



A Comparative Study on Nizar Qabbani and Qeysar Aminpour Poems of Resistance

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Abstract: Nizar Qabbani is one of the pillars of the poems of resistance in the Arab contemporary literature, and Qeysar Aminpour is regarded as one of the most committed poets of Iran Revolution and Sacred Defense literature. This paper aims at elaborating aspects of resistance in the poems of these two famous poets in the Arab and Iranian contemporary literatures. The findings indicate that both poets, despite time and location distance, have had an approximately similar approach towards resistance in their poems. Both of them have applied a simple and unaffected language in their poems of resistance, and their poetic images are very fluid and enjoy a high communicative load. As regards content, both poets have taken such issues as sacred Jihad, myth and symbol, the ravages of war, etc. into account.

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1. Introduction

Researching on the resistance poetry and literature, explaining various aspects of the Iranian Sacred Defense, and comparing it with other nations resistance literature, through using the expressive language of art (particularly literature) are irrefutable necessities that unfortunately have not yet been considered by the artists, writers and poets seriously in a way this great historical event deserves.

The works created by poets and writers of resistance (either during or after war, or as regards Palestinian Resistance Literature) are not few; however there is much doubt and debate regarding whether they have been successful in clarifying these events, narrating epics, and depicting these historical occurrences.

Hence with respect to the importance of research on the resistance literature and particularly comparative study on the different nations' resistance literatures, the present paper aims at analyzing and assessing the most important structural and thematic features of the resistance poems of these two revered poets by presenting some examples of their poems.

2. A Review on Nizar Qabbani and Qeysar Aminpour Biographies

Nizar Qabbani is one of the greatest poets of romantic verses and the best known and most popular contemporary poet in the Arab world. He was born in March 21, 1923 in Damascus. Qabbani studied law at Damascus University and graduated in 1945, and then he was employed by Syrian Foreign Ministry. Nizar

entered into the world of policy when he was 22 and he was appointed as Consul of Embassy of Syria in Cairo. From then on he served as the representative of Syria government in different countries including England, France, Spain, China, etc. until 1966 (when he left politics for good) (Yusefi, Bekkar, 1978: 21).

With more than forty books of poetry, Nizar Qabbani is deemed as one of the greatest contemporary poets of romantic verses in the Arab world.

Qeysar Aminpour was born in 1959 in the city of Dezful. He finished elementary school and high school in Getund and Dezful. Then he went to Tehran and he received his doctoral degree in Persian Literature from Tehran University in 1997 (Ghasemnia, 2011, 90).

In 1988, he became chief editor of *Soroush e Nojavaanaan* and from then on he started teaching in Azzahra University and Tehran University until his death. Dr. Qeysar Aminpour died in 2007 due to heart failure (Heidarian, 2011, 109-110).

Among his works, "Sudden Mirrors" (1993), "Selected Poems" (1999, Morvarid), "Flowers are all sunflowers" (2001, Morvarid), and "Love Grammar" (2007, Morvarid) can be mentioned.

3. Concept of Resistance Literature

"Literature of resistance is regarded as a set of works that express ugliness of the internal injustice or external aggressors in all political, cultural, economic, and social arenas by an artistic language (literary

style). Some of these works, either during or after war, have written its history." (Shokri, 1987: 10-11)

This type of literature possesses particular features, including having the face of common people, utilizing symbols, special lingual and verbal features, depicting suffering and oppressed face of people, inviting to a universal challenge, describing and praising the victims and martyrs, that distinguish it from other literary styles.

4. The Structure of Resistance Poems of Nizar Qabbani and Qaysar Aminpour

"Form" or "structure" may be defined as, "all the effective elements and components in creating a literary totality. Thus form comprises all the elements that may bestow a literary aspect to the work" (Shafiei Kadkani, 2000: 17).

Most of the critics consider form in such elements as language, words, format, rhythm, imagination, etc. which is the criterion used in this paper.

a. Language in Resistance Poems of Nizar Qabbani and Qaysar Aminpour

Abulhasan Najafi, a contemporary linguist, believes that Andre Martine has offered the most accurate and comprehensive definition for "language". He says, "language is a means of communication among humans on the basis of which human experience is decomposed and converted into units with a semantic content and vocal form called morpheme, and these units are also decomposed into separate consecutive units known as phoneme whose number is specified in any language, and their nature and interaction are different from one language to another" (Najafi, 2003: 33).

As regards poetry, whenever language is discussed, the style of using words and distinguished presence of objects and inducing concepts different from common language is a matter of great magnitude.

So from this perspective, it must be stated that Qabbani poetic language in the poems of resistance is an easy yet difficult language. In the other words, a common feature in almost all resistance poems of Nizar Qabbani is simplicity of language and clarity of interpretations and images; and this is because the addressees of his poems are mainly the oppressed Arab people. Through using a simple and unaffected language, Nizar discloses the unsaid hardship of people lives under the pressure of the Arab unjust rulers:

"O' my lords! Do not rip away my nails to make me tell the truth/ O' lords! What is the benefit of my confession/ when, whether I tell or not, you write?!/ When, since you have become our ruler, you think on behalf of me?! (Qabbani, 1986, 124-126)

Aminpour poems also enjoy simplicity largely alike Nizar Qabbani poetry. This is one of the particular methods in today poetry. Since poetry has lost its ivory tower and has embedded in the quiddity of life and community:

"These dusty shoulders,/ how simple and patient/tremble when a disaster occurs/these/ although/their knees and waists have broken/ have stood victorious and heroic/ without any house wares" (Aminpour, 2010: 35-36).

Besides the general feature of the poems language, the thing that is more effective than anything else in a language structure is word. Word and structure are so important that some critics consider it to be more valuable than content.

Word may be deemed as a simple common tool that is applied to express a particular concept. As per a scientific definition, "word is a term composed of several letters which indicate a meaning" (Zamanian, 1988: 25).

What matters regarding words is the way they are selected. In general, words that are seen in the resistance poems of Nizar Qabbani are updated and sometimes modern words, and words have mostly been applied in their main meaning:

"Collective media make me laugh/ and assembled and unreal lands/ as well as puppet governments/ and their strange rituals." (Qabbani, 1993: 310/3)

In Aminpour poems, although we rarely encounter with archaic words, simplicity of the words is the salient feature of his poems of resistance; however, the poet do not hesitate to use words and prepositions in an archaic form:

"Yeah/ even wall has not been able to listen/ these hot words of my heart/ are you able to listen?/ wall!/ mobile cold stone wall!/ is it worth that you remain a dead body/ in the dependence of remaining alive?" (Aminpour, 2010: 36)

Furthermore Qabbani and Aminpour must be considered among skilled poets that are familiar with the features of the words usage and do not employ redundancy:

"The devoted shines on us like the sun/ perhaps we did not exist if there was not any sacrifice / we were born from warriors' wounds/ since they are born from their wounds" (Qabbani, 1968: 410/2)

b. Format and Rhythm in Resistance Poems of Qabbani and Aminpour

The most important and salient feature of Nizar Qabbani Resistance poems in terms of "format" is that he is a poet that composes in the format of "free verse". Although classical and metrical poems are also found in his works, he has used this format in his early years of composing poem and most of his poems in

his poetic peak period have been composed in the format of free verse.

The wide stage that this format has provided for poetry has left his hand open in paying attention to the content. So he indicates different contents of resistance in his poems regardless of constraints of classical formats. Yet most of his poems are faithful to rhythm:

"Six-day War has been finished/ and all other wars after that and we are fine/ good news are heard about us and we live in the best way possible/ and the sound of Firuz/ comes from the heaven that we will return." (Qabbani, 1993: 114/3)

Qeysar Aminpour poems of resistance have been composed in various formats such as couplet, sonnet and free verse. This diversity based on various subjects and contents provides an elegant set of Persian resistance poems before the audience. Examples:

"We wash martyrs by a pure light
We wash them inside the moonlight spring
Martyrs are pure like the spring water
Isn't it ironic that we wash water with water?!!"

(Aminpour, 2010: 126)

And:

"A martyr that had slept in the soil/ told himself/
"If this is victory that we defeated the enemy/ why is there still enmity?" (Aminpour, 2012: 17)

From another viewpoint and as regards rhythm in Qabbani and Aminpour resistance poems composed in the format of free verse, it must be stated that both poets have attempted to create various musical, verbal and visual functions by different rhythms. However Qabbani is more committed to the rhythm compared with Aminpour so that among Nizar Qabbani resistance poems there are few poems that do not enjoy rhythm:

"Do not get drunk with victory./ if you kill Khaled, know that Amro will come/ and if you crush the flower/ know its perfume will remain." (Qabbani, 1986: 167)

Yet in Qeysar Aminpour poems, we must expect the presence of rhythm where it can contribute to the artistic and visual richness of the poem. For example, in a poem titled as "a plan for peace" two words "in" and "on" add a particular conceptual and visual connotation to the poem besides playing a traditional and musical role:

"A martyr that had slept in the soil/ ran his finger in his blood and wrote/ two or three words on the stone:/ "Hope for a real victory/ not in war/ yet on war!". (Aminpour, 2012: 18)

c. Imagination in Qabbani and Aminpour Resistance Poems

Poets and writers pay a particular attention to imagination in the poetry and each have offered a

definition for imagination based on their accepted world view.

To create poetic imagination, multiple factors are involved. Language, music, emotions and imagination are the most important elements. Imagination that is called "image" by the European critics is "a set of possibilities of literary expression in the poetry and its main stage is provided by metaphor, virtual instruments, code and different types of making imagination" (Shafiei Kadkani, 1993: 10)

Among the features of Qabbani poems in terms of imagination is its fluidity and that the poet does not set any limit for his imaginations. The elements of time and location are always changing and he does not consider any limit for metaphors and similes:

"Haziran comes and goes/ and still Farzadgh stabs in Jarir body (the Arabs regard each other as the cause of failure)/ the Arab nation is like chess and scattered rocks/ and like a leaf in the air..." (Qabbani, 1986: 235/3).

On the other hand, the poet has allocated a major part of these pictures to the surrounding natural appearances.

"For my land and its stars/ for its clouds and scents and dews/ I pour bowls of my blood in the streams/ for my green home that has been sacrificed" (Qabbani, 1989: 26).

However, he cannot be deemed as a symbolist poet. Hani Al-Khayer, a critic of Nizar odes, says about his poetic language that, "he has not been a symbolist poet. He writes poem in a way that his common compatriots, housewives, teachers, students, fighters, drivers, and the President of the Academy of the Arabic Language can understand his poem" (Al-Khayer, 2006: 12).

Anyway, it must be mentioned that Nizar is a great poet with his own specific features. "He is a phenomenon. And this phenomenon is not a virtual one, rather it is a real phenomenon" (Al-Arud, Bela Al-Tarikh: 62).

On the other hand, his Iranian counterpart has more or less similar features. Aminpour endeavors to achieve a simple and unaffected language influence the quality of imagery application in his poems. He is fully familiar with the possibilities of imagery and takes an appropriate benefit from it.

Albeit it must be noted that Aminpour poems of resistance in the poems collection "Morning Breath" is under the effect of radical imagery of 80s. So sometimes we encounter with a skein of intertwined images in his poem and sometimes epic expression does not leave any opportunity for poetic images:

"Waiting shoes in the frame of door
A little knapsack full of impatience
Behind the window, forehead of a man beats

In the fever of a pain that is inevitable like life" (Aminpour, 1996: 155-156)

However, in "Sudden Mirrors" we face with a more artistic function of imagery in the poems of resistance; images lose their main aspect before the poet and are appeared everywhere in the chain of the poet speech, and extends the emotional prospect – personal and social emotions – of the poetry. Epic and extrovert language of the poet is converted into a tale of soul and thus a kind of introvert view gets dominated over the spirit of the poem and images:

"If we are entirely wilt and yellow
Yet we have not lost our heart to the autumn
As an empty vase on the lip of window
We are full of cracked memories
If it was broken heart, we have seen
If it was bloody heart, we have seen
If it is sticker of enemies, we are throat
It is dirk of friends, we are loin!" (Aminpour, 1996: 102-103)

In the poems of resistance of "Love Grammar", imagery is seen with low frequency yet more effective in the chain of words; it increases the emotional load of the poem and induces the message of poet in a simple yet effective manner to the reader:

"But why/ the rhythm of your poems/ and their color is bitter?/ when a lamb/ cool and calm/ closes/ with its feet to the slaughterhouse of the inevitable fate/ what is the resonance of its urceolate?!" (Aminpour, 2008: 23)

In brief, one can state that Aminpour reached from radical imagery orientation in his early works to a normal and artistic application of image in his later works, so there is no more verses presenting a hank of images in an intertwined clusters of imagination. An example verse from Morning Breath:

"A man descended from Moses with a garment of shepherd came in the twilight of fire and smoke." (Aminpour, 1984: 110)

5. The most important contents of resistance poems of Qabbani and Aminpour

In terms of content, resistance poems of these two poets are similar. In the following some of the most important ones are pointed out.

a. Disagreement and Contention

Within the concept of resistance literature, there exists a kind of protest. The resistance poet is saying "no" to something before anything else. This "no" and "protest" may belong to various causes based on which one can depict different levels for the concept of resistance literature. Most of the protests and contentions in Qabbani poems is pertaining to tyranny and occupation of the Arabic land, and most of the critics in Aminpour poems is related to injustice, distortions and corruptions.

Qabbani indicates disagreement and contention with what is happening in the Arab world in his poems of resistance:

"No it is not my great home/ no.../ this sentenced home comprised of twenty insane persons/ twenty rulers/ twenty thieves/ twenty prisoners/ these are not called home/ this is not my great home." (Al-Taleb, 2008: 195)

Aminpour depicts his disagreement with incorrect procedures in many of his resistance poems:

"O' wisdom, foreworn of hundreds of secrets
How long you search for reasons
Friends finished the journey of love
Your are not man, you're still in the beginning"

(Aminpour, 2010: 105)

b. Attention to the concept of sacrifice and martyrdom

Among approaches observed in the contemporary poetry of Arab and particularly Palestinian poets, martyrdom can be mentioned. Such an approach in the poems of resistance is no doubt a great mutation indicating magnificence of the martyrdom culture and reverting to Islam and recovering Islamic identity:

"The devoted shines on us like the sun/ perhaps we did not exist if there was not any sacrifice / we were born from warriors' wounds/ since they are born from their " (Qabbani, 1968: 410/2)

"The world got colorful by the lover blood
It made the dark porch of the heavens brilliant
Pagan night immersed in the darkness
Sheikh Eshragh reached the red wisdom"

(Aminpour, 2010: 127)

c. Depicting wandering and devastation caused by war

Occupation and confiscation of the Arab lands by immigrants Jews and/ or dominating Muslims sacred places in Palestine have hurt the heart and soul of the Arabs, and subsequently we witness the reflection of this painful matter in the Arab literary works. The outcome of these occurrences is an increase in the awareness of the Arab poets regarding the Arab and Israel problem whose stage had been provided after embarrassing defeat of the Arabs in the war of June 1967. (Bagheri, Farzad, 1997: 236)

In an ode named as "O' Lady of the World, O' Beirut", Qabbani praises his beautiful Beirut devastated due to the civil wars in that time in a way as if he is talking about a woman with all the organs and characteristics of her femininity. He composes as below:

"O' lady of the world, O' Beirut/ who sold your ruby bracelets?/ who confiscated your magic ring?/ who cut your golden sheaves?/ who sacrificed the happiness lied in your green eyes?" (Asvar, 2003: 172)

Aminpour poems of resistance reflect pain and suffering of humans who have survived from the war tragedy and whose destiny is not separate from other people destiny. The fate of homeland is the fate of poet, and the poet regards its pain as to be his own pain. Hence whenever sadness comes to the home, the poet whines and integrates tears and rage:

"Let my poem/ like people damaged homes/ gets crushed and immersed in blood/ I must compose bloody poems/ I must compose a poem of rage/ an eloquent poetry of cry" (Aminpour, 2010: 30)

d. Sanctity of Jihad for freedom

One of the functions of the resistance literature is presenting a sacred image for Jihad. In the Arabian literature it is called Entefatheh. Introduction of Entefatheh is a matter that has been emerged during recent two or three decades in some of the works of resistance literature in the form of a pervasive movement. Entefatheh is deemed as a national and social movement (Azar noosh, 2007: 706).

Resistance and Entefatheh in Qabbani poems are mainly embedded in fighting trends and groups such as "Fath Movement", and the poet believes that the Arabs must have long ago thought about forming freedom-seeking movements not now:

"After we were killed/ after they said a prayer for us/ after they buried us/ Fath came like a flower bred by wounds..." (Qabbani, 1986: 140/2)

However, Jihad in Qeysar Aminpour poems is a Divine exam whose value must be appreciated, and the pledge to Jihad for Allah must be honored:

"Lest we subside ourselves
Lest we leave our Imam lonely
A tulip grew from the blood of any martyr
Lest we crush the tulips" (Aminpour, 2010: 125)

e. Symbols and Myths in the poems of resistance

"Symbol is a tool by which the poet substitutes a concept for another concept and expresses mysterious words and rhythms when necessary in the resistance literature. In fact, symbol is a tool with cultural value that the poet uses to explain his interpretations better." (Soleiman, 1997: 176-177)

"Myth has a common ground with symbol, because there is a set of related symbols that represent a general view from the current reality. Old symbols in the contemporary poetry are mainly attributed to the mythological characters or the characters that have become mythological as time went on" (Asvar, 2002: 89 and 108).

In this regard, Qabbani and Aminpour have selected and used symbols and myths by dominance over their classical literature, with a difference that Qabbani has mostly used the Arab myths in his poems with a ridiculous view.

For example in the poem "Belqeis", besides recalling misery, insecurity, fear and suffocation of

the Arabs in their failures against Israel, he criticizes mythical beliefs and unwarranted pride in the unfounded past days of the Arab world:

"Where are Samaval and Mohalhal? (Old Arab warriors)/ And where have gone past warriors?/ here a tribe eats another tribe/ a fox kills another fox/ I will decry the Arabs by stating some strange facts/ is prowess an Arabian lie? Or is it all over false like our history?!!" (Qabbani, 1982: 7-8)

In Aminpour resistance poems, we hardly face with Iranian historical myths and symbols including Rostam, Arash, Giv, etc. and the poet mostly uses religious myths and characters:

"Indeed was the only homework of Karbala children/ to repeat writing constantly water? Water!/ writing father water?!" (Aminpour, 2012: 21)

The poet tries to use symbols that are common in the everyday language like "owl" that is the symbol of infelicity and ruin:

"Owl denies you on the ruins yet

The soil of these ruins has a smell of that treasure" (Aminpour, 2010: 76)

6. Conclusions

Nizar Qabbani and Qeysar Aminpour are committed poets in their poems of resistance, yet their commitment boundary is different in their poems. Nizar Qabbani states pain and grief of Palestine and Beirut frequently and we face rarely with ideological concerns in his poems. However, Qeysar Aminpour constantly takes ideological components into account.

Though content diversity in Nizar resistance poems is more, Aminpour has composed his resistance poems in different classical formats as well as free verse based on the type of content and reader.

In the free verse, Nizar Qabbani has paid more attention to the music of the poetry and commitment to the rhythm. Yet this matter (using rhythm) happens in the poems of Aminpour when rhythm creates a particular meaning.

Both poets have used a simple and unaffected language in most of their poems of resistance and have selected the characters of their poems from the events of the resistance scene.

The most important contents that are common in Nizar Qabbani and Qeysar Aminpour poems of resistance are namely: Invitation to fight and its consecration, recalling the Arab and Islamic myths in the poems of resistance, disagreement and contention with the current status, expressing the grief of home devastation in war.

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