

# **The 'Station Journey' of Ghaisar with Husserl's 'Temporal Awareness': A reading of the poem 'Station Journey' by Aminpour based on Husserlian Phenomenology**

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## **Abstract**

Phenomenology is one of the most important contemporary philosophical approaches, founded by Edmund Husserl, which quickly became a method for research in various fields of the humanities, including literary criticism. The phenomenologist suspends the naturalistic approach to the world and focuses on interpreting phenomena as they appear to the subject, aiming to understand and explain objects. Since artists, especially poets, describe their lived world as it appears to them, one can trace phenomenological components such as "intentionality," "epoché," the relationship between the "ego" and its lived world, and "time consciousness" in their works. Ghaisar Aminpour is a prominent contemporary Persian poet with numerous publications in both classical and modern Persian poetry. "Travel Station" is one of his modern poems that this research offers a new reading of, extracting the phenomenological components he employs to describe his lived world through an analytical-descriptive and comparative method. The results of the study indicate that Aminpour refers to "intentionality" and "ego" in this poem and addresses "eidetic intuition" in certain instances. Moreover, Husserl's "time consciousness" can be a guiding factor in analyzing this poem.

**Keywords:** *Phenomenology, Husserl, Time Consciousness, Eidetic Intuition, Phenomenological Criticism, Travel Station, Ghaisar Aminpour*

## **1. Introduction**

Phenomenology (Phenomenologie) refers to the study of phenomena and their description based on how they manifest to the knowing subject. In other words, it involves examining consciousness as experienced from a subjective (first-person) perspective (Smith, 2015: 236). In his philosophy, Husserl invites us to describe the shared essences of conscious actions (Smith, 2015: 243), such as

"perception," "memory," "anticipation," etc., which always intend towards an object and are directed at it. Therefore, in defining Husserl's phenomenology, we can say: "It is a method for analyzing and describing consciousness and what is given to consciousness" (Vallard-Mayol, 2019: 31). In this particular research approach, the phenomenologist strives to describe phenomena as they appear and are revealed in their consciousness. Thus, phenomenology has a history as long as human thought itself; however, it was first articulated by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), an Austrian philosopher, at the beginning of the twentieth century, and soon became one of the most influential contemporary philosophical schools. This perspective did not remain confined to philosophy but quickly found widespread application as a research method in various fields of the humanities (see Copleston, 2020: 7/423). The foundation of Husserl's phenomenology is based on concepts that he either invented or redefined. Some of these fundamental concepts that have broad applicability in Husserlian phenomenology include: "epoché" or suspension (Epoche), "intentionality," "noesis," "noema," "ego," "time consciousness," and "constitution." By setting aside all presuppositions and focusing on phenomena, phenomenology describes those phenomena that become evident during human lived experience as a knowing subject ("ego"). In other words, phenomenology seeks to provide a description of the objective world as it becomes apparent to the subject (mind/known agent). This revelation occurs through actions such as awareness and perception—actions that Husserl introduces as "intentional," "attentive," or "approaching." The knowing agent provides the ground for the emergence and revelation of these phenomena through their perceptions, which Husserl refers to as the "constitution" of phenomena.

Phenomenology has also entered the realm of literature and literary criticism, becoming one of the methods for reading, analyzing, and interpreting literary texts that falls under reader-centered critiques. However, the critical application of phenomenology in literature began in the early twentieth century with Roman Ingarden, a Polish philosopher (1893–1970) (see McCarthy, 2009: 350). Phenomenological criticism is an effort to apply the phenomenological method in critiquing literary works. Just as Husserl placed the actual object in parentheses in his philosophical school and focused solely on describing and explaining what appeared to him, in phenomenological criticism, the historical context in which a literary work is produced and the biography of the author are also set aside and ignored. The critic's effort is to empathize with the author and understand how the natural world manifests to them, which is reflected in the themes embedded in their work. This topic is discussed in more detail in the second chapter of the thesis; however, it can be briefly

stated here that phenomenological criticism specifically emphasizes the quality of the author's experiences of time, space, and the relationship between the "self" or "ego" of the author and others, as well as the author's perception of material objects (Eagleton, 2020: 82-83). It seeks to understand how the author has lived their world; that is, how a phenomenological relationship is established between the ego (self) as subject and the world as object. To achieve this, we must read and reread the text enough to set aside our personal interpretations and place ourselves in the author's position, as if the creator of the text is thinking from within "me" (Safavi, 2019: 98). In recent decades, theorists and critics in the field of literature have examined literary texts using various methods, including analyzing poetry based on contemporary philosophical approaches. Edmund Husserl's phenomenology is one of these philosophical approaches that analyzes and describes phenomena from a subjective perspective, and critics have borrowed his phenomenological method to examine the object of poetry. In this context, the poetry of Ghaisar Aminpour, known for its unique style and linguistic combinations, is selected for phenomenological examination and analysis, as it is among the notable works of contemporary Iranian literature. Ghaisar Aminpour is an influential poet in the realm of Islamic Revolution poetry, with various poetry collections published that have been the subject of different academic studies. In this research, we aim to analyze and examine the ghazal "Familiar Dream" from his poetry collection "The Grammar of Love" through a phenomenological approach. Therefore, we will examine both the poet's phenomenological relationship with the objects of his lived world and consider his poetry as an object for phenomenological analysis. We will present our reading based on the fundamental components of Husserl's phenomenology in relation to this poem by Ghaisar Aminpour.

So far, there have been very few studies dedicated to exploring Ghaisar Aminpour's poetry in connection with Husserl's phenomenological approach. On the other hand, analyzing Aminpour's poetry from the perspective of Husserlian phenomenology can contribute to a better and deeper understanding of the meanings and structures within his poetry, opening a new avenue for understanding literary texts and analyzing them. Therefore, in this article, we aim to apply the essential components of Husserl's phenomenology to our reading of one of Ghaisar Aminpour's poems to demonstrate the effectiveness of this method in interpreting literary texts and poetry in practice.

### **1.1. Background of the Research**

In recent years, studies have been conducted in the field of examining the phenomenological aspects of Persian literary texts, especially poetry. Among these, the following research can be mentioned:

The article "Hermeneutic Phenomenology of Poetry: A Re-reading of Ahmad Shamlu's Poem 'The Wall'" (Hossam Dehghani, 2009). In this article, Dehghani reinterprets Shamlu's poem "The Wall" based on hermeneutic phenomenology, a branch of phenomenology founded by Heidegger, a renowned student of Husserl. In his article, Dehghani introduces the method of hermeneutic phenomenological interpretation of artistic works and analyzes Shamlu's poem "The Wall" through phenomenological dimensions such as mythology, temporality, historicity, and intersubjectivity, attempting to apply hermeneutic phenomenology in the analysis of Shamlu's poetry.

The article "Comparative Study of Fundamental Ideas of Phenomenology with a Husserlian Approach in Several Themes in Sohrab Sepehri's Poetry" (Morteza Babak Moein, 2011). In this article, Babak Moein attempts to align themes created by Sohrab Sepehri in his poetry with the main principles and rules of phenomenology. According to Babak Moein, the blending of the perceiving subject and the perceived object is one of the main themes in Sepehri's poems. This theme is compared from various perspectives with a principle in phenomenology that does not separate subjectivity (mentality) from objectivity (reality), where "seeing" as a communicative act realizes the unity and blending of the subject who sees with the object being looked at. Babak Moein aims to present some features of Sepehri's vision that can be compared with certain principles of phenomenological thought, focusing on Sepehri's last four poetry collections. He briefly introduces the main concepts and foundations of phenomenology and then elaborates on one of the essential themes in Sepehri's poetry, which he claims is also a fundamental concept in phenomenology. Sepehri's intuitive gaze at the world, which arises from negating all preconceptions, places him in a pure and novel relationship with the world, aligning with the non-preconceived view of objects. According to Babak Moein, Sepehri should be considered a poet whose poetic trance becomes apparent only when his awareness is entirely directed toward an external object or, in other words, when it turns to a tangible and concrete reality in the world.

The article "Phenomenological Approach in Sohrab Sepehri's Poetry" (Ali Akbar Samkhaniyani, 2013). In this article, Samkhaniyani first extracts the phenomenological approach present in Sepehri's poetry and shows some intellectual similarities between his poetry and Husserl's thought.

Samkhaniyani considers Sepehri's poems as some of the most enigmatic and complex works in contemporary Persian literature and argues that Sepehri was deeply influenced by phenomenological views in his last few collections, leading to a comprehensive transformation in his intellectual character, language content, and poetic style. The author believes that there are many similarities between Sepehri's theories and those of phenomenologists like Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. He states that the powerful presence of the thinking ego (I), emphasis on the difference between reality and the truth hidden behind it, transcendental thinking, drawing attention to hidden dimensions of realities, theoretical recommendations for seeing differently, emphasis on re-understanding phenomena, suspension of meanings and traditional norms, and conflict with habit and tradition all support the existence of a phenomenological approach in Sohrab Sepehri's work.

Another article in this field is "Phenomenology of Ghazal in the Poetry of Nezami and Amir Khosrow" (Seyedeh Ziba Behrouz, 2014). Behrouz states that the aim of her article is to examine the phenomenological aspects of ghazal in the poems of Nezami and Amir Khosrow, especially in their two works "Layla and Majnun." These two works, which are prominent examples of ghazal literature, despite many similarities, have fundamental objective differences in their representation of the idea of "love."

The article "The Poetry of Ghaisar Aminpour from a Phenomenological Perspective" by Ebrahim Kanan (2014) applies some phenomenological concepts to five ghazals by Ghaisar Aminpour. However, what Kanan discusses regarding "the principles of the phenomenology of Aminpour's poetry" includes some references to the contexts that gave rise to phenomenology (critique of tradition, critique and denial of dogmatism, and connection between reality and mind) as well as theories that have emerged on the basis of phenomenology (interpretation of multiple significations to a single referent through sign-semiotics).

## **2. The Poem "Station Travel"**

The train is leaving

You are leaving

The whole station is leaving

And how simple I am

To have stood for years  
Waiting for you  
Next to this departed train  
And still  
Leaning against the railings of the gone station!  
(Aminpour, 2022).

### **3. Analysis of the Poem**

If we divide this poem into two parts—as indicated by the space between the third and fourth lines in the printed version—we encounter in the first part the phenomena of "train," "you," which could represent the poet's beloved, "station," and "leaving." In the second part of the poem, phenomena such as "simplicity and gullibility" and "waiting" can be identified.

#### **3.1. How Phenomena Are Reflected in the Poem**

In this poem, Aminpour provides only one characteristic about the "train": it is moving and "is leaving." The train is a means of transportation for carrying goods and passengers; however, on the day and at the time when the poet's beloved departs with the train, this aspect of movement becomes particularly evident to the poet. His entire attention is focused on this aspect of the train that takes "you," meaning the poet's beloved, away from him, leading to separation and longing.

Regarding "you," the poet merely states that "you are leaving," and he naively and optimistically waits for their return. However, what is said about the "station" is quite unexpected; it speaks of the "leaving station." Attributing the action of "leaving," which is full of movement and fluidity, to the "station," which is characterized by stability and permanence, seems contradictory. This is because attributing movement to something that is immobile creates a paradox.

The station is, in fact, a point of origin or destination for movement (travel), and although it itself is a fixed place with no motion, passengers begin or end their journeys there. The fact that Qaisar attributes the act of traveling and departing to this initial or final point of movement goes against the audience's expectations. Of course, to resolve this peculiarity, one might resort to metaphor; in the phrase "the whole station is leaving," the word "station" could metaphorically refer to the passengers present at the station. Thus, "the whole station" would mean those passengers who have come to the station and are leaving with the train that takes away the poet's beloved. However, this

interpretation does not align with the title of the poem ("Station Travel") and also with the descriptive phrase "gone station" mentioned later in the poem, where the poet indicates that he leans against its railings while waiting for his beloved's return. Therefore, "leaving" must be attributed to the station itself, which brings back the previous contradiction.

Another way to escape this contradiction is to focus on the verb "leaving" and change our perspective on it. The first thing that comes to mind regarding "leaving" is physical relocation and movement from one point to another. However, a broader meaning of movement can be considered that does not merely encompass spatial displacement but also includes changes and transformations over time (temporal changes). Such transformations can also be regarded as a form of movement. Just as spatial movement (in this case, "train" or "beloved") from a location near the poet to another outside his sensory perception is referred to as "leaving," so too can essential movement and gradual changes over time in an object (here, "station") be described with the term "leaving." For instance, this particular station may have completely deteriorated over time or become abandoned or had its function altered in such a way that it no longer exists in its original form; thus, as expressed by the poet, it has "left," because he can no longer have a present awareness of it.

### **3.2. The Personal Nature of "You" for the Idea of "Station"**

Another analysis of the departure of the station is that the poet, based on "eidetic intuition," engages in the process of negating and referring to concepts in his mind to reach the essence of the station. By gradually removing and adding certain concepts involved in the phenomenon of "station," he moves closer to the general idea and nature of it. This method involves subtracting components and elements from the phenomenon in question—here, the "station"—to see which component can be removed while still preserving the concept of the station, and which removal leads to the complete obliteration of that concept. The latter group constitutes the essence and idea of the "station," allowing one to reach its essence, nature, or idea and experience it.

"Eidetic intuition" refers to becoming aware of an aspect of an object that cannot be conceived without that aspect. In this case, as the poet speaks first about "you" leaving and then about "the station" leaving, he seems to be engaging in a process of negation and reference to strip the intended phenomenon of any incidental or non-essential elements, leaving only its essence.

In this poem, the phenomenon of "you" is central and pivotal in the first part and throughout the entire poem, while other phenomena, including "the station," are marginalized. Thus, from his perspective, the poet concludes that the essence of a "station" lies in your presence; a station from which "you" depart ceases to be a station and loses its identity and nature. Therefore, the poet presents "you" as an essential element of both the station and other phenomena mentioned in the poem; for him, it appears that "you" (the beloved) is the center and intrinsic element for all phenomena referenced in the poem, and without "you," all these phenomena lose their identity. Consequently, when "you" leave, "the whole station leaves." The station can also refer to the poet's world, which collapses and is destroyed with the departure of the beloved.

### **3.2. The Role of Husserlian Temporal Awareness in Interpreting "Station Travel" by Qaisar Aminpour**

The poet's "experiential self" experiences the space of the "station," where the train departs and takes "you," or the beloved, away with it. Following this intuitive perception, he presents his understanding in a series of propositions (the train is leaving / you are leaving / the whole station is leaving) and shares this truth with other "selves." In other words, after this truth becomes apparent to the poet, he reports it in the form of sentences structured within grammatical language; sentences that can be true or false. This report results from a lived experience that the poet has undergone and now wishes to share with other "selves" (the audience of the poem).

Since the "I" or "self" has the ability to reflect on itself and its transcendent relationship with the world, it can articulate itself and observe its own actions. Thus, in the second part of the poem, the poet adopts a transcendent perspective on his situation and states: "And how simple I am." Here, through introspection, the poet describes himself as "simple and gullible," which is an attentive and reflective action; because "belief" always pertains to belief in something and has an opposite that it turns toward. In this context, "the return of the beloved" is what the poet's belief is directed toward and pays attention to.

In line three, there is mention of "the departure of the station," and as previously stated, what is meant here by the poet is indeed the departure of the station itself—a seemingly contradictory combination that nevertheless guides us toward the poet's perspective. This perspective recognizes movement as a transformation of an object over time and temporal changes. Therefore, just as spatial movement of an object—here, "the train" and "you"—from a location near him to a location



further away from his sensory perceptions is termed "leaving," so too can essential movement and gradual changes occurring over time in an object (in this case, "the station") be described with the term "leaving." Thus, the previous station no longer exists in present time; as expressed by the poet, it has "left," because he can no longer maintain a present awareness of it. Consequently, through a form of absent-mindedness achieved via a recollective approach, the station re-presents itself to the poet, allowing him to relive it. In this renewed experience—albeit one that is empty and marked by absence—he leans against the railings of the station and waits for the beloved's return.

In the first half of the poem "Station Travel," Qaisar employs the verb "goes" in each of the first three lines, which indicates movement, flow, and continuity both in terms of substance and content, as well as in form; because in this section of the poem, he uses the present tense indicative verb. It is as if this movement and flow are currently unfolding before the reader's eyes, rather than being an action that occurred in the past and has ended, with the poet merely reporting on it now. However, in the second part of the poem, he uses the past perfect tense (I am standing / I have leaned), which makes it clear to the reader that the departure of the "train," "you," and "the station," mentioned in the first part of the poem, is not currently happening; rather, it is an event that took place in the past and has so profoundly impacted the poet that despite the dust of time settling on it, he can still vividly engage with and live through it. As a result, he uses present-tense propositions to express it.

According to Husserl, time is not a continuous line; rather, it is a network that encompasses not only what is currently present and a field of presences but also a collection of absences and everything that is potentially absent and presented to human awareness in a vacuous manner. Therefore, every step a person takes along the timeline leads them to a new present moment; the previous moment and the moment they will reach in the future are both present to them in a vacant and absent manner. The difference lies in that the previous moment, which is now past time, fades into the darkness of absence after it has been made present to the individual, who has actively engaged with it and observed it clearly. However, it still remains within the individual's sphere of attention, though the further one distances themselves from that moment and the more it fades into darkness, the less attention they pay to it, resulting in a more blurred memory of it.

As for future moments that will materialize in time, our attention to them also exists in an absent manner; we only perceive their clarity and presence when we confront that moment, transforming it from future to present. Until we reach that moment, our awareness of it remains shrouded in darkness and ambiguity, existing only as "anticipation."

Thus, at every moment, an individual faces a collection of presences and absences to which they pay attention: "the now that is present and actual," "the previous nows that have faded into a veil of darkness," which become darker and more indistinct as we distance ourselves from them, and "the future nows that become clearer and more distinct as we approach them, emerging from darkness until we meet them and they become fully bright and present."

In the second part of the poem "Station Travel," where Qaisar says, "I am standing beside this departing train," it recalls the idea that a person, at every moment, has a vacant and absent awareness of past presents. What has happened in the past is still present to them in a shadowy manner. Therefore, the poet can stand in the present next to a train that left in the past, taking away his beloved; because in this present moment, he is aware of what was once present and has now sunk deep into time, allowing him to envision himself standing beside that train—a train that was once vividly present to him and to which he had immediate attention. However, now, after many years, he has an absent awareness of it from the depths of time, and this awareness is also related to the present moment.

In the last two lines of the poem, where he says, "I have leaned against the railings of the departed station," this same analysis can be applied. In "remembrance," the object is directly bestowed upon the "I" (the knowing subject). However, the bestowal of the object always occurs amid shades of presence and absence; because when a facet of a phenomenon is bestowed upon the "knowing I," it is present for them and illuminated, while other facets of the object remain absent and shrouded in darkness. An object that the "knowing I" has previously engaged with in a present manner will later be engaged with in an absent manner; yet there exists a unity and sameness between what was once fully present to the "knowing I" and what is now engaged with as absent after the passage of time. The "knowing I" witnesses a singular entity through these various engagements. In other words, memory bestows the same object that was directly perceived and attended to with fullness and presence, but now it is presented with a new layer of meaning as something related to the past whose time has elapsed. Thus, memories are acts of re-living, and the past, along with all its

existing objects, becomes alive for me; but this time it assumes a specific form of absence that does not transform into presence with a change in the location of the subject or object, unlike the absence occurring in the present which can be made present through a change in location—though at the cost of sacrificing current presence.

Here, too, as the poet recalls the departure of the train and his separation from his beloved, he is actually turning toward that object in an absent manner, and that object reveals itself to him as empty. Consequently, the poet relives the moment of the train's departure and the beloved's distancing. This is when he sees himself standing beside the departed train and states, "I am standing beside this departing train." As he reflects on that very same entity and object related to his awareness, it offers itself to the poet's "I," referring to that train—the one with which his beloved left the station. He also turns towards a station that has become abandoned or destroyed over time (has departed) through the layer of remembrance, and in this turning, that station presents itself to his "I," allowing him to envision himself at that station, leaning against the railings while waiting for his beloved's return. He then reports this experience in a statement for other "I"s to share.

The objects in this world that we observe are part of this universe and naturally relate to other objects because they all constitute parts of this whole. The "I" is also a part of this world and shares this natural relationship with other components of existence; however, the "I" is a unique entity capable of stepping outside its natural position and reflecting on its relationship with the world. This "I" serves as a center from which the world and its various existing objects become manifest, possessing an understanding and perception of the world. This is what is referred to as the "transcendental I," which emerges from and transcends the "empirical I"—which is merely part of the world—standing before it, making it its own and intertwining it with itself while contemplating its perceptual relationship with the world.

Based on the explanation above, it can be said that in the first part of the poem "Station Travel," Aminpour encounters the scene of the departing train, the departure of his beloved, and the abandonment of the station with his "ego," his natural and experiential "self." In expressing what he has encountered, he uses the present tense verb "is going" to indicate the liveliness of the scene; that is, this event is currently happening, and the poet's "I" is the observing subject of the scene, reporting it as a truth that can be true or false.

However, in the second part of the poem, he transcends his "experiential self" and observes the previous scene and his relationship with it through his "transcendental self," as if he is looking at this scene from the outside and focusing on his perception of it. Here, he describes himself as simple and gullible, recounting his state of waiting for the return of his beloved and reliving the moment of separation from her, standing next to the recalled object of the train and the railings of the station, which he experiences as repetitive. Thus, in this part of the poem, there is a reference to the past (perfect tense); a past that continues to the present and still has an effect, with its impact remaining and recurring in the poet.

The act of recollection used in the second part of the poem reflects a phenomenological approach; as Sakalowski states: "... natural and phenomenological approaches achieve recollection in different ways. In the natural approach, the past is seen as having passed and been destroyed; it no longer exists. In this approach, only 'presence' holds significance. We do not attribute 'presence' to the past. Therefore, when we want to describe recollection, we tend to assume something like a mental image or an idea from memory that is present and replaces the past. ... Although from a transitive perspective and with a precise understanding of presence and absence, we can recognize a specific kind of presence that the absence of the past has for us" (Sakalowski, 2019: 149-150).

Thus, in recalling the "departed train" and "departed station," Qaisar suspends the natural approach and engages with a phenomenological perspective in recalling these objects. Consequently, we observe a kind of presence in Aminpour's words even though the time of these objects is in the past; because it seems as if the "departed train" and "departed station" are presently available to him, as he states that he stands beside them and leans against their railings.

## **Conclusion**

The poetry of Qaisar Aminpour, one of the notable poets in contemporary Persian literature in both classical and modern poetry, has been the subject of various studies. In this research, we have analyzed one of his modern poems titled "Station Travel" using Edmund Husserl's phenomenological components. As observed, the poet's transcendental self, by turning towards phenomena such as "you," "the train," and "the station," describes his lived world through this poem. He depicts his world as a station where his beloved (you) is the central phenomenon, and with her departure, this world collapses and is destroyed. Thus, through eidetic intuition, the poet declares that the phenomenon of "you" is an essential and intrinsic matter for his world "station,"

whose absence leads to the destruction of that "station." In this study, we also utilized Husserl's theory on time to analyze and justify parts of the poem, deriving meaningful insights from it. However, it is essential to note that our intention is not to claim that Qaisar consciously and meticulously employed Husserl's phenomenological components in his poetry; rather, he approached surrounding phenomena with a poetic gaze that suspended everyday natural perspectives on phenomena and described these phenomena from his poetic viewpoint in the form of poetry. This indeed reflects a kind of phenomenological perspective that the poet holds towards the surrounding phenomena and his lived world.

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