

## The Reflection of the Themes of Resistance in Abul-Qasim al-Shabbi's and Abul-Qasim Aref Qazvini's Poetry

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### Abstract

*Resistance literature is a type of literature whose aim is to verbalize the sufferings and tribulations of oppressed nations and incite them to rise up against their oppressors. Abul-Qasim al-Shabbi and Abul-Qasim Aref Qazvini are two contemporary resistance literature figures of Tunisia and Iran in whose socio-political poems the themes of resistance literature are clearly perceptible. For this reason, investigation into the political and social themes of the poetry of these two poets is of considerable importance. The present article attempts, in a descriptive-analytical way, to investigate the similar and different themes of resistance in these two poets' poetry.*

*Shabbi and Aref Qazvini are two of the outstanding poets of the twentieth century who, under the influence of the political and social atmosphere of their age and with the aim of promoting Islamic awakening and national resistance against colonizers and their domestic agents, have composed numerous poems through which they have managed to ingrain the sense of patriotism and a spirit of militancy in the people of their countries. In their poems, these two poets have handled such themes as patriotism, the praise of liberty, and anticolonialism in a more or less similar manner. Each of them, in his own way, has also treated other themes of resistance including calling people to unity and warning them against schism, the promise of victory, the reminiscence of the bygone glory of their countries, description and eulogy of martyrs, war against kings, war against hypocrisy and the hypocrites, and war against poverty and ignorance. In the present paper, these themes are explored and illustrated through the analysis of sample lines from the poetry of these two poets.*

**Keywords:** resistance literature; modern Persian poetry; modern Arabic poetry; Abul-Qasim Shabbi; Abul-Qasim Aref Qazvini.

## 1. Introduction

Literature has numerous functions. Many critics consider the creation of beauty and its communication to others as the central function of literature. In other words, they see the production of beauty and the endowment of readers with aesthetic pleasure as the *raison d'être* of literature. Some other critics believe that a poet, besides creating beauty and giving pleasure to his audience, should pursue the more exalted goal of edifying and enlightening his readers. Resistance literature is a subcategory of this latter type. A large number of Persian and Arab poets have devoted their talents to the production of this kind of literature. Abul-Qasim Shabbi and Abul-Qasim Aref Qazvini are two Tunisian and Iranian poets who dedicated themselves to the cause of resistance. Both of them lived in societies which were being devastated by the avarice of voracious colonizers and their domestic agents, and both of them, in their poems, tried to expose the sham of these enemies of their countries and incite their nations to awaken and rise up against them. Many similar and different themes related to the area of resistance have been detected in the poetry of these two poets. The present article, through the investigation of library sources and in a descriptive-analytical way, reviews some of these themes. In each case, representative lines from the poetry of these two poets are quoted in order to illustrate the discussion even more.

Many articles and other research works have already been written on Shabbi and Aref Qazvini in which their poetry has been analyzed from different points of view. In an article on Shabbi, Zarei Kefayat and Mohseninia have investigated formalism and defamiliarization in this Tunisian poet's works. In this article, they have listed "the existence of extra-regularity, attention to emblems and symbols, the use of discordant rhymes, attention to imagery and the creation of beautiful and novel pictures, attention to cohesion and coherence in poetry, the presentation of different types of tropes, and attempt at effecting organic unity in odes" (153) as the most important instances of defamiliarization in Shabbi's poetry. In another article, Alebooye Langroodi and Modaberi, after explicating the characteristics of Romanticism, have concluded that the poetry of the Persian poet, Nader Naderpur, and that of Al-Shabbi are instances of romantic poetry. Rostampur and Farhangnia, in their article, have introduced Shabbi as a resistance poet and investigated patriotism, anticolonialism, and the defense of the Arab nationality as some of the most important themes and topics related to the area of resistance in his poetry.

In their comparative study of Farokhi Yazdi's and Aref Qazvini's poetry, Bahmani Motlagh and Purtoreifi have compared and investigated some of the prominent social and political themes treated in the poetry of these two major Iranian poets of the Constitutional Era. In another comparative study, Saeed Hatami and Parvaneh Safaei Qahfarokh have discussed the role and place of women in the poetry of three Iranian poets, namely Abul-Qasim Lahuti, Iraj Mirza, and Aref Qazvini. In this article, the authors argue that "due to not having a deep understanding of the precepts of Islam" and "under the influence of the novel and unprecedented social and cultural developments of their time," these three poets have blamed Islam for its laws against women and raised such topics as "the rights and freedom of women," "the criticism of the Islamic dress code for women," and "opposition to the marriage of juvenile girls" (65).

The above are but a few of the innumerable scholarly works written on Shabbi and Aref Qazvini. Considering the important place these two poets occupy in the canon of literature of their countries, the thematic and topical similarity of their poems, and the absence of any research work hitherto done in a comparative manner on these two poets as resistance figures, the authors of the present study decided to start their work on this paper. It is hoped that the present research may shed some new light on this area of scholarship.

## **2. Resistance Literature: An Overview**

Basiri (26) defines resistance literature as “a type of ‘engaged’ literature brought forth by people and the intellectual forerunners of the society to stand against what threatens their material and spiritual life.” He adds that the purpose of this kind of literature is “to prevent the deviation of literature from its right course and help its proper development.” Dr. Ghali Shokri, one of the authorities on the issue, writes in this connection:

Resistance literature refers to a body of works which speak, in a literary language, about the repulsiveness of domestic tyranny and foreign invasion and the calamities caused by them in all of the political, cultural, economic, and social areas. Some of these works talk about the time before the occurrence of the calamity, some deal with the time of war, and others refer to the time after it. (10-11)

There are so many reasons for the formation and emergence of resistance literature. Some of the major causes of the development of resistance literature, as enumerated by Khidr (45), are as follows:

- 1) Domestic strangulation and despotism and the divestment of personal and social freedom.
- 2) Old and new colonialism and exploitation.
- 3) The usurpation of power, land, and natural resources and riches.
- 4) Trespassing on the precincts of personal, religious, social, historical, and national values.
- 5) Evasion and defiance of the law by the bases of power.

It should be mentioned that the role of poets in the direction of their societies and boosting of their morale for resistance is too conspicuous to be overlooked; after all, they are endowed with strong feelings and profound spiritual experiences which they employ in order to encourage people to save their countries and defend their national and religious values against the invaders and foreigners (Kiani and Mirghaderi 126-28).

## **3. Abul-Qasim al-Shabbi: A Glimpse at his Life and his Poetry**

Abul-Qasim al-Shabbi was born at the village of Al-Shabbiya in Tunisia in 1909 (Mo'avash 621). He did not go to school in his early years, but learned the basics of the Arabic language and reading and writing from his father (Mirzaei 171). In 1920, he went to the University of Zaytunah and learned the Quran and the Arabic language there. Later on, he went to the Tunisian School of Law and took a degree from that university in 1930 (Fakhoury 556). Nevertheless, he never worked as a lawyer; rather, he turned to poetry and literature. He devoted his talents to

composing poetry, writing articles, and delivering lectures on literature. Shabbi never learned a foreign language, nor did he ever travel abroad. Of course, he got acquainted with the literature of other languages through their Arabic translations. He read the works of western literature avidly and absorbed them thoroughly (Daif 143).

Shabbi was 15 years old when his poetic genius bloomed (Fakhoury 556). He was profoundly influenced by the Romantic and Symbolist movements (Mirzaei 171). The romanticism existing in his poetry is mostly a revolutionary and social romanticism, and the characters of his poetry are real heroes, namely people. He believed in freedom both in the sense of freedom from the restraints of imitation and man's freedom from the existing political and social tyranny. "Shabbi was a patriot," comments Ismail (425), "who believed that intellectuals have a human mission." His tendency for Modernism was perceptible even in his first poems, and it was by virtue of this tendency that he joined the Apollo Society in Egypt and published his poems and essays in the journal of that society (Mo'avash 621). The distinct feature of Shabbi's poetry is its deep plaintiveness. "His poetry tells of a heart which opens toward life and love" (Abu al-Shabab 132).

In 1929, when he was twenty years old, Shabbi's father died. A little after his father's death, he himself was afflicted with a severe disease and died in 1934 at the age of 25 (Mo'avash 622). The collection of his poems is entitled *The Songs of Life*, and his book on literary criticism is called *Poetic Imagination Amidst Arabs*.

#### 4. Abul-Qasim Aref Qazvini: A Glimpse at his Life and his Poetry

Abul-Qasim Aref Qazvini is a famous poet, lyricist, and musician of the Constitutional Era of Iranian history. Sepanlou (7) has asserted that the precise date of Aref's birth is the year 1297 A.H. (1879 A.D.), though based on the poet's oral remarks, the date is usually considered to be the year 1300 A.H. (1882 A.D.). He was born in Qazvin amidst his parents' constantly ongoing arguments and altercations. His father, Mullah Hadi, was a barrister who liked his son to become a clergyman, thereby incurring Abul-Qasim's deep resentment (Matini). After his father's death and the division of his bequest, he went from Qazvin to Hamadan with two of his friends and began to associate with the aristocrats of that city. Through these aristocrats, he entered the service of Mozaffar ad-Din Shah, the king of Iran at that time. From the time of his birth up to this period of his life, except for a few years he spent on studying, he lived a life of dissipation. However, with the advent of the Constitutional Revolution, the course of his life changed suddenly. During the Constitutional Era, this poet lived in Tehran where he got acquainted with the anti-despotic thoughts of the Constitutionals (Izadpanah 145). As soon as the cry for liberty was heard, he joined the line of the revolutionaries, and through his poems and songs, he became the eloquent voice of the Revolution. For this reason, and also due to his "sincerity, candor, fervor, closeness to the language of people, and knowledge of music," he was denominated the "national poet of Iran" (Noormohammadi 227).

During Reza Khan's dictatorship, when the Constitutionals were heavily suppressed, Aref Qazvini experienced the worst days of his life. He, who had devoted his youth to an unceasing struggle against domestic tyrants and foreign colonizers, now, at the age of forty, was forced to live a life of silence and solitude. This silence irked his liberal soul so much that he had to escape

from the society of people and become friendly with the nature of Hamadan and its wildlife. Aref died in Hamadan in 1934, and he was buried in the courtyard of Avicenna's mausoleum in that city (Izadpanah 145).

## 5. Similar Themes of Resistance in Shabbi's and Aref Qazvini's Poetry

Shabbi and Aref Qazvini both belong to the circle of committed and liberal poets. They have not spared any effort for awakening people out of their ignorance. They have composed a large number of poems in the area of resistance which are similar to each other with respect to their themes and topics. The praise of liberty, war on colonizers, patriotism, and calling people to wakefulness are some of the identical themes of resistance appearing in the poetry of these two poets. These themes are discussed below.

### 5.1. Praise of Liberty

One of the common themes of resistance in Shabbi's and Aref Qazvini's poetry is the praise of liberty and liberal-mindedness. Both poets refer to freedom as one of the chief criteria for national unity and emphasize its importance. Shabbi's very famous poem "The Will of Life," for instance, is, according to Mohajer Noei, "the anthem of liberty for all his nation" (177). Since he is a liberal-minded person, he prefers death to the humiliating life imposed by the French colonizers on the people of his country; the French, after all, have divested his nation of liberty:

What kind of life is this and what kind of being?  
Many a life there is than which death is far better!

(Shabbi 65)

As it has been stated earlier, Shabbi is a romantic poet with a strong interest in nature. In his poetry, he frequently refers to natural elements. He sees and envies the freedom of natural phenomena and, accordingly, compares the free human being with such natural entities as light, breezes, and birds (Awaz 20). In one of his odes entitled "The Wanderer's Songs," for instance, he uses the two terms "dawn" and "stars" as the symbols of liberty and hope:

In my heart there are a dawn and stars  
And seas not covered by clouds.

(149)

Shabbi's mind was fully preoccupied with the condition of his country, and he made every possible effort to bring about its emancipation. "The cause of the freedom of his country," comments Tannous (34), "was not a trivial matter for him; it was a stringent necessity of the highest importance and emergency." In the poem "O My Mother's Son," he rebukes the people of his country for their ignorance and asks them to rise and retrieve their lost liberty, for liberty is the natural right of every individual and nation:

What has become of you who are satisfied with the disgrace of chains,  
And bowed to those who have subjected you to humiliation?  
You silence the loud cry of life when  
Its echo sings a song in your soul.  
You've become contented with living among caves.  
Where is your song of freedom? Where are your cries and moans?  
Get up and go along the path of life,  
For life does not await those who slumber.

(188)

Aref Qazvini also, like Shabbi, is a liberal-minded poet. He lived during the Constitutional Era when “the cry for freedom was one of the most audible cries of poets” (Seidi 73). In his view, the main mission of a poet is to expose and scandalize those who are restricting the most precious blessing God has bestowed on human beings, namely their liberty. As Alavi (64) puts it, “Aref, as a sensitive poet endowed with a delicate sense and a powerful gift for poetry, believes that his duty is to remove the veil from the face of the most wicked enemies of freedom and progress and scandalize them.” These enemies of freedom, in Aref’s poetry, are either the despotic kings of the Qajar dynasty (mainly Mohammad Ali Shah, the arch-enemy of Constitutionalism) or the foreign colonizers who support this dictatorship. In the following extract, he verbalizes his rage against the Russians and points out that Iran’s soil belongs to Iranians. Similar to Shabbi, he believes that if a nation loses its freedom, it is better for that nation to die:

Nation’s yell, “either death or liberty,” is most apt.  
This is a reply to the bullyings of the babbling Russians.  
Why do the freedom-stifling Russians keep on giving orders to us?  
Do they not know that Iran belongs only to us?  
Say to the sightless Russians: “Look well at this clean soil,  
And see if it is children of Iran’s or yours?”

(Aref Qazvini 63)

As Noormohammadi points out, “Aref Qazvini’s services to the cause of freedom have been noticeable in both promoting social war against tyranny and instilling liberal thoughts into poetry” (204). In one of his poems, he declares that, if God helps him, he will give back freedom to the people of Iran:

If an able claw helps me some day,  
I’ll break the dictator’s claw from its arm.

(125)

## 5.2. War on Colonizers

“Some scholars have divided resistance literature into three subtypes,” argues Sahba (313), “one of which deals with resistance against the foreign enemy.” This type of resistance literature

constitutes a remarkable portion of Shabbi's poetry. Shabbi's birth coincided with the occupation of Tunisia by the French. Short as his life was, through his masterful utilization of romantic literature, he was able to acquaint us with a brilliant example of idealism in poetry. The poetry Shabbi wrote in defense of his country (Tunisia) against colonizers is rebellious, free, purposeful, and directed against slavery. Shabbi has written many odes in which he has exposed the true faces of tyrants and their atrocities, and declared the fate of oppressors to be death and damnation. His celebrated ode, "The Will of Life," is a cry against all of the colonialist powers of the world. In the following poem, he addresses the tyrants of the world and calls them the friends of darkness and the foes of life. Then he goes on to say that these tyrants ridicule the weak people, and their hands are smeared with those people's blood:

O, despotic tyrant (colonizing country)!  
Thou art the friend of darkness and foe of life.  
Thou scoffest at the groans of weak folk.  
And thy hand is smeared with their bloods.  
(Shabbi 188)

Tyranny and fight against colonialism are so salient in Shabbi's poetry that one cannot help giving credence to Shawqi Daif where he observes, "Shabbi's first motive is struggle against tyranny and the promotion of reform" (150). This poet, in the ode "The Roar of the Gale," which is a political poem written in a meter and diction similar to that of rap music, cries out against the oppression of colonizers in this way:

O tyranny (tyrant) who (out of arrogance) cock a snook at people.  
Calm down! To be sure, the world both builds and ruins.  
(159)

Due to the existing political suppression, Shabbi occasionally utilized a symbolic or ironic language. In the following extract, for example, he has used the word "snake" as a symbol for colonizers:

The snake of the mountains saw (the coming of spring).  
What of happiness and the spirit of youth is found in her made him sad.  
(53)

In another poem, this poet warns the tyrants of the impending insurrection of the oppressed nations:

O Palace of Tyranny, woe on you! A day will come,  
When the indigent will rise to end your rule.  
(160)

Aref Qazvini also, in a similar way to Shabbi, “looks upon his poetry as a medium through which he can express his political and social thoughts and rouse people to action” (Aryanpur 359). He uses his poetry as a weapon against the policies of the colonizers. He laments the fact that colonizers have appropriated all the riches and property of Iran:

Foreigners have become the owners of Iran, and this is my grief.  
They are happy, because they have (our) estate, gold, and women.  
(Aref Qazvini 79)

He never likes foreigners to enter his homeland under the pretext of accelerating its progress. In this connection, he says:

A house which is made habitable by foreign hands,  
Demolish it with your tears, for that house is the house of woe.  
(64)

Aref Qazvini is in love with his country and wishes it to be honored and independent. Therefore, when he sees it on the verge of being occupied by foreigners, he gets furious and wishes to die.

I wish to die because of the disorderly state of Iran.  
Me has knocked down the sorrow and grief of Iran.  
The land of Kaveh is being trampled by foreigners, ah!  
Where is Saam and what’s become of Giv and Rostam of Iran?  
To England whose deviousness exceeds that of the Devil,  
The soil of our country was sold by the chief minister of Iran.  
I wish your mother had mourned your death long ago,  
For your existence has caused the nation to bewail the state of Iran.  
(117-18)

Kaveh, Saam, Giv, and Rostam are four mythological heroes of ancient Persia who defended their country against its domestic and foreign enemies. The problem with modern Iran is that it does not have such heroes any more. Lines 5-6 allude to the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 based on which the government of Iran (headed by the Prime Minister Vosough al-Dowlah) bestowed the control of most of the civil and military affairs of the country on the English government, thereby reducing Iran to a mere colony of Great Britain. Of course, thanks to the nationwide protests raised by numerous liberals such as Aref Qazvini, this agreement was never actualized.

### 5.3. Patriotism

One of the important themes of resistance is patriotism and the necessity of the defense of one’s country. This theme has been taken up by both Shabbi and Aref Qazvini. Shabbi, who according to Kerru (82), “always expresses his attitudes and thoughts with exemplary courage,” believes



that he must have a land independent of the forces of colonialism. Unless it is free, his country will never attain welfare and prosperity, no matter how sincerely his countrymen apply themselves to that cause. He loves his country and terribly suffers because of the tyranny and oppression it is undergoing. In his poems, he uses a sincere language in order to express such concepts as patriotism and freedom. His philosophy of patriotism is that people should be taught the meaning of life and encouraged to live that kind of life. They should learn not to acquiesce in a wretched life of bondage and degradation. What makes Shabbi's poetry especially outstanding is his creation of beautiful expressions of patriotic feelings. Many of Shabbi's national and social views have been expressed in his patriotic poems. Sheikh (252) names some of these poems: "In the Glen of Sufferings," "Sons of the Devil," "O My Friend," "The Lost Voice," "The Lost Songs," "The Will of Life," "The Unknown Sons," "In the Stillness of the Night," and "To the Nation." The following lines demonstrate Shabbi's love for Tunisia very clearly:

My beautiful Tunisia! I have swum  
In the sea of your love. What a fantastic swim!  
My creed is your deep love, and for sooth  
I have tasted its bitterness and sweetness a lot.  
(Shabbi 190)

Patriotism and the defense of the homeland is one of the major topics of Aref Qazvini's poetry too. The homeland featuring in Aref's poetry is the land of Iran in its geographical sense. He regards all of the regions of Iran as his homeland. He does not pick a particular spot as his favorite abode and center of love. He deems such an act a sign of narrow-mindedness. He believes that all of the parts of Iran must be adored and cultivated alike. He is ready to sacrifice himself for his homeland, which is in the extremity of wretchedness:

I am willing to sacrifice for my country  
My whole existence, my soul and my body.  
Wretched and helpless is no one like me, and yet  
More wretched and helpless than me is my country.  
(Aref Qazvini 120)

In another poem, Aref expresses his strong devotion to and love for his homeland thus:

After that I made a mention of my homeland,  
And wished to give my life for my homeland.  
If they set my body on fire,  
My ash will make the image of my homeland.  
(117)

“Aref was a patriot, a liberal, a person who was fond of nothing except his homeland” (Haeri 17). Aref eventually considers every love save the love of one’s country as disgraceful and unworthy. In his poetry, time and again he demonstrates his love for his homeland and discloses that his moans are all for its sake:

The moan of the captured bird is solely for the sake of the homeland.  
The way of life of the encaged bird is the same as mine.

(64)

As it has been stated earlier, Aref Qazvini loves every spot of Iran alike. He is not a native of Azerbaijan, a north-western district of Iran; nevertheless, in the following extract, his affection for that province is conspicuous:

How my soul is on fire out of the love of Azerbaijan!  
I will purchase this fire with my soul as long as I have one.

(77)

#### 5.4.    **Calling People to Wakefulness**

One of the common themes of resistance in Shabbi’s and Aref Qazvini’s poetry is their awakening of their nations to their socio-political condition. In his poems, Shabbi always encourages people to recognize their potential resources and not allow despotic rulers and colonizers to trample on their rights. His ode, “The Will of Life,” is one of the masterpieces of modern Arabic literature in the area of resistance. In this poem, he underlines the necessity of people’s vigilance and points out the importance of their will. According to Shabbi, this vigilance and will cause nations to rise up against tyranny and pave the way for the emancipation of their countries:

In a person’s will, forces are gathered  
Against which even a lofty mountain falls.  
(Shabbi 142)

Another thing to mention about the above poem is that natural elements have been used in it symbolically. Mo’avash (629) enumerates these symbols: The word “night,” has been used as a symbol for tyranny and despotism, and the expressions “the ruggedness of vales” and “flaming fires” refer to the obstacles in the way of human beings and the problems of life respectively. “Ascend the mountains” means “attain eminence.” The word “pits” serves the symbolic meaning of debasement and disgrace. “Horizon” is used to mean free life, and “dead birds” has been used to represent weak people:

Perforce the night will be wiped off.  
Perforce the fetters will be removed.  
I won’t shun the ruggedness of vales,

Nor the raid of flaming fires.  
A person who doesn't like to ascend the mountains,  
He has to live amongst pits for good.  
The horizon doesn't embrace dead birds,  
And bees don't kiss the dead buds.

(90-91)

In his poems, Aref Qazvini also attempts to awaken people out of their sleep of ignorance. He perpetually reminds them of their Iranian identity and urges them to keep watchful and vigilant:

O my eye! Shed blood, for this nation has been seized  
By a slumber, and I yearn for two wakeful eyes.

(Aref Qazvini 49)

In another poem, he is vexed because of the people's sleep of ignorance, and out of chagrin, he utters the following line:

See how ignorant and calm is sleeping this nation,  
Like a herd of sheep in their rickety shed.

(124)

## **6. Some Dissimilar Themes of Resistance in Shabbi's and Aref Qazvini's Poetry**

In addition to the above themes, which have been treated in Shabbi's and Aref Qazvini's poetry in a more or less similar way, other themes of resistance can be found in the poetry of either poet which have not been handled by the other one in a conspicuous way. In this section, some of these themes are introduced and discussed.

### **6.1. Some Themes of Resistance in Shabbi's Poetry**

#### **6.1.1. Depiction of the Downtrodden Visage of People**

"When foreigners take control of a country," argues Kerru (79), "the people who receive the highest amount of injury are the members of the working class. This is especially true of the Tunisian society, whose body and soul are sick, and the thought of its people is rotten, and they have yielded to despots." Therefore, the description of the condition of this downtrodden class of the society of Tunisia constitutes a considerable part of Shabbi's poetry. He has written an ode entitled "To the Tyrant" in which he has described the condition of his oppressed people suffering from the tyranny of the French. In this poem, Shabbi uses such hard and harsh words as "tyrants," "thick," "conquered," and "collapse," and exhibits the intensity of his repugnance at colonialism through the use of these harsh words:

They say debased people's voices are faint,  
And the ears of the tyrants of earth deaf and thick.  
But in the yells of conquered nations there's a destabilizing power  
Which causes the loftiest thrones to collapse and be razed.

(Shabbi 160)

“Shabbi, a poet endowed with a colorful imagination and acute feelings, is never satisfied with the way of people's life and the tyranny they suffer” (Kerru 79). In his poem, “For History,” he describes the oppressed people of his country. He compares his nation with a ewe whose enemies, like a wolf and a butcher, are clutching at it from two sides:

The nation is blindfolded. It is like a ewe  
Caught between a butcher and a wolf.

(Shabbi 58)

### **6.1.2. Imparting of Hope for the Future and the Promise of Victory**

“One of the characteristics of resistance literature is its revival of hope for victory in people's hearts” (Hejazi and Rahimi 52). This quality can be found in Shabbi's poetry. In his poetry, he gives his nation the hope of a bright future and anticipates victory for them. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (439) believes that Shabbi's fame is due to those of his odes (such as “The Will of Life”) in which there are traces of hope and belief in the ultimate victory of oppressed nations. Shabbi is the poet of life whose hope is never stifled, even in the direst situations:

The wave of woefulness and the storms of scourges  
Don't extinguish the luminous flame (of hope) in my blood.

(Shabbi 29)

### **6.1.3. Reminiscence of the Bygone Glory and Magnificence of One's Country**

Shabbi, in his poems, refers to the past glory of his country a lot. Jayyusi believes that Shabbi does so “in order to light the flame of hope in their [i.e. his people's] hearts” (439). His aim is to nurture the sense of patriotism among his people and thereby boost their morale for resistance:

(O people!) You spoiled the greatness of a nation.  
They constructed life honorably.  
They sewed a garment of glory for you.  
You disdainfully took off that raiment.

(Shabbi 102)

#### 6.1.4. Description and Eulogy of Martyrs

One of the salient manifestations of resistance literature can be found in those poems which have been composed in praise of the martyrs of the way of freedom. Shabbi invites tyrants and the enemies of his country to ponder on the consequence of their atrocities. He warns and assures them that their heyday will not last long; before long, the blood of martyrs will overwhelm and annihilate them:

Ponder! Wherever you harvested  
The heads of people and the flowers of hope,  
And watered with blood the heart of the earth,  
And let it imbibe tears until it became tipsy,  
The torrent made of blood (of martyrs) will carry you away,  
And the blazing storm gobble you down.  
(189)

#### 6.2. Some Themes of Resistance in Aref Qazvini's Poetry

##### 6.2.1. Opposition to and Struggle with Despotic Kings and Rulers

“Resistance literature germinates out of the tyranny and oppression existing in a society” (Mostafavinia, Tavakoli Mohammadi, and Ebrahimi 569). Therefore, one of the major themes of resistance in Aref Qazvini's anthology is opposition to and struggle with tyranny and the despotic kings and rulers and the laudation of the national heroes who defy these tyrants' autocracy. In poems such as “The Xenophilic Monarch” and “Reprimand of Reza Shah,” he announces that the nation is the true owner of the country. Consequently, he believes that common people ought to hold the reins of government. In conflicts between the people and kings, he always sides with the people. He considers kings as the main cause of the weakness and destruction of their lands and deems himself their bloody enemy:

I am the bloody enemy of kings  
Due to whom Iran is so weak.  
(Aref Qazvini 110)

In the following lines, he violently attacks the Royal family of Iran:

From the first offspring of Adam till now,  
No Adam (i.e. human being) have I found in this House (i.e. the royal family of Iran).  
(109)

##### 6.2.2 Calling to Unity and Warning against Schism

Calling to unity and national solidarity and warning against schism is another prominent theme of resistance in Aref Qazvini's poetry. According to Chavosh Akbari, Aref is the first songwriter in Iran who has expressed social topics and political thoughts and criticism of the conditions of his time in the guise of poetry and song (298). Aref believes that, having the same religion, all of the Islamic countries ought to be united with each other so that they can resist against their foreign enemies. He, furthermore, believes that the progress of atheists and the other enemies of Islam is due to the schism among Muslims:

Atheism and religion are fighting in the battlefield.  
The progress of atheism is due to our discord.  
One Kaaba, one God, one Book.  
How is this dividing of our hearts justified?  
(Aref Qazvini 207)

### 6.2.3. War on Hypocrites

Fighting with hypocrisy and the hypocrites has been prevalent in Persian literature since the old days. Aref is one of the eminent poets of the Constitutional Era who struggled against the hypocrisy of the fake sheikhs and ascetics. These hypocrites, in the guise of pious believers and true patriots, inflicted the severest blows on the bodies of Islam and their country. They were the agents of the most disgraceful contracts between Iran and the European countries based on which the honor and wealth of Iran were handed over wholesale to its enemies. They were, in fact, traitors to their country worthy of severest punishment. Aref Qazvini, in his autobiography, writes about this group thus:

A traitor to his country must not be allowed to escape punishment. The corpse of a government agent who has betrayed his country must be disinterred, even if he is our father, and burnt with the North oil – the same oil concerning which one thousand kinds of treason to Iran have been committed – so that the future benchers should know what their duty is. (qtd. in Doroudian 18)

Aref Qazvini has dealt with the issue of hypocrisy in several of his *ghazals* (Persian poems more or less similar to English sonnets) including “The Tongue’s Sword, the Curtains of Hypocrisy,” “The Wanderer in the Desert,” and “Kaveh’s Heirloom.” In these poems, he argues that hypocrisy and the hypocrites endanger the national interests and profits of Iran for the sake of their personal profits. He, in his poems, denounces hypocrites for their duplicity and promises to scandalize them:

The door of hypocrisy and cant has been opened; this time  
It must be closed so hard it can't be opened again.  
So much drama is acted behind this curtain of imposture,  
It's a pity if the curtain does not rise to let us watch.  
(Aref Qazvini 154)

Aref, in his poetry, mentions one main difference between the men of heart and the men of hypocrisy. Whereas the men of heart do not reveal their pains and sufferings and conceal them in their hearts, hypocrites tend to show off and exaggerate their misery:

Between the men of heart and those of hypocrisy this difference lies:  
Our scars are on our hearts, theirs on their foreheads.

(112)

A “scar on the forehead” is a mark formed on the forehead of some presumably religious people on account of frequent contact between the forehead and the prayer stone. The point of this line is that true lovers and worshipers of God have a scar on their hearts, which no one can see, though it is very painful; hypocrites, on the other hand, have a scar on their foreheads whose function is only to show that they are devout Muslims.

#### **6.2.4. War on Poverty and Ignorance**

Aref Qazvini, in his poetry, fights against poverty and ignorance too. He considers sectarianism as one main example of ignorance. Muslims, instead of keeping their unity against their common enemies, are engaged in domestic strife among themselves on account of belonging to different sects and denominations. Some of the poems in which Aref Qazvini has dealt with this important subject are “Sectarianism and Ignorance,” “Democrat and Moderate,” “The Completion of Wisdom,” “The Wanderer in the Desert,” “The Light of the Morning of Wisdom,” and “Poverty and Ignorance.” In all of these poems, he considers poverty and ignorance as the main causes of debasement and invites people to awaken out of their ignorance so that they can be saved from this degradation which has been imposed on them by their kings and the colonizing foreigners:

The poverty of the nation and people’s ignorance  
What can I say? They’re spread in every place.  
Make an endeavor and move, o nation!  
Yourself rescue from this humiliation.  
Like a lion break this chain.  
Kill that king, this emir, and thane.  
If you are wise, act like one demented by love.  
Turn the foreigner out of your house.

(183)

### **7. Conclusion**

The careful study and analysis of Abul-Qasim al-Shabbi’s and Abul-Qasim Aref Qazvini’s poetry as well as the critical works written on resistance literature in general and the poetry of the two aforementioned poets in particular led the present authors to the following conclusions:

1. Shabbi and Aref Qazvini are two contemporary Tunisian and Iranian resistance poets who have devoted themselves heart and soul to the cause of the reform and salvation of their countries.
2. The collections of the poetry of both of these poets are full of verses of resistance which left very positive effects on their contemporary people. By these poems, they both intended to guide their people and effect the progress of their countries.
3. Shabbi is a romantic poet who sometimes utilizes a symbolic language for his resistance poems. Aref Qazvini's language is also symbolic sometimes, but, at other times, his language is direct and straightforward. As far as the quantity and quality of the usage of symbols is concerned, the two poets are almost the same as each other.
4. Shabbi, in his poems, attempts to strengthen the will of the people of his country against French colonialism. Aref Qazvini also, in his poems, rises up against the colonizers and makes people aware of their tyranny and oppression.
5. Other themes of resistance treated in the poetry of both of these poets are patriotism, the praise of liberty, and calling people to vigilance.
6. Besides the similar themes enumerated above, in the poetry of these two poets some other topics can be found which have been dealt with by just one of them, and in the poetry of the other one, little, if any, trace of those topics can be noticed. Shabbi sometimes depicts the downtrodden faces of Tunisian people and sometimes gives them hope and promises them victory. Sometimes he undertakes to describe and praise the martyrs, and sometimes he talks about the bygone splendor and magnificence of his country. Aref Qazvini sometimes invites people to keep their unity and solidarity against the tyranny of foreigners and sometimes expresses opposition to the despotic kings and rulers of the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties and versifies violent political poems against them. Moreover, in his poetry he wages war on hypocrisy and the hypocrites and cherishes the hope of rescuing people from poverty and ignorance.
7. Though the quantity of Aref Qazvini's resistance poetry is more than that of Shabbi, the artistic and aesthetic quality of the two is the same.



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