

A Comparative Study on Some Nostalgic Contents in the Poems of Nizar Qabbani and Salman Harati

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ABSTRACT

Nostalgia is mainly regarded as a grief created by remembering a matter in the unconscious mind of the artist and is converted into a poetic space. Nostalgia is mostly found in Nizar personal and social romantic poems; yet in Salman Harati poems, nostalgia is frequently reflected in its collective aspect and in his political – social poems. Among common axes of nostalgia in the poems of these two poets, such items as remembering days of rule of justice, freedom, regret about golden past days and childhood, as well as the wish to return to the utopia can be mentioned which have been embedded in their nostalgia.

KEYWORDS: nostalgia, comparative literature, Nizar Qabbani, Salman Harati

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important literary approaches towards which the contemporary poets orient due to the different personal and social factors is the nostalgic approach in the poems. Among the most important factors of this approach, some items can be pointed out that they are indeed regarded as among nostalgia contents such as losing family members, exile from homeland, regret about the golden past days, recalling forgotten human values, remembering utopia, recalling memories of the childhood and youth, sorrows and pains of aging, thinking about death, etc. The poetic reflection of these concerns is the items in which romanticism school believes as its main general principles. This school introduces the contemporary poet as a person that has tended to the nature following the irritation at the current time and environment and makes his poem full of such contents as recalling the pleasant memories of the past days, nostalgia and regret.

Nizar Qabbani and Salman Harati are among poets whose abundant grieves, regrets, and nostalgia have given a particular mood to their poems so that nostalgia has a great share of their poems.

Although numerous articles have been written about the poetic contents of their poems, their poetry has not still been assessed in terms of nostalgia. Many books and papers have been written as regards Nizar Qabbani and Salman Harati works and biography, and each writer has considered a particular issue such as love, politics, home, resistance, etc. However, no research has been carried out as regards nostalgia in their poems. So this paper aims at assessing and analyzing nostalgia and grief in the poems of these two poets.

2. A Review on Nizar Qabbani and Salman Harati Biography

Nizar Qabbani is regarded as 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)

His familiarity with the literature of other countries and his modernistic enthusiasm led to breaking the traditional structure of the Arab poetry. Even those who were not interested in poetry knew him and his poems. He adopted a language in his poems that took its stability from an eloquent language and its warmth and courage from the language of common people (Al-Khayer, 2006: 12).

Salman Harati was born in 1959 in Tonekabon, Mazandaran. He finished his elementary school and high school in Mazandaran. He always worked along with education, ranged from pastoralism and agriculture to proletarian. In 1977, he went to Tehran to work and received his diploma there, and from 1983 he was appointed as a teacher of art in Gilan schools. Salman Harati was one of the stars in the contemporary poetry sky. He only lived 27 years. In spite of his short life time, he left three exquisite collections (From the Green Sky, A Door to the Sun House; from this Star to that Star) as his legacy. He said, "I will die too/ yet not like Cheraghali/ I will die too/ yet in

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a crowded street/ in front of the indifference of the watching eyes/ under the cruel wheels of the machine..." He finally died in 1986 due to an accident as he had said (Alipour, 1996: 9).

3. The Concept of Nostalgia

The word nostalgia has been defined in Oxford Dictionary as a feeling of sadness for what has been lost in the past (Hornby, 2003:840).

In the Persian Dictionary, it has been defined as the regret about the past (Batani, 2001: 572) or sadness of being away from the homeland and wishing the past days (Arianpour, 2001, volume 4, 3539).

The equivalent of this word in the Arab language is al-eghterab, al-ghorbat, and al-hanin (Firouzabadi, 1406, 383 and 630).

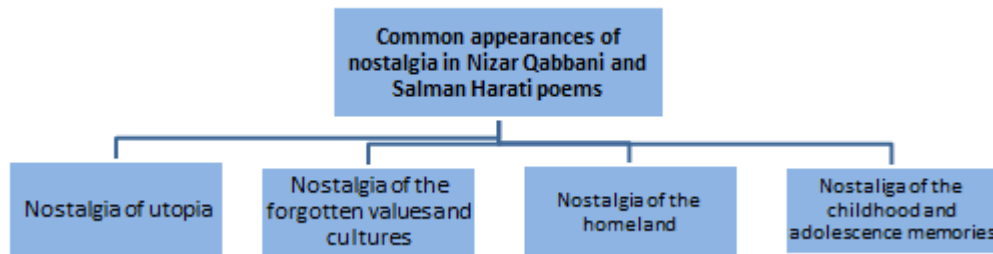
4. Nostalgia in Qabbani and Harati Poems

The events occurred in the Arab lands under the occupation has made Nizar Qabbani a poet whose pain is identical with the pain of the whole society. Following the failure of the Arabs against Israel, Nizar says that today a poet must be a mirror of his home pains as "this era is not the era of the little sparrows... the Arab world is eaten like a peeled orange, it sleeps over the horror machine guns and wakes up on the terror machine guns.." (Al-Khayer, 2006, pp. 163-164)

In such poems as "Our history is only a rumor", " Call summer of June 5", "Bread, Hashish and Moon", "The hole" and "Tale of revolution", Nizar recalls the painful past days of the people with a nostalgic approach and looks for a golden and ideal future.

On the other hand in Iran, Salman Harati is a poet teacher and pain has been integrated with the warp and woof of his rural spirit. The poet rural life and memories of childhood that are now realized as a green dream in his adolescence as well as the events of war, resistance and the after war occurrences hurt the poet spirit in a way that he composes the most elegant nostalgic poems of the Persian contemporary literature.

With respect to the comparative study of nostalgia in Qabbani and Harati poems, four main axes can be mentioned as the common axes of nostalgia in the their poems namely, nostalgia of the childhood and adolescence memories, nostalgia of remembering the departed, nostalgia of the forgotten values and cultures, and nostalgia of the utopia.



a. Nostalgia of the childhood and adolescence memories

Remembrance of the childhood and the memories, games, life elements and all the indices related to the purity and innocence of those days have always accompanied the poets and it is a balm for fatigues and boredoms of the poets in adolescence.

By recalling the elements associated with his childhood period and using words such as "textbooks, packets of cookies, etc.", Qabbani tries to associate his poem with the innocence of his childhood:

"You entered into my textbooks and packets of cookies/ I hid you in the words of the prophets/ in the wine of the priests/ and in the napkins of the farewell day/ I drew you on the window of the synagogues/ and on the mirrors of the sleeps/ and traveler wooden horses." (Qabbani, 1982, pp. 36-37)

Elsewhere, Nizar uses such words as "class chairs, pencils, blackboard, plasters, etc." each of which represents a part of his childhood memories:

"Take all the books that I have read in the childhood/ all the pencils and black boards/ all the plasters and teach me a new word" (the same, pp. 14-15).

Some human characters play a major role in creating this nostalgic space. Among the most important characters presented in the ranges of nostalgia related to Nizar childhood is the sacred character of mother. Nizar regards his mother as a sacred person who has fostered her child with milk as well as greatness and honor.

"My mother milk was a white ink/ and her breast taught me high-mindedness." (Qabbani, 1998, 14)

He considers his mother as an angel who has always protected her young child. Nizar states this nostalgia as below:

"My mother extended my vocabulary circle/ whenever I left a sheet in the yard/ my mother washed it inside the pond with other washable things" (Al-Havari, 2003, 50)

Most poems of Salman Harati have been allocated to the remembrance of his rural life in the childhood and illustration of the memories pertaining to the pains and sufferings. Living among people for whom suffering is the most familiar word in their rural lives made him a poet whose poems are full of the sorrowful remembrance of the life of his compatriots.

A matter of remarkable magnitude in Salman poems is that he has extremely used domestic words to depict these pains and create the nostalgic space in his poems. For example, see the function of a Mazandarani word (kale chal) in below:

"I was not/ my mother was orphaned/ the half-burned woods/ made kale chal¹ full of fire" (Harati, 2009, 86).

In the twist of childhood memories and the adolescence life that is full of temptations, the poet remembers his concerns and the nostalgic space of the elementary school and associates it with his today concerns and apprehension:

"Like the afternoon of the school days/ I am full of weariness and uncertainty/ and my book/ is black/ by the checked home works/ my apprehension is that/ tomorrow in the time of account/ they will say:/ one thousand/ you must go down in the flames/ this is the penalty.. Go..!!" (The same, 52)

His life, full of deprivation, made Salman Harati to write about those excruciating days in his nostalgic poems. In some of the poems, he calls to mind those painful days:

"Walking in the grey coast of fog/ I look for the simplicity of a boy/ that was my childhood/ and one day from the tension of poverty/ he had come here." (Harati, 2004, 195)

Like a master painter, the poet depicts the pleasing space of the village and simplicity and intimacy of the shepherds and ranchers whose songs have relaxed the poet in childhood.

"I am drunken of your unaffected moments, O' rancher/ with whom did you integrate that/ eglantine/ flourishes by the point of your hands?!!/ O' rancher!! (The same, 48)

b. Nostalgia of homeland

From one perspective, one can say that nostalgia is the sorrow of being far from homeland on the basis of which the poet or writer illustrates the past days in a painful and regretful manner (Shamlu, 1996, 17).

In literature, whenever the poet or the writer integrates his poem or writing with a feeling of nostalgia along with regret and anxiety for his homeland, he is called a nostalgic person. Nizar shows this nostalgia as below:

"For my homeland 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)

Stars, homeland, clouds, rains, and freshness are all live images of a homeland from which Nizar is far away and tries to revive its memories by mentioning its beauties.

In his second poetry collection published in 1948, he mentions his sorrow and love for his homeland:

"Our mountains are fan/ for the East, it is green and colorful/ it spreads bliss and felicity in the world/ in our good natured hands/ even birds like to nest." (Qabbani, 1998, volume 1, 96)

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

"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)

Salman Harati is a poet who loves his homeland with a different view. Salman Harati regards his homeland as an oppressed land that has merely seen fire, cruelty, war and devastation; yet it is still standing and capable for continuing the life:

"Standing in the grass of a clear sun/ O' my homeland!/ O' the most capable oppressed/ I love you!..." (Harati, 2009, 9)

He remembers with sorrow what has happened with his homeland and cries:

¹ "Kale chal" is a wood-burning stove, "kale" means fire and "chal" means pit (Nasri Ashrafi, 2004, volume 3, 1682). It is a kind of outdoor stove which is made by putting three stones together in the form of U. then a pot is placed over them. Kale chal is the inside part of this stove in which there is wood and ash.

"Let me cry/ not for you/ as love and wisdom have reconciled in you/ as your hands are green/ and your sky is blue/ and your sons are men of prayers and sword/ and you have patient mothers..." (The same, 10)

Harati presents an elegant painting of his homeland that boasts its beauty in the range of mountains and the North Sea. He composes so:

"Our geography/ between tree and sea/ welcomes red events/ between tree and sea/ birds traffic is spectacular" (Harati, 2001, 237)

In some of Harati nostalgic poems regarding homeland, we witness that sometimes delicate and surrealistic spaces created by the poet are broken by a slogan and the poem is entered into another space and all the beauties are converted into the pain:

"My homeland is the sea/ for a while I have talked with the soil/ the pain of this moment breaks me" (Harati, 2005, 129)

c. Nostalgia of the lost human values

From one perspective, nostalgia may be regarded as one of the new era thoughts resulted by boredom of the intellectuals from the modern world and regret for the lost values and traditions. "Being modern is finding ourselves in an environment that promises power, pleasure, growth, and transformation of ourselves and the world, and simultaneously it devastates all we have and all we are... It throws modernity into permanent collapse and modernization, fight and contradiction, ambiguity and nostalgia. Modernity is a part of a world in which as Marquez has said everything smokes into the air (Kalinikus, 2003, 60).

Hence, the new era and its different circumstances may disturb the discipline of some transcendental values in the society. The reflection of this matter in literature is that the contemporary scholar writes about the lost values by depicting new conditions.

Nizar Qabbani regrets for the values lost in the political and social space. He is sad about losing high values including honesty, chivalry, and happiness of people, and composes about the sorrow of living in a society which has lost all the human and ethical values governing in the past:

"Neither our war is war, nor our peace is peace./ all that is happening in our lives/ is just a film./ our marriages are pointless/ and our loves/ like pointlessness of love in the end of movies." (Al-Khayer, 2006, 67)

The poet believes that life in the previous eras has been based on the ethical and human principles. Yet now humanity, tenderness and love have left it and society has brought about a machine life for our children:

"We united before the era of monotheism/ and they integrate Damascus with Sham/ they take our love and youthful enthusiasm/ they taught us not to love and we feared/ that if we love we will change into stone/ so we refrained from any love/ and we did not love" (the same, 105).

In the poems composed about his dissatisfaction with what has happened to the culture, ethics and emotions in the Arab world, he blames the Arabs for depending upon the futile past and neglecting ethics and wisdom:

"Beware of listening a word of/ the Arabs sermons/ as they are nothing but grammar and poetry/ in the dictionaries of clans there is no nation named Arab." (Qabbani, 1998, volume 6, 75)

Salman Harati talks about the death of values. In the beginning he composes nostalgic poems with a mythical approach and depicts death from Adam time:

"The desire to be immortal/ made Adam to walk up the stairs of sin/ and stop in the downhill of apprehension/ after Adam, humans/ ran looking for the water of life/ all over the earth." (Harati, 2009, 57)

The matter that makes the poet sad is losing human values without which life is nothing but fatigue and exhaustion, and identity becomes a great puzzle in such a society. The poet depicts a space in which people have left aside their assets and have tried to buy a futile identity:

"An odorous toad/ sticking on the stones/ on the sidelines of the lagoon/ where its twin frogs/ get managers in the factories of the third world." (The same, 227)

In this lifeless space, the delicate spirit of the poet lost its tolerance. The era of iron, smoke and machine has descended him in a wilderness of failures:

"My heart has remained under a veil/ under a curtain made of iron/ I wish I could rip these curtains/ then/ I could fly far away from the curtain gap." (Harati, 2009, 95)

So the poet likes another environment, the Front that in his poems is the symbol of self-sacrifice and simplicity. The poet composes about the death of last days, death of honesty, and death of corses with a nostalgic approach as following:

"I have missed the Front/ how I have missed honesty!/ how we ignore corses!/ I feel/ my head is heavy/ ...today again they have brought a body/ that did not have a head." (Harati, 2001a, 84)

The normal life in which there is no hope for a sun, and the blessing that God has bestowed on the martyrs last day, are today the mere dreams and this annoys the poet more than ever:

"I am sad about these days,
There is a thousand miles to achievement
For me, opening several gates is not sufficient
A thousand arenas are tight for me to jump..." (Harati, 2001b, 305)

Harati regards returning to spirituality as the mere path to calmness and confidence of the heart. He illustrates prayer carpet that is the symbol of purity and spirituality as a sacred territory only by which one can be released from his constant anxieties:

"Where is my prayer carpet/ I want to be released from this usual anxiety/ maybe this continuous nostalgia/ is the effect of my shadow/ that so rude and stone like/ has stood between God and my heart/ where is my prayer carpet?" (Harati, 2009, 84)

d. Nostalgia of Utopia

The thought of Utopia is a defensive thought against hardships and nostalgia. The existence of Utopia has a history as old as human civilization.

Utopia literature is a type of literature which designs an ideal society. The word '*utopia*' has been derived from the Greek *ou-topos* meaning 'no place' or 'nowhere' (Shahidzadeh, 1981, 4).

Presenting a nostalgic image of utopia is considered as among the salient features of Nizar Qabbani poems. He depicts a society that is full of elegance, kindness, and love. In fact his utopia is the lost heaven:

"O' my lady!/ I wished I had fallen in love with you in another era/ an era that was more poetic and kinder/ where there was more scent of book, jasmine and freedom." (Asvar, 2003, 384)

Even his nostalgic and romantic poems are full of concepts that create a new design of his ideal society. To depict this modernistic enthusiasm, he builds his utopia not on the earth rather on the moon that is the symbol of innocence and virginity from his point of view:

"I have reserved a room for two persons in the house of moon/ to spend the weekends, but O' lady!/ I don't like this world inns/ the inn in which I like to stay is moon." (Qabbani, 1970, 18)

Salman Harati is a quite perfectionist poet. He does not just wish, rather he shows the way of reaching to this utopia. He regards returning to the domestic culture and religious assets as a path to escape from consumerism. By selecting soft words with mystical aspects including "sip", "Salavat", and "thirst", and using immediately the words that have a sharp scent of cultural and economic colonization (Coca and Pepsi), he provides the opportunity of comparison for the readers:

"When a sip of votive water/ removes the thirst/ it is none of my business that whether Coca is more delicious than Pepsi" (Harati, 2004, 85).

The utopia that Salman Harati illustrates is so simple and innocent that the poet uses children painting book to explain it:

"Good for the martyrs/ that the earth is their painting book/ they can draw thousands of seas in their books." (Harati, 2008, 8-9)

In spite of the social and ethical problems governing the society, he is still hopeful and waiting for a brilliant future. He believes that these problems will be eliminated one day through sunshine that is symbol of revolution and guidance in his poems, and humans will achieve the utopia in the light of this guidance light:

"In the hands of brunette and petal
We are the green buds of the hope
We are bright and pure like tomorrow
We are the sons of the city of sun" (the same, 49)

The poet that sees his utopia in the light of spirituality and guidance of the sun expects his compatriots to release their hearts from sin and filth, and to be the reflection of the sunshine like a smooth mirror and to gift its light to the whole world:

"Let us to be bright and without rancor
Let us to be a silent oh in the heart
To reflect the sun towards us
Let us to be a mirror like the heart" (Harati, 2009, 143)

5. Conclusions

Studying poems of Nizar Qabbani in terms of nostalgia, we found out that there are four major axes in the nostalgic poems of Qabbani and Harati namely remembrance of childhood and adolescence, nostalgia of the homeland, nostalgia of the lost values, and nostalgia of the utopia.

As regards remembrance of childhood and adolescence, Nizar uses a simple and unaffected language and we can rarely interpret multi dimensional images from those poems. Yet in most of Harati poems, there is no boundary between the poet childhood and today status.

Even when Harati applies human characters in his poems, their presence in the nostalgic space of the poem is so that it is generalizable to any other reader, and this extensive circle of association increases the animism of the characters, events and memories.

In the nostalgia pertaining to the homeland in Nizar Qabbani poems, he has mostly a nationalistic approach and praises the homeland as it is the birthplace of the poet. Yet sometimes he is sad about what has happened for his homeland and thinks about somewhere beyond the homeland; a free land like the moon in which he can live as he wishes. However, Harati nostalgic approach towards homeland is different. He loves his homeland as it is an oppressed yet resistant land, and its resistance makes the poet to compose poems for it which is the land of sun from the poet point of view.

In nostalgia of the lost values, both poets have an identical approach. They regret and complain about the lost ethics and innocence. This kind of nostalgia in the poems of Nizar Qabbani is mainly embedded in his dissatisfaction with the current circumstances and seeking refuge in the golden past and/ or utopia that the poet visualizes for the humans in the future. Yet in the poems of Salman Harati, this sorrow and dissatisfaction is accompanied by the invitation to endeavor and fight. Nizar Qabbani complains frequently about the death of ethics and love, while Harati objects to the death of spirituality. Although the boundaries of ethics and spirituality are closing together in the end, Nizar Qabbani believes that human obtains the ultimate perfection through love while Salman Harati thinks that human is guided towards perfection in the light of spirituality.

The utopias depicted by these two poets are different to some extent. In Nizar Qabbani poems, the path to the utopia is frequently passed without leader, whereas the utopia wished by Harati is not achievable without the presence of the sun of guidance and it will not be realized unless all people make attempt to build this utopia by an accurate appreciation of spirituality and thralldom. In the other words, the utopia illustrated by Nizar Qabbani is a personal utopia, while the utopia created by Harati is a collective town with a capacity for all the humans.

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