

The Symbolism of the Moon Between Darwish and Lorca: A Comparative Study Between Darwish's "Afraid of the Moon" and Lorca's "Ballad of the Moon"

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Abstract:

The moon does not always shine bright; at times, it appears dark. Despite its associations with femininity, beauty, innocence and new beginnings, the moon also embodies masculinity, fear, sin and connections to endings. This comparative study focuses on the contrasting use of moon symbolism and its implications in relation to two distinct cultural backgrounds; the Arabic culture represented by Mahmoud Darwish, a Palestinian poet who presents the moon as a source of fear in his poem "Afraid of the Moon", and the western culture represented by Federico Garcia Lorca, a Spanish poet who portrays the moon in "Ballad of the Moon" as a symbol of femininity and sensuality. This study attempts to highlight the influences of their choices in symbolizing the moon and the variations in meaning that come with it through the lens of French comparative literature theory.

Keywords: *Comparative literature, Poetry, Moon, Mahmoud Darwish, Lorca.*

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1. Introduction

1.1 Comparative Literature

Literature is the mirror of peoples, their historical record, and the repository of their values and beliefs. If we want to make a literary comparison between two cultures, we must seek knowledge that aims to study the different cultural and literary natures between nations, and this is what comparative literature does. Comparative literature is a field that examines how writers and texts from different cultures and languages interact and resonate with each other." (Hutchinson, 2018). Comparative literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country and sometimes beyond the confines of one particular genre." (Bassnett, 1993) In the realm of literature, there is a fight for acknowledgment that extends beyond national borders to encompass a global scale. (Casanova, 2004) Comparative literature has three famous theories: the French theory, the American theory, and the Slavic theory. We take the French theory as a framework for this research to study cultural differences and their significance in one poetic symbol and the influence between the two poetic works of poets from two different cultures "Arab and Western."

1.2 Moon

Various themes have been utilized in Arabic poetry, with their presentation differing among poets and time periods. It could be the most stunning and significant of all time. Although the moon has been a common topic throughout history, it is often used for its beauty in poetry, being described with flirtatious and praising verses both directly and metaphorically. Poetry is a form of reflection and exploring the intricacies of existence that may appear mundane to those who are not poets, yet it offers a vast landscape for the poet to delve into for

ideas, ultimately crafting them into a beautiful, artistic presentation for the reader. The moon continued to be a universal symbol that extended beyond poetry and became a part of daily life, symbolizing flawless beauty and providing solace to lovers and travelers during sleepless nights. From the pre-Islamic era to the present day, poems have immortalized the moon in all its phases, from crescent to full. Thus, the comparison to the moon is not seen as a recent development or a novel trait. For instance, the Arab tradition included the presence of the full moon. A representation of utter perfection in terms of beauty. In Arab culture, the moon symbolizes humanity, whereas in Western cultures it represents loneliness and fear. Furthermore, it holds a significant poetic position within Arab culture, representing beauty, an invisible companion, and a religious icon. Others went as far as giving it individual names like "Moon, Crescent, Badr." Despite the varying uses and perspectives, the moon continues to be a constant presence that lights up the darkness of the night and witnesses the happenings in the universe.

2. Problem of the Study

Even though numerous studies have been conducted in both Arabic and Western cultural literature, none of these studies have highlighted a significant symbol as crucial as the moon. And an examination of whether poets from the two distinct cultures show convergence or literary dissonance when using this symbolism.

3. Hypothesis of the Study

The poets' cultural background influences how they use the symbolic meaning of the moon.

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4. Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to examine symbolism of the moon in both poems and explore the connection between the symbol's significance and the poet's cultural background.

5. Methodology

This study utilizes the qualitative method of analysis. It specifically makes use of French theory of comparative literature to compare two texts semantically and identify differences and similarities in the symbolic representation of the moon.

6. Discussion and Results

Afraid of the Moon

By Mahmoud Darwish

*"Hide me. The moon has come
If only our mirror were stone
A thousand secret secrets
While your chest is bare
Eyes on the tree
Do not cover the planets
Oozing salt and numbness
Hide me... from the moon
The face of my yesterday has left
And our hands are on a trip
My house was a ditch
No cradle for the moon...
Hide me... by myself
And take the glory... and the sleeplessness
And leave me my pillow
I have you or the moon?"*
(Darwish, 1966)

Ballad of the Moon

By Federico Garcia Lorca

*"Moon came to the forge
in her petticoat of nard
The boy looks and looks
the boy looks at the Moon
In the turbulent air
Moon lifts up her arms
showing — pure and sexy —
her beaten-tin breasts
Run Moon run Moon Moon
If the gypsies came
white rings and white necklaces
they would beat from your heart
Boy will you let me dance —
when the gypsies come
they'll find you on the anvil
with your little eyes shut
Run Moon run Moon Moon
I hear the horses' hoofs*

*Leave me boy! Don't walk
on my lane of white starch*

*The horseman came beating
the drum of the plains
The boy at the forge
has his little eyes shut
Through the olive groves
in bronze and in dreams
here the gypsies come
their heads riding high
their eyelids hanging low*

*How the night heron sings
how it sings in the tree
Moon crosses the sky
with a boy by the hand*

*At the forge the gypsies
cry and then scream
The wind watches watches
the wind watches the Moon"*
(Lorca, 1923)

The moon in Darwish's poem "Afraid of the Moon" appears masculine, dangerous, and harmful. Where the poet asks his beloved to hide him from the moon that came to seek him: "Hide me, the moon has come!", and he repeats this request more than once: "Hide me... from the moon!" And "Hide me... by myself," which clearly depicts the negative, unwanted presence of the moon and the poet's fear of it. The moon also embodies the poet's fears of departure, distance, and estrangement: "The face of my yesterday has left, and our hands are on a trip" At the end of the poem, the poet's vision becomes ambiguous as a result of his confusion and fear, as he is unable to distinguish between his beloved and the moon: "Are you with me or the moon?"

As for the moon in Lorca's poem "The Ballad of the Moon" it appears feminine, soft, and gentle. The moon in this poem represents the female, and sometimes it seems that it is nothing but a metaphor for the poet's lover. Luna comes with a skirt made of white valerian fabric, representing innocence and clarity in their finest forms. On the other hand, the boy is Lorca the poet: "Moon came to the forge in her petticoat of nard The boy looks and looks the boy looks at the Moon" The word "Moon" is repeated in the poem, indicating the boy's shock and fascination with beauty and his inability to understand it. The boy here is not afraid of the moon, but rather worries about the moon, as he asks him to escape from the gypsies who are coming to kill him: "Run Moon run Moon if the gypsies came white rings and white necklaces they would beat from your heart" The presence of the moon is an ambiguous presence. It is initially seductive and feminine, but it threatens violence, as the

closed eyes give the possibility of the boy being killed by the moon: “Boy will you let me dance when the gypsies come They'll find you on the anvil with your little eyes shut“ Which indicates that the feminine moon dominates the male character in the poem.

7. Conclusion

The study concluded that the poet's cultural background plays a major role in his poetic choices and his use of symbols and their meaning. The use of the moon differed between Mahmoud Darwish and Lorca depending on their different cultures and roots. It also showed that Mahmoud Darwish did not follow the Arab pattern in his vision of the moon as a source of femininity, beauty, and innocence, but rather used it as a symbol of evil, danger, and fear, as Lorca used it in his poetry.

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