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Militarization of Childhood: a Reading of Nizar Qabbani's Children of the Stones Trilogy

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Abstract: In the context of the Arab Israeli conflict, the Palestinian Intifada of 1987, commonly referred to as the "Intifada of Stones," bears significant weight. In this study, an investigation into the representation of the event in Contemporary Arabic poetry is carried out. This research is an in-depth examination of Nizar Qabbani's Children of the Stones trilogy. From this, the researcher draws Qabbani's thoughts on the Intifada and the children of the Intifada who were pushed into adulthood too soon. Qabbani classified Intifada Children into four groups that overlap in typical activities, skills, and responsibilities. The four types of children are those who are admired, those who are men, those who are teachers, and those who are soldiers (i.e., militarized). Qabbani identified a new generation of children who he believed offered hope for the restoration of our country's rights. He contrasted these children with what he referred to as "the generations of defeat and setbacks." Qabbani saw these children as heroes who wrote a new chapter in their nation's history by resisting tanks and planes with only stones. They embodied tenacity, passion, and optimism.

Keywords: Intifada (uprising), Contemporary Arabic Poetry, childhood, Nizar Qabbani.

1 Introduction

The political disasters that the Arab country was forced to endure played a crucial part in altering the perspectives of Arab poets, leading some poets to regard this development as a shift in poetic interests. Arab poets like Nizar Qabbani went through a transition in both vision and style at this time. The most significant shift did not occur during the Nakbah (catastrophe) of 1948 but during the Nakabah (catastrophe) of 1967: "As if it (Nakbah) was some cold poured on to quench the flames of Nizar's feelings and his poems; it was the shock that triggered Nizar to awake from his feminine slumber to nationalism, transforming him from a romantic poet who wrote love poems to a poet who wrote poetry, whose pen is knives, bullets, and artillery; he went from being a romantic poet who wrote love poems to become a poet who wrote poetry, whose pen is knives, bullets, and artillery[1].

"Oh, my bereaved nation!

In an instant, you spun me around.

From a poet of compassion and love,

To a poet whose pen is a knife," [2]

After the shock, Nizar became but "a stallion driven mad by rage... But where exactly does one draw the line between being angry and too angry? As long as the Israelis continue to occupy and humiliate, even if just by a centimeter, constructing their colonies, I have no intention of drawing a line around my rage. So, my rage is like a sea unleashed by a land. [3]

For a very long time, Nizar had been building up his anger as he saw one tragedy after another, one loss after another, until finally, the moment of resistance he had been waiting for had arrived. The moment of Intifada came as a "The Intifada, an upheaval that impacted all forms of literature, including poetry, which was particularly effective at evoking quick and intense emotional responses from readers. Poetry was the first medium to describe the events of the Intifada" [4]. Like other poets of the time, Nizar celebrated the Intifada and its young heroes before older ones. Following the footsteps of Nizar and his fellow poets "Palestinian poets then went on to portray the events of the Intifada in their poems, representing aspects absent from the poet who was exiled, relating to the homeland and how it was suffering under the tyrannies of occupation and the trespassers." [5]

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"Then, the origins of the revolution and the Intifada go all the way back to the official Zionist Invasion in 1882. The Intifada's middle roots can be traced back to the years 1936 to 1966, and its more recent roots can be found in the aftermath of the war in 1973, as well as in the Intifadas (uprisings) of 1976, 1980, 1982, 1985, and the Intifada of "flaming December." [6].

The poetry written about Intifada, its events, and heroes "addresses the ongoing Intifada's heroes of all segments, directions, and ages in a perfect interplay (The Stage of Mobilization), where literature juxtaposed with the stone to open up a new hope." In contrast to other poems produced following defeats Arabs faced from 1948 to the current day, these poems became the harbinger of a better future and the messenger conveying the amount of perfect interplay between diverse parties" [7].

On November 8th, 1987, a group of young Palestinians set off the Intifada after an accident between two automobiles driven by Arab laborers and a truck driven by a Jew tasked with carrying out the scheduled incidents in the Gaza Strip. Despite the young Palestinians' best efforts to offer first aid and lifesaving blood donation, the three were proven dead. A large funeral procession was held for the three young men. [8]

Nizar's goal in engaging with Intifada was to "dismantle some eschatological and apocalyptic concepts found in religious myths included in Old Testament books and subsequent Hebrew textbooks full of the Zionists' claims of the promised land." Nizar would pick and choose from the claims he demolished to construct an optimistic resistance poem that is unified and strengthened by counter-meanings to the enemy's thinking that had a defeatist effect and was frustrating for Arabs and Muslims." [9]

A close reading of Nizar Qabbani's Children of the Stones Trilogy, published in Beirut in 1988, is the focus of this research. This reading is based on a vision concerning Nizar's perspectives and attitudes toward the youngsters of intifada who were forced to become adults before their natural age.

2 Methodologies

1.2. The admirable child (The Child who is the Source of Admiration):

Nizar regarded the Palestinian child as a worthy object of admiration and an inspiration for other youngsters and the lazy members of the population of his nation because the Palestinian child lacked the technologically advanced weapons necessary to combat his adversary. The Palestinian kid has a profound connection to the ground, and he fights using stones that testify to his right to the land and the rights to which he is entitled. The Palestinian kid is like the moon that guides us through the night, the Annunciation of the savior who will save us from the humiliation and shame our enemies have inflicted upon us.

"They amazed everyone everywhere.

armed only with stones.

Flashing like beacons, heralding good news." [10]

Their opponents were kept awake at night by the sudden appearance of these children as if they had emerged from the earth's crevices. For various reasons, the poet was unable to join the resistance movement. The poet can only pray for them, for these children planted roses and blossoms in the nation's bleeding wounds, turning the Intifada/revolution into a song sung by all the world's free people:

"Dearest, tiniest ones, Allah bless you with a day as sweet as jasmine.

You emerged from the earth's cracks, planting flowers over our scars.

This uprising is the ink for the paper, a song on our tongues. [10]

The story of the Palestinian kid who faced down his adversary with a stone, his resolve, and his optimism went viral around the world. It was a mystery for all who heard about that kid coming from Canaan/Palestine. That kid was legendary; he or she exposed the entire occupation army and brought the case back from the brink of obscurity.:

"Big newspapers are asking about him:

Who are these mysterious Canaanite prophets?

A boy?

Born in agony and forced into the world?

A fictitious plant sprouting from the holes in the wall?

Streams of precious sapphire?

Flooding out of the pages of the Quran?

Soothsayers are wondering about him.

Sufis are asking about him.

Buddhists are asking about him.

World kings are asking about him.

Jinni kings are asking about him.

Who is that boy,

Emerging as plums,

Out of the trees of oblivion? [10]

2.2. The Child/Teacher:

That Palestinian kid, although being so young, is a source of wisdom as well as inspiration. He became a role model for lazy men everywhere who had forgotten their manhood and the Palestinian case, turning instead into men of paper and dough. At a time when all children should be at school, the Palestinian child turned to the other side and gave lessons instead of receiving them:

“To the students of Gaza, please remind us of what we may have forgotten.

Please instruct us in a world where real men are formed of dough.” [10]

The poet then begged the young warriors to explain the stone's secret and how it could withstand enemy fire from guns, tanks, and armed men. The occupation taught those kids many things they needed to know and learn for a long time, such as how to perform the impossible with the simplest tools other kids use as toys. However, for Palestinian children, stones represent something more: a means of fighting for their independence. Nizar tries to convey the idea that the youngsters who fought for freedom for their land were coerced into giving up everything they valued as children, including bicycles, new clothes, and milk straw:

"Show us how a child can transform a stone into a jewel, a bicycle into a shell, and a silk ribbon into a trap.

When you get arrested, your milk straw becomes a knife! [10]

The prophets, one of whom was born in Palestine and is often known as Jesus Christ, keep a close eye on these youngsters. These prophets are pleased with the actions of these young people. Qabbani compares these kids to Jesus, who was also born a prophet, suggesting that perhaps God will bless them with prophetic abilities in these dark and brutal times. Jesus Christ, like the Palestinian kid of today, endured torture and anguish while fighting evil and tyranny.

“Show us how to maintain our ground... Don't abandon Christ in mourning” (Qabbani, 1988)

While the right of return calls for some insanity, we live in an age of puppets led by corrupt politicians and cowards who accept half-measures. Like Palestinian kids, there's no one who can make us insane:

“Politics is so obsolete; give us a lesson in insanity instead. [10]

2.3. The Child/ Man:

Because of their resistance, these children have reached adulthood at an earlier age than usual, and as a result, the poet can no longer tell the difference between men and these youngsters. While the adults are busy, as the miserable unemployed, sitting in cafés, looking for deals and women's pleasures, striving to gather money, and listening to the radio to hear the news of victory and glory which these children are making in the occupied areas:

“They gave their lives to our cause.

We were as slimy as a clam in our cafés.

One who is on the lookout for a deal.

One who dreams of a trillion more.

Wedding number four!

Fashioned breasts. “[10]

While Everybody walked off in search of what they needed to feel fulfilled and while men who were willing to compromise continued to seek wealth, status, and material comforts, the children of stones continued to march toward their goal of victory:

One... looking for a palace in London.

One... working a weapon dealer..

One.. seeking his revenge in bars.

One... in search of a throne, an army, or a nation.” [10]

While the adults became dwarfs who accepted a life of shame and cowardice, these youngsters grew into giants who paved the route to greatness for our nation. These youngsters fought the enemy to the point of martyrdom. Others, like bears, are deaf, mute, emotionless, and actionless:

“They resisted... burst... were martyred.

We remained senseless like arctic bears wearing heavy armor [10]

These children matured without anyone noticing. Resistance and the various snares of the adversary rendered them centuries old rather than only a few short years old. Others kept casting a shadow over these young ones every time they would agree to the so-called peaceful compromises, banking on bogus peace words. The poet did not ask these youngsters for anything other than to be like rain in the sky of those old losers. He wanted to wash older adults from the filth of ugliness and weakness.

“Let rain pour over us to cleanse our ugliness, and please cleanse us .

We have grown to be a thousand millennia little ,

while you have grown to be centuries old in a month” [10]

2.4. The Eradication of Childhood and the Militarization of Children:

These kids were meant to grow up like kids everywhere else, going to school, hanging around in parks and playing fields, and experiencing childhood in its normal progression. Yet, as the poet put it, they acted the saviors of the generation, the generation of defeat. Instead of being buy learning the fundamentals of life, they are asked by the poet to teach the generation, including the poet himself, life fundamentals as they all were fleeing the war. The poet asked these children to fight their own battles away from him and the rest as they were the cause of failure and defeat. These children, in the poet's eyes, were not only children but rather military generals, fighting their own battles, creating military plans, and prosecuting cowardly troops for escaping from military service.:

"Leave us. We only keep doing maths... Fight your fights by yourself.

We have deserted the military... Put a noose over our necks and hang us ". [10]

The poet and his peers fled the battle and surrendered, thus becoming dead though still alive, losing their senses, feelings, and manliness. They abandoned their places, leaving these children fighting the armed enemy alone, having nothing but stamina and hope:

“We are dead in no graves and orphans of no eyes.

We hid in our burrows, leaving you to fight the dragon alone.” [10]

Instead of drinking milk, the Children of Stones drank the steel from the tanks, and the stones themselves served as their playthings. Their stones were sufficient to beat their enemies, giving them a valuable lesson in pride and resistance. Even though these children were disadvantaged in the fight against the enemy, the holders of rights, land, and cause will eventually emerge victorious:

“A child throws a stone

Or two,

Cut the Israeli snake into two halves,

Chewing tanks,

Returning with no hands.” [10]

These kids are engaged in a war of fate and existence, and they're using every trick they can learn to defeat an adversary

that's armed to the teeth with cutting-edge aircraft, artillery, tanks, and bullets. Children create with little more than their naive eyes, pencils, books, ink, glue, sketchbooks, and paintbrushes. Again, the poet invokes Christ and the Virgin Mary to compare them to the defiant kid because their foes, situation, and suffering are all the same:

A moon appears to be thrown out of the child's dark eyes.

Maybe two moons..

A pencil,

A book,

Ink,

Glue,

Drawing books,

Painting brushes,

Holy Mary screams: "O, my son.

taking him into her arms." [10]

This youngster has written an alternative history in which resistance serves as the foundation, determination serves as the character, and the child's letters only speak of the continuation of their right so long as generations of heroic individuals defend it. The Palestinian youngster, the fighting soldier, etched his name and principles into the memory of the nation, proclaiming the continuation of action and resistance over polished speeches, the words of which are coated with bogus dazzling promises. It is a new poem that has been added to the book of the Arab morning. The children of the stones wrote it with their tears, their blood, and their memories of their lost childhood:

"He opens another tunnel,

Creates a new time,

Writes a new text,

Breaks the desert's memory,

Eradicates a consumed alphabet,

From A to Z,

Punctures a dictionary,

Pronounce the death of Grammar... syntax.

Our canonical poems." [10]

3 Conclusions

Stated that the poetry of Arab countries has been influenced by the Palestinian Uprising, often known as the "Intifada." A significant number of poets wrote about the fresh hope that can be found in the struggle against the enemy to reclaim the areas that have been occupied. Nizar Qabbani was one of these poets. In 1988, he published a collection of poems dedicated to the Intifada. He called the group (The Trilogy of the Children of the Stone). In his collection, he attempted to do an analytical reading and present his viewpoints related to that great event. The research paper concludes that:

The Children of Stones had to become adults at an extremely young age since they were made to grow up too quickly. Qabbani divided children into four groups, all of which had some degree of overlap regarding their daily activities, responsibilities, and results. The following are the four categories.

Qabbani saw a glimmer of hope for the future of our country in the form of these children, separating them from the generations that came before them, which Qabbani referred to as the generations of defeat and setbacks. To Qabbani, full of resolve, passion, and optimism, these children added a new chapter to the nation's history by fighting tanks and planes with stones.

Conflicts of Interest Statement

The authors certify that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial

interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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