

A Study of Personification as a Literary Figure in Poems of Fereydoon Moshiri and Nizar Qabbani

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Abstract: Personification is one of the most beautiful figures of speech in poetry and it is via this power of imagination that the poet gives life and dynamicity to inanimate objects and by this mental and perceptual relationship with nature and surrounding world, he injects human spirit and characteristics to them and starts a dialogue with them and creates a new world. The authors of current article intend to assay the place of personification as a figure of speech in the poetries of two contemporary renowned poets from Iran and Syria, i.e. Fereydoon Moshiri and Nizar Qabbani, and compare their use of various types of personification from the perspective of metaphorical relation and non-relational metaphor and contents like human characteristics and states and personification, human body members and personification, addressing and abstract concepts, as well as animation of natural phenomena and objects in the poems of these two poets are comparatively assayed and analyzed. The results of our study show the existence of similarities in presentation of mental pictures and poetic syntheses and its notions in the poems of these two poets who have taken advantage of personification for expression of their own emotions and internal states. High frequency of the use of personification and avoidance of natural norms of speech are among the key features and novelty of the poetry of these two poets. **Keywords:** Fereydoon Moshiri, Nizar Qabbani, Personification, Natural Phenomena, Mental Notions.

Introduction

Poetry is a type of imaging by words and the poet's mind can understand the relationship with nature and abstract entities and present what he has found in his own soul along with the emotion that has paved the ground for the poetry to the audience; because no artist or poet can convey any idea or imagination to the readership without having the opportunity in advance to experience and feel it by himself; for poetry is the expression of one's inside and whatever that influence the soul does also affect the poetry. "Poetry is the product of a mental state for man in a natural environment; this is to say that a state of mind is created in the poet due to which he establishes a special mental relationship with humans and this relationship in turn is a spiritual relationship in which the objects lose their absolutely physical and material state and in fact they borrow part of the feelings and thought of the poet" (Barahani, 1965: 1).

Contemporary modern poets have sought to create new mental images and ideas by means of words and phrases denoting a special theme or idea. Contemporary Arab poets, i.e. the young generation that includes such figures as Badr Shaker Al Sayyab, Adonis, Nizar Qabbani etc., have emerged in the same conditions as compared to Iranian modern poets. This generation of poets is no longer the silent and imitating generation, rather it is a generation that is exposed to the direct breezes of world poetry and thought and seeks to harmonize itself with all measures of the western literature world" (Sheikh Rezaei, Farhadi, 2016: 72).

It is comparative literature that "provides the ground for the native literature to leave the corner of seclusion and become part of the world literary heritage through being exposed to the global ideas" (Ghanimi Hilal, 1994: 40). Fereydoon Moshiri and Nizar Qabbani who are both distinguished contemporary Iranian and Arab poets of love songs who besides describing their love for the beloved "provide a new image of their mental world in search of justice, freedom, and respect of man" (Dehghanian, Malahi, 2013: 92).

In this world everything is in continuous motion and the inanimate is animated and speaks; the sense of a proximity of the poet "to external and internal worlds allows him to take advantage of the perfect form of image, i.e. metaphor, which is both succinct and blurring, in order to give life to whatever from sensible affairs to spiritual notions he likes and present in a tangible and sensory form" (Dawarpanah, 2007: 314-315).

Background

Earlier in *Figures of Speech in Persian Poetry* (2015) Professor Mohammad Reza Shafei Kadkani has devoted part of his book to the issue of personification and also Professor Mir Jalal Al Din Kazazi in his work *Aesthetics of Persian Language* (1989) has provided some discussions in this regard and other authors have also discussed this issue to some extent. There is also a study entitled *Personification from the Point of View of Linguistics* (1999) by Mohammad Hossein Yamin as well as some other independent studies as regards the personification as a figure of speech in the poems of poets which are shortly introduced: *Personification in the Poetry of Parwin Etesami* (Ahmad Ghanipur, 2011), *Personification in the Poems of Shafei Kadkani* (Farvardin Purmaman, 2010), *Analytic Study of Personification in the Poems of Qeysar Aminpur* (Ali Mohammadi, Jamileh Zarei, 2009), *Personification in the Poetry of Salman Savuji* (Amir Hossein Hemati, 2004), *Personification of Abstract Concepts in the Odes of Shams* (Amir Dawarpanah, 2007), *Overhang and Personification in the Poetry of Hafez* (Mohammad Ali Asiabadi, 2006).

However, no independent comparative study has been conducted of two Iranian and Arab poets in view of the application of personification. Then this study seeks to analyze and assay the place of this figure of speech in the poems of Fereydoon Moshiri and Nizar Qabbani.

Fereydoon Moshiri and Nizar Qabbani and Their Poetical Styles: A Snapshot

"Fereydoon Moshiri is one of the modern Iranian poets and is a key figure in history of the contemporary Persian poetry and literature and he is undoubtedly one of the great men who cannot be repeated in any form. He was born on 1926 September 22 in Tehran (Einudulah Neighborhood) (Ahmadi Zamani, 2011: 31); "Moshiri finished his first and second grades in primary school at Tehran and then he moved to Mashhad due to his father's work mission and after several years he returned to Tehran" (ibid).

The poems of Fereydoon Moshiri lie somewhere between the traditional poetry and Nima's modern poetry; he has three semi-traditional books, but later the number of the semi-traditional poems become lesser and lesser and instead the number of the free verses grows. The leitmotif of Fereydoon Moshiri's poetry is love, passion and humanism (Dehqanian, Malahi, 2013: 91). Love and humanity are the building blocks of the emotional system of Moshiri's poetry. This romantic and emotional perspective of man and social events associated with a simple, but at the same time, readable and rhythmic language distinguish his poetic style from the style of other contemporary poets like Nima, Sepehri and Naderpur (ibid: 92).

"He is one of the pioneering poets of contemporary Iran. Some of his poems like "Alley" are so popular that many readers know him as the poet of the poem of "Alley" (Ahmadi, Zamani, 2011: 32). After writing 12 collections of poems Moshiri passed away on 2000 October 24.

Nizar Qabbani is a contemporary Arab poet who has written poems that have revolutionized the traditional poetic style of his own time. Since the publication of his first book *Qalat Li Al Samra*, which was different from the stereotypical traditions of the society of his time, his poems triggered numerous disputes in Arab societies and were studied and discussed by modernists, students and those people who sought to free themselves from the

heavy bondages of the society (Dehqanian, Malahi, 2013: 92). "He was born on 1923 March 21 in an ordinary family in Damascus. His father had a bakery and was a revolutionary. Nizar served for many years in political and diplomatic missions and he was always outside Syria and for this reason he could fluently speak several languages (Sheikh Rezaei, Farhadi, 2016: 75). He died on 1998 April 30 when he was 50; Nizar has fifty poetic and prose works. "His romantic poems more than anything else reflect the poet's imprudent and audacious language in application of new themes, similes, metaphors and sensory and living pictures" (Dehqanian, Malahi, 2013: 920); "Nizar has chosen one of the most delicate poetic languages which stands in the border between the wild language of modern poetry and static and stereotypical language of old poetry and he uses this language for description of his own feelings and romantic passions of women (Shafei Kadkani, 2008: 115).

Definition of Personification and Its Applications

Personification is the act of decoration of inanimate elements and mental entities by anthropomorphic and animistic states, actions and behaviors. "Issue of personification has been discussed and studied in the western works of criticism of poetry and rhetoric in independent chapters but in our works there is no sign of it, and we do not have even a clear title for it. Tashkhis is the term that has been coined by the contemporary Arab critics in their works for referring to personification" (Shafei Kadkani, 1996: 150); however, this issue has been discussed in the Persian Rhetoric under the title of metaphor. "European critics define it as giving human features to something inhuman or giving human characteristics and particularly human feelings to abstract entities, general terms, nonhuman themes or other living creatures" (ibid: 150-151). One can say that personification establishes relationship between two phenomena and depicts them in a way that can be fathomed by human senses". "Anthropomorphism or personification has been described as one of the types of metaphor. What is offered as the definition of the allusive metaphor includes anthropomorphism too; thus, anthropomorphism or personification as metaphor is equivalent to allusive metaphor, because, although in the works of the Old Iranian rhetoricians it has not been directly discussed, it has the features of allusive metaphor. This type of metaphor appears in the poems of the Persian poets from almost fourth century" (Dad, 2006: 2). It reaches its climax in the poems of Bidel Dehlavi.

"The foundation of anthropomorphism and animism in allusive metaphor dates to the ancient cultures and mythological beliefs. Anthropomorphism has been always one of the most fundamental ideological foundations in the mythological worldview and culture. In the magical world of myths, like the wonderful world of beliefs, everything is dynamic and moving" (Kazazi, 1989: 127); the issue of personification has been also noticed by Aristotle and "in his rhetoric he has referred to it as "to set things before the eyes" and some of the old translators of Aristotle's rhetoric have called it one of the figures of speech and "Nasb Al Ein" and the term vividness which is in the sense of giving life to the objects is more appropriate for what we refer to as personification" (Shafei Kadkani, 1996: 151). Shofi Zeyf has described it as follows: "this type of pictures is mostly based on creation, visualization and transmission of the natural elements to a world which has motion and life and it is different from the metaphor whose basis is simile" (ibid: 154). Moreover, he has separated these pictures a la westerners from the metaphor and imagery.

Personification of Natural Scenes

"Nature is always among the primary elements of poetry in every time and place and we never can separate poetry from nature in the extensive sense" (Shafei Kadkani, 1996: 317). These beautiful natural landscapes have been always the symbol of life and joy for poets and artists since time immemorial and have stirred the power of imagination and poetic

taste in the poets. There are many poets who describe the nature but few of them can make their description associated with motion and life and according to Croce, nature is weak-minded as compared to art and if man does not make it speak it remains mute" (Shafei Kadkani, 1996: 150). The following verses by Moshiri picture with all beauties the whole dynamicity, joy and life in the tree's flowers and grain fields:

"I hear and see the supplications of trees in the morning/ the dance of odor of frost flower by wind/ pure breath of the peony in the blossom of mountain/ the words of swallows with morning/ everlasting pulse of being in the grain field/ circulation of the color and scent on the cheeks of flower" (Moshiri, 1999, vol. 1: 494-495).

Or he speaks of a spirit in the water, soil and wind that gives life to the nature:

"Cloud comes full of sacrifice and compassion/ she gives her necklace to the paddy field/ river cries so that the green grass to joyfully smile/ water wants to make rose scent out of the timber/ soil struggles to make the see fly/ wind dances so that blossom may sing!" (ibid: 839).

He also speaks of the sight and hearing capability of flowers and plants as well as human emotions:

"Light of the dew is on/ voice of the flower is transparent/ the eyes of the grass are bright/ the heart of the green lawn is romantic" (ibid, vol. 2: 1485).

Here we provide examples of the poems of Qabbani in which he personifies some natural phenomena like snow, violet, spring and flower:

"When I touch the snow, it is dry like the soil?!/ and the passageway of violet in our garden is like the wilderness/ and no one pays any attention to it/ spring passes through our windows" (Qabbani: 408).

I don't believe that the flower needs to make its lovely scent to reach the people (ibid: 74).

Qabbani like Moshiri personifies the nature and trees with human emotions and sees the orange tree like a man who embraces him:

"I always know him, and he knows me too/ my own houses, my father's house and even our harvest field/ and the orange shrub embraces me!" (ibid: 388).

Personification of Objects

The tools and objects in our surrounding world are personified in the world of poets and with poetic intelligence and creativity emerge with human features and move. "The poet has a factory in his mind where he gives human form to the objects insofar as they would have both their own objective state and mental state of human imaginary perception; they are themselves and at the same time have human characteristics" (Barahani, 1965: 7). In the following verses, Moshiri attributes human actions and features like "winking" and "calling" to the pitcher and describes the candle with human states and actions like "smiling" and "sitting" and by anthropomorphism:

"Pitcher in the corner of the room is winking/ and calling me to stand up" (Moshiri, 2008, vol. 1: 432).

"Wind started to blow shouting loud/ candle sat with a smile on its lips!/ thunder was lost in our laugh" (ibid: 345).

Or he speaks with the pen and identifies himself with and shares his destiny with it and he speaks his own pains to it:

I address the pen/ O' My doppelganger my friend/ you are part of my destiny/ we are both surprised by the games of the time (ibid, vol. 2: 1438).

In some examples of the poems of Qabbani, human states have been attributed to the objects and in them such objects as minaret, stone dome and cloak:

When the ceremony of light and sound begins in your eyes/ and the minarets start to move out of happiness ... (Qabbani: 79).

And the marble dome laughed in my chest/ and the fountains and sun and pine (ibid: 24).

His cloak crawled back to its knees/ and I enjoyed water and shadow (ibid: 442).

Personification as a figure of speech can be divided into two groups of form and content and their subcategories can be independently studied.

Personification in view of Form

Non-relational Metaphor

Poets and literary thinkers make use of metaphor as a tangible and sensory picture of abstract entities in order to convey complicated linguistic concepts in the world and creation of new themes and beautification of the words and stirring the sense of thinking and imagination in mankind. Animation of these intelligible objects and inanimate elements of nature are among the factors that have given rise to the metaphor art which is used in the literary, daily and philosophical languages for assisting the audience to understand the intention via mental pictures. For animation of inanimate phenomena in the universe we can make use of this art. Moshiri and Qabbani have made use of personification as a type of allusive metaphor in their poems. In this type of metaphor the actions that are used indeed for humans and living beings are applied for the inanimate elements and notions, e.g. in the following verses Moshiri attributes the verb "hitting the head against the wall" to the heart and "punching the door" to the death:

My heart is hitting its head against the wall and say/ it is the death that is punching the door (Moshiri, 1999, vol. 1: 24).

This is also the case with the attribution of the verb "answering" to the mountain, which does not have intelligence and the act of waking up to the tulip and kissing to the morning:

The mountain answers whatever you ask/ this is the witness of my moaning at night (ibid: 75).

From the sound of the wings of the morning birds/ the tulip woke up of the heavy sleep/ first radiation of the morning/ had kissed the sky (ibid: 30).

In the poems of Nizar Qabbani, personification has been used in the form of non-relational metaphor or anthropomorphism via attribution of the special actions of the living

beings to the inanimate objects. Among their most beautiful examples one can refer to the following verses in which the verbs have been attributed to the inanimate objects:

My beloved!// In my notebook thousands of words are dancing! One in yellow shirt while the other in the red shirt.

Imagination is thirsty for her elegance/ and it is drowned in her golden bracelet/ sun is sleeping on my shoulders (ibid: 28).

The groves across the land are calling me/ and also the gardens that exist along with each other (ibid: 78).

Metaphorical Relation

Metaphorical relation is a kind of allusive metaphor in which the proper term is used as part of the phrase while the metaphorical term is not mentioned as such rather a feature or attribute of it is noted. "Allusive metaphor is used sometimes in the structure of relation. This type of allusive metaphor is what is known in grammar as metaphorical relation" (Kazazi, 1989: 133). In most cases it is associated with personification and the metaphorical term which is eliminated is always man. "This can be called anthropomorphism. Moreover, in the second type of metaphor sometimes the eliminated metaphorical term is an animal, and, in this case, it is called animation" (Shamisa, 1991: 159). In this type of personification, the inanimate objects are the noun in the personification while the requirements and attributes of the person are the adjective:

Soft and fast the spirit of water/ is flying with the breeze (Moshiri, 1999, vol. 1: 752).

"Water" is the personified term and the "spirit" is the personifying term.

A colorful violet/ had grown in the blossom of mountain out of the heart of stone (ibid: 877).

"Mountain" is the personified term while "embrace" is the personifying term:

Even now the eye of my heart/ is looking at everything from the aperture of hope (ibid: 59).

"Heart" is the personified term while "eye" is the personifying term; And in the poems of Qabbani the personification has been used in relational and metaphorical form as follows:

Let me overcome you/ even if just for once/ in the war of words (Qabbani: 341).

The phrase "words" is the personified term while "war" is the personifying term:

The dew which is on our fingers/ comes from the whining of wind ... or from us (ibid: 408).

Wind is the personified term while "whining" is the personifying term:

It is frolicking ... in the mourning of our love? It is happy ... While the corps of the love has not returned yet? It is monitoring e like the heavenly doom (ibid: 110).

Love which is one of the abstract and mental concepts has been personified and is used in a human context and corps is one of the features of human person.

Personification from the Point of View of Content

Abstract Concepts and Personification

Abstraction, lexically speaking, refers to the act of purifying and as a philosophical and psychological term it is an universal mental concept which has no extension in the outside world and is not tangible in the external world. Personification or anthropomorphism was first restricted more to the sensible world and the environment graspable by the five senses and its examples are simple and few. However, following the gradual evolution of poetry and poetic thoughts, the poets required to use complicated and mythological pictures, and the use of personification and allusive metaphor was extended into the inside world and invisible elements from the nature and the dialogue of the flower and nightingale (Dawarpanah, 2007: 314-315). Accordingly, personification of abstract concepts and innermost states and spiritual and emotional affairs like death, love, grief, hope, loneliness, sorrow and enthusiasm was widely used. Some examples of this kind of personification have been reflected in the verses of Moshiri:

For example, here death as a mental notion has been described as a wild animal which has claws and the hope is described as having collars:

The claw of death has grabbed the collar of hope/ the candle of my life has been burning the whole night on its side (Moshiri, 2008: 46).

Or in the following poems he imagines a blossom for "loneliness" and has described love and joy which are mental notions as a person who has a grave:

And at the middle of night under this purple sky/ me and the open arms of the loneliness ... (ibid: 266);

On the grave of love and joy/ are dropping the tears of grief from the eyes of moon (ibid: 82).

Personification of such words as "love", "enthusiasm" and "passion" in the poems of Qabbani is done more frequent than other abstract affairs and he has taken advantage of this type of mental notions for personification. Here the verb "suicide" which is an exclusively human action is used as regards the "passions":

He taught me how the heart dies and the passions make suicide (Qabbani, 46).

Likewise, he uses the verb "flying" as regards "love" and "enthusiasm":

Darling! I didn't know that love is flying like a pigeon (ibid: 54).

Exchange love with me ... under the thunder/ and under the song of the drains (ibid: 65).

Human Attributes and States and Personification

Sometimes the poet uses human attributes and features to describe natural phenomena and inanimate objects. In fact, "one of the poetic features of attribute is giving life to the inanimate things; the poet takes advantage of this type of attributes that belong to man and living beings personifies the cloud, wind, flower and etc." (Farshidvard, 1984: 855). Among the beautiful examples of animation and anthropomorphism by human and animal features and attributes one can refer to the following poems by Moshiri:

Red lash of thunder/ makes the depressed blood inside the heart of the cloud/ to boil/ lovely rain/ cheerful scent of vivacity and compassion/ then/ sea of brightness in the blueness of sky (Moshiri, 2008, vol. 1: 672).

O' the hidden hand of life!/ with the first smile of tomorrow/ kindle the bloody sun!/ hang the sad moon (ibid: 444).

On these ruins in the arms of this depressed silence/ your memory is still the capital of my life (ibid: 64).

Qabbani has also made use of human attributes like miserly, suckling, compassionate in his poems for personification of the inanimate elements and mental notions; "vine" and "firewood" are nouns that have been personified by the human attributes:

And among those things that have been hidden by the suckling vine/ and in the love of moon in the middle of singing firewood (Qabbani: 107).

The poet has used human characters to describe "eye lash" and "life":

In the middle of the letters ... you are a kind eye lash ... and a mout that has been fed by the milk of flexibility and delicateness (ibid: 440).

I thank you for all the moments that your eyes have given me in the jealous life (ibid: 69).

Human Body Members and Their Actions and Personification

The poet takes advantage of his faculty of imagination and artistic phrases in order to provide a human and animal picture of the inanimate natural phenomena which enjoy the movement and actions and members of human body and creates them in a way that even the mind of the audience accepts that these inanimate notions and elements can have human emotions and feelings. "Then by taking advantage of imagination he creates a new world and this creation helps the reality to be depicted from an artistic point of view. Art has been always associated with a type of change in sensory perceptions and realities (Shabanian, 2015: 69). One of the most sensible and tangible and at the same time exaggerating type of personification and animation of the abstract notions and the nature is handled via human body members. Here Moshiri has imagined eye for the door and wall, tongue for the wind, eye for the river and lips for the flower:

Door and wall are watching me/ wind is taking to the jasmine/ river is crying and the flower is smiling (Moshiri, vol. 33, 2008: 1).

And with such an artistic and poetic taste imagines human body members for the hills, trees and flood:

The exposed arms of the neck are embracing the tempting breasts of the hills for pleasure (ibid: 502);

Agitated hairs of the old trees/ everywhere arms are stretched upward for praying/ flood is taking the sickle of adversity at hands/ uprooting everything (ibid: 79).

Qabbani is also thinking, seeing and expressing in an imaginary, pictorial and emotional way (Shamisa, 1991: 17); he personifies the inanimate nature by means of human characters and attributes heart, hand, arm, mouth, eye, life and spirit to it:

All flowers of love withered in the heart/ how can I read my poems for you? (Qabbani: 370).

The evening repentance is with me in the prayer, over the shoulders of the ascetic village (ibid: 109);

It is him who is crying inside my chest when the sky is crying (ibid: 68).

Addressing and Personification:

In this type of personification, the inanimate elements and natural phenomena are addressed like a human being who hears and answers. Moshiri speaks with the inanimate elements and nature and addresses the sky, wishes, memories and war and personifies them so that he expresses in this way what he has in his heart:

O' Sky! I swear to God that I can see the black mark on your forehead (Moshiri, 2008, vol. 1).

O' Dead wish! You do not answer me?! O' Asleep memories! You do not see me (ibid: 128).

O' the claw of grief nothing would come from you but whining/ do something to make the whining more than this (ibid: 242).

"Beginning of self-knowledge is one's dialogue with the objective world; a dialogue which is based on the feelings. When the man is encountered with the objective reality as the external motive a type of impression takes form that leads to sensation" (Shabani, 2015: 67). Nizar also addresses the inanimate objects in the world in a poetical way in order to reveal his own emotions:

O' seed of pomegranate! Go crazy and play around and whirl! (Qabbani: 434);

O' word of fire ... you are swimming like the scent in my pond/ O' silent word that has been written with light (ibid: 433).

They are calling the crescent; you crescent! O' the fountain from which diamond is gushing out as well as plant and sleep (ibid: 14).

Conclusion

Personification in the poems of Fereydoon Moshiri and Nizar Qabbani is not restricted to these methods and classifications as we just outlined, rather we can also study other aspects of it. However, what we have enumerated here are a part of the most important ones. Frequency and diversity of personification and animation in the poems of these two poets show the power of imagination and identification of them as well as their deep relationship with the natural phenomena and artistic imageries that the poems of these two modern poets have built to their great heights because imagination is the most striking and important feature of aesthetics in poetry. From our studies of the poems of Moshiri and Qabbani we can recognize the similarities in presentation of mental pictures as well as the beautiful use of personification and animation as regards the surrounding natural environment which have served the goals of the poets in expression of their intentions. It should be mentioned that these similarities are closely related with the poetic style of these two contemporary poets because both despite their modernist trends have sustained their own relationship with the traditional literature and both have taken advantage of the personification as a figure of speech as a vehicle for expression of their emotional experiences and states of mind. In both poets the domination of emotions has led to the emergence of the unreal poetic expression and this act of blurring and personification of unreal entities in poetry and avoidance of natural norms of the expression and its meanings by personification is among the key poetic features of both poets which has made their poems beautiful, valuable and fresh.

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