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Voice of Homesickness in Selected Poems of Nali and Robert Browning (A Comparative Study)

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Abstract

Comparative Literature perceives literary texts as both being the product of a specific language and culture and as a universal phenomenon surpassing national and cultural boundaries and timeframes. Nineteenth century witnessed a glorification of poetry in both British and Kurdish literatures; as a result, vital names become prominent. Robert Browning (1812-1889) and Nali (1801- 1855) who, in their poetry, framed miscellaneous images, reflected the era and with its accompanied circumstances.

And since literature is an addition to physical existence, not a mere description of it, so the article attempts to explore the voice of homesickness in both poet's verses due to the same nostalgic conditions that each one of them separately had when they stayed far from their own countries in spite of their non-knowing of each other and their entire dissimilar circumstances. The article, further, follows the American school of comparative literature to elucidate the various elements implemented by both poets to embody their enthusiastic eagerness for their birth lands with displaying the tools of nature that have been utilized to draw their inner tendency.

I. Introduction

Lyric poetry, including poems from expatriated view, was a dominant genre of poetry emerging during the nineteenth century, deriving from the Victorian

conventions of narrative and dramatic poetry. One of the vital features of Victorian English poetry is its being more realistic and less idealized of nature which accompanied by a change of emphasis on what types of

common people and common language would be prioritized. Poets, like Robert Browning (1812-1889), in this era, tended to employ detailed imageries for conveying thoughts and emotions (Richards 7).

Kurdish Poetry, in the same century, reached the peak of its classical traditions and norms. Nali (Mala Khider Shaways Mikaily) (1801- 1855) was the most famous one; he depicted his poetic concepts in a very unique style manipulating the elements of language mingled with literary thematic scenes that illustrated both the poet's inner emotions and the entire atmospheres of Kurdish nation during the Ottoman Empire's reign, and the local uprisings (Hadad 34).

As far as the article is concerned with comparative study in literature, Henry Remark (1916-2009), regards the American school of Comparative Method as a Parallelism theory in fields of human expressions like history, arts, and philosophy besides literature (31). Further, Ihab Hassan (1925-2015), a critic, claims that there are close relationships between literatures of different people of similar stage of development even without having any mutual influence. The method does not rely on the principle of 'influence' and 'being influenced' as it is there in French school of comparison, but prefers 'Parallel Theory of Comparison' which claims that there are close relationships between literatures of different people of similar stage of development without paying attention to any mutual influence or direct relation between them, and this due to the fact that human mind has common ways of responding to experience (42).

It's noteworthy to mention that the two poets never met and they were unknown for each other, and it's the circumstances and a kind of mental thought transference or parapsychological precognition of human minds that they are all exposed to approximate situations and causing the same

reactions and feelings. Both of them stayed far away from their countries of different reasons but they expressed the same eagerness and nostalgic emotions for their homelands.

II. Significant Settings

Browning spent a good deal of time in Italy, and this created nostalgic feeling to his homeland "England". He threw himself in the role of the homesick wanderer, thirsty for every detail of his beloved home. All these resulted in writing a poem named "Home-Thoughts, From Abroad" in 1845 which describes a typical springtime scene in the English countryside, and the poem's message elaborates on that he misses home and shows the melancholy as he imagines the beauty that is overtaking his native country when spring approaches with birds singing and flowers shining (Trivedi 487).

Nali spent most of his lifetime abroad far from his native land (Sharazur, Sulaimaniah, North of Iraq). He was a frequent pilgrim to Mecca and remained for longer period there, and he stayed in Sham for several years and visited Istanbul. He never got married but had love affairs with women named Mastura, and Habiba whom might be seen plainly in his lyric poems (Muhammaed 32-46). He showed some circumstances of his homeland during the conflicts happened among rulers of Baban Emirate in his poetical frames, and as a result, he left his home place and started being abroad in Mecca (Saudi Arabia), Sham (Syria), Turkey, and for a short period in (Sannandaj) Iran (Muadarres 184).

Nali expressed his nostalgic feeling and homesickness toward his birthplace (Kurdistan) when he was in Sham, so he wrote a very prolific and the most well-known piece of poem that he ever had which was addressed to his contemporary poet Salim (1805-1866) who is another significant classical Kurdish poet. In that

poem entitled "The Two Letters of Nali and Salim" (c.1854), Nali asks his fellow to inform him about the conditions of life there in their birthplace and concerning the recent changes had happened to all aspects, and Salim replied. So, the two letters are reciprocal and both of them were written in a very highly classical and poetic style in Kurdish literature (Sajadi 33).

III. Concerning the Selected Poems

It's significant to realize the vital factors behind writing the two poems, and how the feeling of nostalgic had been formed. Nostalgia or homesickness is a psychological recollection and a longing for good old days and a comparison between past and present. It's happened during a separation from one's own ideal place, his/her social, political and cultural situation and in general their undesirable current conditions in life, therefore, this unconscious behavior is a common feeling among the human beings (Eagleton 57). Nali's home-sickness is caused due to political problems and he wonders if he is able to come back but his friend Salim (the addressee) advises him not to come back as it is unsafe for him, so it's a kind of patriotic feeling originated as a result of compulsory factors. Browning's poem is romantic and a thorough nostalgic due to non-obligatory conditions.

Nali's poem is constructed in the form of rhyming coupled, whereas Browning's poem is unrhymed and simple, and he utilizes much uncomplicated items and words to survey his passion with less figurative language. Nali, from other side, is considered the pioneer in writing poetry in the dialect of (southern Kurmanji) in Kurdish language, and draws his poem through a rich and figurative language with non-simple syntactic forms; he shows the picture of his country through metaphorical

scenes and creates miscellaneous themes of similes, and personifications.

IV. Voice of Homesickness

In "Home-Thoughts, From Abroad", Robert Browning's continuous use of describing nature uncovers its impact and reflection found in the speaker's tone; he remembers every detail of spring season in England. He describes his home country in April, and also when May follows during the spring, that's why he dreams of the change from April to May that will take place in England while he is away.

It is obvious that the coming of spring has brought these feelings of longing for his home country as he once states " You can take the poet out of England, but you can't take England out of the poet" (qtd in Bristow 63-64). The speaker is also very emotional in his opening of the poem, using the word "oh" to reflect his deep wish and yearning to be home:

Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware

(1-4)

Nali, like Browning, employs spring season to state his inner nostalgic feeling, he sketches images from his native land's scenes to ooze his homesickness (Siweyli 70). In lines 35-36, and 47-48, he considers all other seasons as spring in his country due to its being heavenly irresistible and he shows the ever green grass surveyed by the young fawns, and mild animals, also he regards its dust as breeze and its steam as incense smell. All these resemblances display the poet's intensity of homesickness which made him produce the following lines:

Şamî Hemû Nehar u Fusûlî Hemû Behar
Tozî Hemû Ebîr Buxarî Hemû Bixûr

Seyrêkî Xoş Le Çîmanî Naw Xaneqa Bide
Aye Rebî'î Ahûde ya Çayirî Sitûr

Its eves seem all a day,
its seasons all as spring
Dust like breeze, and steams as incense
Could you discern Xanaqa's croft?
Is it still grassy and verdant for young deer?

(35-36, 47-48)

For Browning, it's a reflection of Romantic poetry to unfold a connection of love for nature, he describes the "elm-tree bole" and its mini leaves since he illustrates his reminiscence to form nostalgic articulation. He realizes that when at home, the most common things like the sprouting of leaves, becomes unnoticed (Rajimwale 337). But when far away and home is just in one's thoughts, even the tiniest things are augmented. He then goes on to delineate the "blossomed pear- tree in the hedge" and the way it "leans to the field and scatters on the clover" for showing more beauty of his birth land so that others might realize his state of being homesick:

That the lowest boughs and the brushwood
sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the
hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover

(5-6, 11-12)

Nostalgia is an absorbing phenomenon and it can be positive and permeated with a rosy glow of familiarity and belongingness (Remark 39). It is plainly noticed that aromatic birch trees, pomegranate trees, and fragrance of blossoms are also significant elements of nature manipulated by Nali to enunciate his homesickness and recall his past experiences, and to demonstrate feelings of fondness and his eagerness of

relatedness for his birthplace as he states in the poem:

Emca Meweste Ta Degeyye Eyînî Serçinar
Awêke Pîr Le Naru Çinaru Gulû Çinar
Xakî Mîzacî Enberu Darî Rewacî Ud
Berdî Xeracî Gewher Çubarî Eynî Nûr

Go on strolling till you get Sarchnar
fountain

There, spring water with pomegranate,
birch, and blossoms

Its soil mingled with bouquet,
and birches are like aromatic

(19-20, 33-34)

Browning draws on an interrogative and wondering tone to depict his homesickness as the poem is told through dramatic monologue. The use of the word "Hark" at the beginning of the line 10 portrays the speaker's intentions to say next is very important and he calls attention to himself by asking his readers to listen rapturously to him (Richards 89). He continues to elucidate the songbird, revealing his wonderment with this little bird (thrush) whether it can sing each song twice over or not like before!

Hark! Where my blossomed pear-tree in the
hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops - at the bent spray's
edge -

That's the wise thrush; he sings each song
twice over,

(10-14)

Nali, like Browning, sketches out some of his nostalgic emotions through frames of Interrogation and wonderment. He asks the addressee (Salim) to walk around for inspecting all what he is requested for, and Nali expresses his wonder whether the rivers, houses, and bridges are still secure or not. He also wonders if he could return

home very soon or he has to be patient and wait longer!

Seyrê Bike Le Berdu Le Darî Mehellekan
Dewrê Bide Be Pirsîşu Teftîşu Xiwaru Jûr
Aya Meqamî Rûxsete Lem Beyne Bêmewe
Ya Meslehet Tewequfe Ta yewmî Nefxî Sur

Look around all houses and town's buildings
turn it up for south, north, east, and west
Is it the proper time to get home back
Or I have to wait till the doomsday

(41-42, 83-84)

Differently, the two poets attempt to shape their nostalgic tendencies through dissimilar elements. Browning, first, limns the thrush bird as a flashback that imaginably fetches him back home, and mentions chaffinch which is the second recurrent breeding bird in Europe. He, later on, moves to the fields as they are covered with dew in the morning but as the noon sun comes up, the dew fades and the grayish white color of the field changes to an exuberant green (Albert 395). It's also noted that the rhyme scheme of the poem is irregular. There are two stanzas, different in length, the first one with 8 lines and the second with 12 lines. It's worthy to say that Browning addressed entire England without turning to cities and regions.

While the chaffinch sings on the orchard
bough In England - now!
And after April, when May follows,
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops - at the bent spray's
edge -
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song
twice over,
lest you should think he never could
recapture

(7-8, 12-13, 14-15)

Nali, unlike Browning, tries to frame his nostalgic passions in the form of synecdoche by taking his city (Sulaimaniah) instead of the whole country (Kurdistan) and inscribing various names of certain avenues and places such as Sarchnar, Bakrajo, Khak u khol, and Xanaqa, etc. He, further, explains his own physical condition in lines 79-80, when he articulates his feeble figure and skeleton due to his impatience to his birthplace. Additionally, Nali follows a regular rhyme scheme in the form of rhyming couplet through the entire poem.

Daxil Nabî Be Enberî Sarayî Xaku Xol
Heta Nekey Be Xakî Suleymanîya Ibûr
Zarim Weku Hîlalu Tehîfim Weku Xeyal
Aya Dekewume Zaru Be Dîlda Dekem Ibûr

Do not enter the desert of Khakukhol
If would not pass the land of Sulaimaniah
As weak as crescent moon, thin as images
Wondering am I remembered and elapsed by
hearts

(29-30, 79-80)

V. Conclusion

It's being concluded that parallel nostalgic reactions could be traced and reflected by both poets in spite of their being from separate cultures and traditions, and both of them use elements from the nature of their countries including spring season, trees, and verdant fields to state their homesickness. Also, they rely on styles of interrogating and wonderment to show their inner fondness and beauty of their birthplace for the reader as they both feel nostalgic.

In different tones, Browning mentions some birds such as thrush and chaffinch from his whole country (England) to sketch his nostalgic message while Nali goes deeper and refers to certain places from his city (Sulaimaniah) such as Sarchnar, Bakrajo to frame his keen to his birthplace.

Further, Nali's poem is highly arranged in the form of rhyming coupled, whereas Browning's poem is unrhymed, and this gave less flexibility to Nali to pick more elaborative lexemes to embody his inner nostalgic tendencies.

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