader quite familiar with the interconnections of cinema and poetry. With the aid of translation, the alien readers of these two cinepoets have two English page-based movies in front of them sharing many Imagistic strategies. Among the common Imagistic strategies of Cocteau and Kīyārustamī are economical wording and phrasing, cinematic adaptation of visual imagery, austerity and clarity of vision, the poetic prerogative of subject matter, avoidance of vague and ambiguous description, and writerly approach to the poem's rhetoric. For example, the economy of word is what Cocteau and Kīyārustamī adhere to while presenting the visual images of their cinepoems. In fact, the filmmaking profession of these poets makes them feel content with the original recordings of their camera; similarly, they make their readers dependent on the camera's presence at the scene to give concise and precise descriptions of their imagery. Since one of the Imagistic strategies of these cinepoets is designed to avoid abstract and contrived images, whenever the poet's camera captures the persona obsessed with innermost and private feelings, there is a concrete metaphor for this abstract image to help the reader identify with the persona. The active and creative role of the reader is what Cocteau and Kīyārustamī emphasize to fill in the gap between their abstract and concrete images so that the reader will have a comprehensive view of the poem's visual imagery, thereby receiving the authorial impression of the cinepoet. Both Cocteau and Kīyārustamī avoid using descriptive words and phrases, which hinder the direct treatment of the subject matter; for example, their careful selection of adjective and adverb clauses is part of their cinematic aesthetic to evoke a particular image in the reader's mind. In promoting the reader's creative engagement, the rhetoric of Imagism helps these poet-filmmakers to pursue a writerly approach to the diction of their short cinepoems. Indeed, the dictions of both Cocteau and Kīyārustamī are persuasive enough to accompany the reader to reach this Imagistic conclusion that there is no meaning outside the visual imagery of the poem.

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## Retorika imagizma v filmski poetiki Jeana Cocteauja in Abbāsa Kīyārustamīja: primerjalna študija

Ključne besede: literatura in film / intermedialnost / francoska poezija / perzijska poezija / Cocteau, Jean / Kiarostami, Abbas / filmska poetika / imagizem

Članek preučuje skupna imagistična načela dveh filmskih ustvarjalcev-pesnikov v eksperimentalnem žanru poetičnega filma. Po eni strani francoski pesnik, ki je postal filmski ustvarjalec, Jean Cocteau, uteleša imagistični eksperiment francoskega cineasta, ki preizkuša narativni okvir poezije, da bi ustvaril film "na podlagi strani." Po drugi strani je iranski pesniško-filmski ustvarjalec, Abbās Kīyārustamī, s tem ko ustvarja vizualne podobe, močno odvisne od bralčevega ustvarjalnega angažmaja, tipičen primer filmske estetike v perzijski moderni poeziji. Retorika imagizma, tega kratkotrajnega modernističnega gibanja z začetka dvajsetega stoletja, je tisto, kar oba filmska ustvarjalca-pesnika na podoben način vključujeta v svoje filmsko-poetične študijske primere, kot sta *Tempest of Stars* (1997) J. Cocteauja in *A Wolf Lying in Wait* (2005) A. Kīyārustamīja. Članek s primerjalnim pristopom k njunim skupnim imagističnim osnovam, kot so ekonomičnost besedila in fraziranja, kinematografska prilagoditev vizualnih podob, strogost in jasnost vizije, pesniška interpretacija vsebine, izogibanje nejasnim in dvoumnim opisom ter pisateljski pristop k retoriki pesmi, dokaže, da J. Cocteau in A. Kīyārustamī poosebljata imagistično filmsko poezijo v francoski in perzijski literaturi.

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