

A Comparative Study of Modernism in the Poems of Forough Farrokhzad and Adunis

Ahmad Lamei Giv^{*}

Department of Persian Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Birjand, Birjand, Iran

Majid Shahbazi

Department of Persian Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Birjand, Birjand, Iran

Abstract—Clash of the West with East countries (Iran, Lebanon and Syria) was a factor in changing the structure of Eastern societies, resulting in the emergence of political and social developments like constitutional movements. There are undeniable similarities between Arabic and Persian poetry because of the long historical ties, similar political and social contexts, close cultural backgrounds and the influence of European culture on their literatures. After the literary revolution occurred under the influence of European culture and literature, attention to modernism is a common approach used by Persian and Arabic poets. In both Arabic and Persian literature, Modern poet expresses his surrounding issues according to the needs of the community. Attention to the culture of the West is a common point closing Forough Farrokhzad and Adunis as two contemporary poets. Due to the different cultural and intellectual situations as well as the degree of their familiarity with the West, they have differences and similarities in the methods and the effects of modernization in the West. Using a descriptive-analytical approach, this article will show that Forough and Adunis have used modern manifestations such as secularism, feminism, nihilism, freedom, deconstruction, city and nationalism in their poems due to their relations with the West under the influence of cultural-political developments in their own societies.

Index Terms—Adunis, Forough Farrokhzad, culture of the West, secularism, feminism

I. INTRODUCTION

Since Forough and Adunis are the prominent modernist poets in Iran and Arab society, their influences on both societies pattern is evident. Moreover, Modernism in poetry is one of the contentious issues in the developing world among literary scholars and thinkers in recent years because they fear of losing their language identity. This article tries to investigate some Westerns approaches in the poems of Forough Farrokhzad and Adunis. They are included in Modern poets of Iran and Arab world who reflect on the transformation of their ages in their poems. As an Iranian contemporary poet, Forough has understood fully the spirit of modernity. Her genius and artistry became more evident when one knows that she keeps her Modern mentality even when she is composing her inner pains in poetry. Adunis is also an Arab Modern poet who is familiar with new world and new components. He reflects on social problems based on present facts. The main question is “What is the influence of Western culture on the poems of Forough Farrokhzad and Adunis?” Using available sources, this paper answers this question through a descriptive analytical method.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been conducted on the works of Forough; researchers have mostly focused on deconstruction and modernity in the form. For instance, Moshref Azad Tehrani wrote the book *The Princess of Poetry* in this regard. Other poets have investigated her life. Many papers have been released about Modern Arab poetry that many of them have spoken of Adunis and his poetry. For instance, Dr. Habibullah Abbasi’s *Approaches to Contemporary Arab Poetry*. However, no independent research has been conducted on the comparison study of teachings of West culture in poems of these two poets.

III. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Some elements of the West have entered into the culture and language of Eastern societies into without their will. These elements are so important that some scholars in Eastern countries with civilization, language and powerful call the entrance of the elements a cultural invasion. Since Forough and Adunis are the prominent modernist poets in Iran

^{*} Corresponding Author
Email: Ahmad.lamei2@birjand.ac.ir

and Arab society, their influences on both societies pattern is evident. Moreover, Modernism in poetry is one of the contentious issues in the developing world among literary scholars and thinkers in recent years because they fear of losing their language identity. Therefore, this study investigates some elements of Western culture in the poems of Forough and Adunis.

IV. DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON, IRAN, AND SYRIA

Lebanon and Syria as well as Iran were experiencing transformations in the course of their acquaintance with the West. A group of Lebanese and Syrians migrated to Egypt in the last third of the nineteenth century. These groups were graduates of Jesuits' school and American and European groups who had been tired of Ottomanians' oppression and they had taken the decision to migrate. The group, who had begun a new experience in the hope of individual freedom and rights, achieved their demands in Egypt. Soon, they collaborated with Egyptians in the literary movement and even some of them excelled at this point of time. Attention to literature in the first place caused most communication with European literature. West-oriented movement was quick in Syria and it developed in many Christian communities, especially Lebanon. The supporters were missionaries and schools that led the younger generation under the influence of European thought, and they expand the study of the works of the West, especially France (Al-Fakhoury, 1982, p. 642). One of the most important factors that influence the Western culture in the Levant, which includes Lebanon and Syria, was fellow European Christians who lived in the country (Enayat, 1991, p. 16). Lebanese and Syrian dealing with Europe makes intellectuals in these countries familiar with new structures of the West. These educated intellectuals began to establish new changes in their countries in European style including establishment of schools and newspapers that led to changes in attitudes, growing urbanization, the expansion of printing industry and newspapers. Therefore, fundamental transformation occurred in the thoughts of the people. The manifestations of the movement in the Levant, due to interaction with the West, was the propagation of schools, newspapers and magazines, printing industry, scientific and literary societies, and libraries. These factors were effective in the spread of liberalism, progress of science and knowledge, motivation of efforts and writers, and developments in the intellectual foundation of Arab society (Al-Fakhoury, 1982, p. 640). These factors were influential in f knowledge and understanding of the people of Syria and Lebanon about the modern world, the West, and accepting some new ideas.

During the course of Iranian and Arab thinking (Lebanon and Syria), if one disregards the story of their conversion to Islam, the entrance of Western thought and civilization is the most important issue in the evolution of the idea of these lands. Some individuals were effective paving the way for great social-political changes by employing the experience of transformation of Western societies in different cultural aspects. The Constitutional Uprising and The Arab Movement are two important points in the history of these nations. Iran and Arab countries underwent transformations in the all areas through these two developments. Concurrency of political-cultural transformations in both nations and their imitation from European culture caused the existence of many intellectual and cultural resemblances in the contemporary era. Literary development was one of the consequences of following the Western doctrine, which changed the scholars in terms of both thought and the works.

In the same pattern, Persian poetry experienced a rebirth in the Constitutional age. It walked in new path, which had never been walked. Persian literature had also been influenced by the modern world. Transformation in social, political and economic areas caused changes in the content of thought. However, poets could not change poetry immediately because they could not deconstruct the traditional system and began a new trend for two reasons. First, for the sacredness of eternal-immortal system of Persian poetry that had been established in poets' minds and collective conscience with its metaphor, metonymy, symbols, and puns. Second, for social passiveness and paralysis of thought and imagination of poets for a century because they could not establish a new system in the case of rejecting the current system (Shams Langroodi, 2005, p. 36). Therefore, the evolution of contemporary Persian poetry was performed step by step. Years 1961 to 1970 can be called escalation of armed conflict in Iran. Forough is placed in the center of this period. Mysticism influenced by Buddha is one of the themes of the poetry in this period, which is tangible in Sohrab's poems. Another important social period is the years 1970 to 1978. Some young poets in the period are wondered of the social events. Shamloo, Gole Sorkhi and Meymenat are important figures in this age (Shafiei Kadkani, 2001, pp. 45-80). In general, Arab and Persian poetry transformations in the twentieth century are due to their familiarity with Western thought and the translation of foreign language poems. Hence, many changes occurred in terms of idea, emotions, and concepts; then, another changes occurred in contents, images, and finally in the music of poems (ibid: p.29). The result of two mentioned movements in Iranian and Arab society was the advent of modern poets who had traveled around the world and introduced new the elements on Modern world by their poems. Along with these transformations, some changes took place in the form and content of the poems and literary works.

V. LIFE AND WORKS OF FOROUGH AND ADUNIS

Forough Farrokhzad was born in 1937 in Tehran. Forough continued her studies to junior high school in Khosrow Khavar School; then, she went to art school and learned art of sewing and painting. She describes her interest in sewing as, "When I come back from sewing class, I can compose poems better" (Jalali, 1993, p. 559). In 1953, she published her first collection of poems called *Captive*. In 1957, she began to travel to Europe; in the same year, she released her

second collection of poems called *The Wall*. In 1958, when she was 23, she entered the field of cinema and cinematic art found a great place in her life. In 1959, Forough Farrokhzad printed her third collection of poems called *Rebellion*. She traveled to England for the first time in this year to pass a course about movie making. Her fourth collection of poems, *Rebirth*, was released in 1962; she went to Tabriz in this year to evaluate making a movie about Leprosy and its patients. In winter 1963, she spent twelve days in Tabriz and made a documentary called *The House is Black* about the patients of Leprosy. Four European countries including Germany, Sweden, England and France proposed Forough to be translated and publish poems. Forough's travels to Europe made her familiarity with artistic and literary culture in Europe and provided a basis for changing her mind. Acquaintance with Ebrahim Golestan, a famous Iranian author and filmmaker, resulted in changes in social space and Forough's intellectual and literary development. Massoud Farrokhzad— Forough's brother- is another influential person in Forough's familiarity with Modern ideas. Because he was fluent in German, he helped Forough to translate some selections of German poems to Persian. Forough's familiarity and association with these poems was effective in transfer of modern culture to Forough's thought and poems. Forough was familiar with the literature of America and South America by her friends. He read Persian translation of the Argentine woman poet Alfonsina Storni's works by Shoja al-Din Shafa (Moshref Azad Tehrani, 1933, p. 48). The emergence of Forough Farrokhzad was a rare and extraordinary event in contemporary Persian poetry. Talking about Forough Farrokhzad, Most literary scholars, either they are agree or disagree with her, cannot hide their admiration because the advent of such poet in traditional society of the East rises the wonder of every fair person. She had been grown up in a patriarchal society where the ancient beliefs and traditions of had taken the power of women performance. Forough is the only explosion of silence, solitude and complex of Iranian women (Baraheni, 2001: 210). She expresses boldly her opinions and speaks in her own language in her poems, as she is anti-traditional and deconstructionist. Her poetry is outcry of a contemporary woman against conventions limiting women in Eastern society.

Farrokhzad understood precisely the transformations of his time. She had comprehended the concept of Modernity and figured out the truth of evolution in the ideas of poets. In a speech in this regard, she articulates, "Today, everything has changed; our world has nothing to do with the world of Hafez and Saadi. I think that my world has nothing to do with my father's world. Gaps have been raised (Jalali, 1993, p. 169).

Ali Ahmad Said Esber, known as Adunis, was born in 1930 in al-Qassabin, a village in Syria. He finished his secondary education in 1949 and graduated from philosophy in 1954 from the University of Damascus. In 1956, he went to Lebanon and received Lebanese citizenship. In 1957, he collaborated in the establishment and authorship of *Poetry Journal* that was the most innovative and effective literary journal of its time as well as consolidation of Arab poetry; he continued this career to 1963. He founded the rich journal *Mawaqif* in 1968. In 1967, he received his Ph.D. in Literature from St. Joseph University of Beirut. He began teaching in 1974 in Lebanon. He left Lebanon to Paris in 1986. He went to Iran in 2005. He is one of the most modern Arab poets in poetry and poetry criticism, especially by the standards of modernization of the West. He learned Western literature from the gate of French literature; he has comprehended many Modern streams of poetry in Europe. Publishing *Two Journals of Poetry and Mawaqif*, he has propagated Modern culture in Arab world. Adunis does not recognize any boundary for modernity and believes that a poet experiences and opens new horizon a new frontier in every moment; therefore, breaking traditions and creating heresy know no bounds. This departure from traditions went as far as that he rejected Islam and converted to Christianity. He was blamed by both religious and non-religious fanatics (Kamal al-Din, 1964, pp. 125-127). Some of his poetic works are *First Poems* (1957), *The Book* (1985), *The Book of Siege* (1985), and *Another Alphabet* (1994).

VI. A STUDY OF THE COMMON FEATURES OF MODERNITY IN THE POEMS OF FOROUGH AND ADUNIS

As two contemporary poets in Persian and Arab literature, Forough and Adunis have shown many capabilities in literature. Both created transformations in the contemporary poetry in terms of content. Modernism is the common and inherent poetic characteristic of both poets that contains the content of their poems. Both have social concerns. Although Forough and Adunis may have not been influenced by each other, their ideas on addressing the problems of the modern world are very similar. These similarities include:

A. *Secularism*

Secularism is one of the elements of Modernity and subjects used by Forough and Adunis in their poems. The term secular is used as an antonym for religious or spiritual. Some scholars believe that Adunis has a mystical vision and new approach. The study of his poetic themes uncovers the hidden points of his anti-religious ideas. This does not mean that all Adunis' ideas are anti-religion. In most of his poems, he uses the advantages of symbols to express thoughts and ideas. The story of Adam (AS) and its dismissal from Heaven is a well-known story; but Adunis uses this story to describe human sufferings. He shouts suffering and human troubles on Earth. In addition to non-religious use of some phrases, he utters some words that are far from words of a Muslim. He questioned the three basic doctrines of Islam (monotheism, resurrection, prophethood). In *Bashar's Requiem*, traces of secularism, or separation of religion and politics and social affairs, are available.

Secularism is evident in the poems of Farrokhzad. In her collection of poems called *Rebellion*, she works on fundamental issues such as Being and Nothingness, good and evil and so on. In Forough's mind, the Western world,

intellectuals have never gained the opportunity to challenge Holy saints, as they have been challenged in Western societies. Forough's world is transparent and free of duplicity. Her world is compatible with the natural world and in conformity with it. Forough has a modern appreciation of the world; thus, she finds all her failures in the inappropriateness of the world.

In Adunis' poetry, this element is manifested based on West foundations with he they lived. In other words, Adunis lived and educated in a Modern world. Moreover, he reveals his secular ideas by attack on the religious beliefs that are sacred in people's minds because he understands the religion and literature of the Arab nation. On the contrary, apart from some of her trips to Europe, she had not understood the spirit of Modernity and she had not been educated in any Modern school. Therefore, she is trapped by sensation due to her superficial understanding of Modernity.

B. Feminism

The women's movement became widespread in the 19th century in France and called Feminism. Feminism series of efforts to create a context to defend political, economic and social rights of women as well as to create equal opportunities for women and girls in education and employment. Scholar such as Forough had been dissatisfied of the marginal role of women in society so that she states about the marginal role of women, "I wish the freedom of Iranian women and equality of their rights with men. I am aware of the sufferings of women of my land due to men's injustice (Haeri, 1955, pp. 27-28). Forough expresses the cultural situation of women in her age in a realistic and accurate perspective. She pays all her efforts to inform and free them. For instance, in her poem *The Wind-Up Doll*, Forough asks women to solve their great riddle of existence and look at the world from their own perspectives (Farrokhzad, 1998, p. 289). In Persian poetry, Forough is among women who transgress the silence of not using the earthy loves. She regards men as the main reason for women enslavement. She argues that many female talents have been destroyed in the border of narrow, ugly and reprehensible traditions of community.

With regard to the new role of women in society, Adunis tries to establish an independent consciousness and wisdom for the public and its audiences. He mixes new ideas about the role of women in society and among people, women's rights, and its impact on the development of the country with his poetic pure imagination to present the audiences the result of his ideas in verse. Feminism and women's rights are stated in in the poetry of Adunis as an objective process; it means that Adunis tries to use the idea of human rights to portray victimization of women and their oppression. However, he tries not to damage the male personality and keeps his position alongside the women. With the appropriate use of the theme of myths, stories and discovering natural symbols, he tries to express effects of modern feminism in his own poetry. Nevertheless, in her poems about women's rights, Forough criticizes men who have damaged her. It has been revealed that apart from having been influenced by the West, Forough pays more attention to this element due to his failures in life for get rid of the complexes; thus, she rebels against men. On the contrary, Adunis has reached the conclusion under the influence of Western culture to fulfill the rights of women.

C. Deconstruction

Breaking old traditions, patterns, and ideas is the main feature of Modernism. Forough was a complete Modernist since the beginning of her poetic career. She even criticizes herself to reject conventions, "I blame myself more than blaming others. It is natural that many of my poems are nonsense" (Jalali, 1993, p. 206). She is a deconstructionist among Iranian poet and declares her hatred of the relationships among people in her age. Therefore, she is seeking a key for freeing herself from this chain. She sees this freedom from conventions in committing sins. Some of her poems revolt clearly against the traditions of society. Extremism in rebellion in breaking with tradition leads Forough to rebellion against social norms. She talks about her emotions towards the lover, longing for him, and her sinful affections (Farrokhzad, 2003, p. 166).

Adunis has uses deconstruction. Adunis is a universal poet due to the quality of his works, taboo-breakings, and innovations in Arab poetry as well as his perspective about literature and the type of his smart approach to form. He uses all the capabilities to compose his poems. He rejects the current situation and firm old traditions. There is no a middle ground; any affair is all (Modern) or nothing. He expects emergence of great transformation (modernism) in his society. Adunis does not recognize any boundary for modernity and believes that a poet experiences and opens new horizon a new frontier in every moment; therefore, breaking traditions and creating heresy know no bounds. This departure from traditions went as far as that he rejected Islam and converted to Christianity (Kamal al-Din, 1966, pp. 193-194). Deconstruction is an important feature in Modernism that has many manifestations. Both try to break the traditions and red lines that have been established in Arab and Iranian society while they have been taboo for thousand years and they are ingredients of the cultures. This element is very ambiguous in the poetry of Adunis and requires historical information. This element is more evident in Forough's poetry.

D. Nihilism

Nihilism is a psychological and epistemological status in which the meanings of life and existence have been lost; therefore, a mental confusion that trigger anxiety is experienced. Nihilism is the disrespecting the world, life and what they encountered (Zamanian, 2006, p. 90). It seems both poets have entered despair, hopelessness and decay into their poems under the influence of nihilistic thoughts; but death is more prominent in Adunis' poems.

E. Freedom

The term freedom, as a fundamental concept of Modernity, signifies different meanings including self-government and independence as well as general ability to get things done, having different choices and the ability to achieve goals. Freedom has a special place in the poems of Forough so that he calls for women's freedom under the influence of the Western culture; she reflects its absence in her poems. She not only considers women's freedom but also wishes for freedom of expression. The poems, "Said Ali to His Mother, a Day", "Bird Was Just a Bird", "Oh! The Precious Borders", "Meet at night" in the collection of *Rebirth*, and "I Feel Sorry for the Garden", "One Who Is not Like Anybody" from the collection *Let's Believe* are examples in this regard. Adunis has also worked on this concept. He tries to eliminate the obstacles to understand realities; he described the realities behind the scene that are the bad state of his society. Homeland has a particular place in his poems. He admires freedom so that he regards the quality of his existence as a unique freedom. He seeks a new innovation along with freedom.

F. City

Persian and Arab poets have associated with the concept of city under the influence of the West and due to their own experiences and perceptions. Feeling a captive of city, homesickness, anxiety and ruin, Arab poet speaks the same as Western poets who feel tired of restrictions in dependency on the new civilization, especially metropolises (Abbas, 2005, p. 186). Regardless of the poets of the past who used concepts such as river and mountain and nature, Forough decorates her poems with new concepts and new sensations in describing her city. Forough feeling toward the town of his life was significant. She says, "I love our own Tehran, In any case... There, my existence finds a goal to live..." (Farrokhzad, 1998, *An Introduction to Let's Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season*). For Adunis, city is a phenomenon composed of many improper patches while the poet tries to destroy it. Leaving Damascus is a cause for development and insults it. Adunis remembers his pains and difficulties in Damascus. Teheran relaxes Forough but city takes Aduni's peace; thus, he likes returning to nature. It seems that Adunis would prefer to take refuge in an old element of poetry, nature.

G. Nationalism

Nationalism has been included in Forough's poems, but Adunis pays attention to this concept more than Forough. In "Oh! The Precious Borders", Forough is happy of the obtained freedom and remembers, "Said Ali to His Mother, a Day", "Bird Was Just a Bird", "Oh! The Precious Borders", "Meet at night" in the collection of *Rebirth*, and "I Feel Sorry for the Garden", "One Who Is not Like Anybody" from the collection *Let's Believe* national ravages and honors to awaken the people's patriotism. To portray the Arab nation, Adunis uses the famous symbol of tree; but he expresses the bent and sleeping palms (Adunis, 1996, vol. 1, p. 156). In addition, day, which is the symbol of brightness and awakening for Arab nation, has been killed. Poet's anxiety and stress rises from the absence of a unified Arab nation. The poet sees the unification as a manifestation of Modernism in European countries; but finally, he believes in his nation and speaks of tomorrow, fight certainty and victory. If he talks about past, he uses it as a fulcrum for the future, he is expecting. In this future, Arab nation is restored and it welcomes the entire world.

VII. CONCLUSION

The influence of Western civilization is a common point closing Forough Farrokhzad and Adunis. A comparison study of commonalities and differences between the two poets uncovers the following words:

Forough Farrokhzad and Adunis have reflected new concepts in their poems under the influence of the teachings of the modern culture of the West so that both are called the modern poets of their own culture. Their inclusion in the category of Modern poets does not mean that they have not used traditional elements in their poetry. Secularism, feminism, nihilism, freedom, breaking with tradition, city and nationalism are manifestations of the influence of the West on their poems. In the use of Modern elements, Adunis pays more attention to secularism because he is familiar with the culture of West and imbued with the spirit. Conversion from Islam to Christianity is a proof in this regard. Nevertheless, Forough's feminist insight is more evident in her poems. Moreover, the nationalism is reflected more in Adunis' poems rather than Forough's poems.

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Ahmad Lamei Giv, was born in Birjand (Iran) in 1969. He has got a Ph.D. in Arabic language and literature from Saint Josef University, Lebanon, 2007. The author has 16 years of academic experience including: Assistant professor of University of Birjand, Faculty of Literature and Humanities (Iran); Scientific and executive secretary of more than 40 conferences and scientific and cultural meetings. Publications are: *Hassan Parsi*, Birjand, Southern Khorasan, Iran; Chardarakht Publication, 2015; *University and the active culture*, Birjand, Southern Khorasan; Chardarakht Publication, 2013. The author is interested in Literary criticism, Literary history, Arabic grammar, Contemporary literature, Research methodology, Comparative (interdisciplinary) literature, and Rhetorics. Dr. Lamei Giv. was selected as the top cultural and social national researcher of National Academic Congress of Harkat (Movement) of Iran's Universities in 2013 and 2014.

Majid Shahbazi has received an MA degree in Comparative Literature, University of Birjand, Birjand, Iran. His research interests are Contemporary literature, Research methodology, Comparative (interdisciplinary) literature.