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THEMATIC AFFINITIES OF "KHOSROW AND SHIRIN" AND "ROMEO AND JULIET"

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Abstract. A romantic work can rarely be found, which would be equal to the story of Nizami's "Khosro and Shirin." Perhaps the only work which can be compared to this literary masterpiece is the tragic romantic story of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," unique poet and playwright of English literature who is full of literary delicacies. The present article attempts to investigate the content and method of processing characters in both stories and reveal their similarities to make a new light to the neglected aspects of the two famous and precious works.

Key words: Nizami; Shakespeare; tragedy; love; Khosro; Shirin; Romeo; Juliet.

Introduction

One of the bright stars of Persian literature is Hakim Nizami Ganjavi, who is placed at the top of the romantic stories of the Masnavi. Among the entrepreneurs' king of Persian literature, a poet rarely can be found like Nizami, who shows the development of the story and its characters with their beauty and richness of meaning; hence, he preserved sweetness and grace of his work for centuries. Nizami projected the radius of his genius in the Persian literature. The most valuable result of Nizami's life is the *Panj Ganj*, which has been constantly praised by poets and scholars. One of the five beautiful treasures is the unique work "Khosro and Shirin."

Shakespeare manifested elegance and appeal of love processing story and broadcasting his heroes, which created pleasant and attractive works. William Shakespeare is known as the greatest English poet and the most leading dramatic poet who is called "as England's national poet" (Ruthven, 2001, P.6). By searching in the tragic and erotic world of literature, it can be found that "Khosro and Shirin" has many similarities with a love story of

"Romeo and Juliet" by William Shakespeare, the celebrated poet and playwright of England. His in-depth talks cultured this sensational story, which today "The name Romeo, in popular culture, has become nearly synonymous with "lover"" (Tan, 2016, P.2). The present article aims to examine aspects of art and literature of the two famous poets in a comparative study, so that, through this study and comparison, it's possible to be familiar with evolution, thinking, intellectual, and literary ideas to observe how and why two great literary works are so close together, although each one has been created on the one side of this vast world. Two works, "Romeo and Juliet" and "Khosrow and Shirin," have so many similarities in terms of themes and plot; in addition, the similarities of the characters of the two stories are so remarkable. At first, the similarities of the two great poet's life should be investigated.

1. The common points of Nizami and Shakespeare's life

Common points from different perspectives in both poet's life can be a significant factor which some of them are briefly noted.

1.1. Interest in homeland

Nizami was born in Ganja, which is relatively a small city. He lived all his life in the city and died in the same place. He except for a short visit to one of the areas around the Ganja, invited by Ghazal Arsalan, remained the rest of his life in his homeland. Shakespeare was born in a small town called Stratford and had to spend his youth in London; because he wanted to be in an environment to be involved in theater and drama. Nevertheless, he backed to his hometown, Stratford, again in the last years of his life, after reaching his ambitions in the field of poetry and drama and died in the same place.

Thus, none of these two outstanding poets liked to travel so much. Although their unique literary masterpieces represent many experiences and reports of maturity and liberation of poets; nevertheless, none of them achieved experiences and refined tips through the journey; both had a special interest to their hometowns. Whatever is born of their mind is the result of wise taste, their creative mind, and by the influence of their study and meditation.

1.2. Friends

Although Nizami passed a major part of his life in seclusion; however, what confronted him out of seclusion was a tasteful outing in the mountains, deserts, and an interest in being with close friends. Nizami's friends also had so much coordination with him morally. Nizami had a long conversation with people; using many customs in his words represents his familiarity with ordinary people's circles. On the other hand, Shakespeare, as Nizami was so close to his friends who filled his loneliness and in addition language of Shakespeare, was full of the language of ordinary people, like Nizami. Dialogue of plays such as "Macbeth," "Hamlet," and "Othello" forms part of people's daily talk.

1.3. Honoring the family

Nizami was a pious man and adhered to the ethical principles who remained faithful to his wives, loved all of them, and had special feelings towards them. "He was married three times, and in his poems laments the death of each of his wives, as well as proffering advice to his son Muhammad" (Meisami, 2015, P.1). He was even inspired by them in composing poems. This can

be perceived from his romantic masnavis, the exact contents, and his visions. He had two sons; his first son Muhammad always had all his attention; he was so interested in his second son; hence, when he passed away at the young age, the poet was in sorrow for a long time. Shakespeare, like Nizami, was for years far away from home, wife, and his three children; however, he remained faithful always to his family and loved them so much. The family was so important in the mind of the poet. Shakespeare also like Nizami lost his son (Hamnet) in young age; his death, which coincided with the composition of the play "Romeo and Juliet" left a profound impact on his mind that even some believed he was inspired by his lost son to characterize "Romeo." As Rickard puts it:

Hamnet Shakespeare lived eleven years; in Stephen's reading of Shakespeare's life and work, Hamnet and Hamlet are one and the same to the mourning father. Both are linked more closely to the contents of the midwife's bag through the cockle, which Stephen has already associated with Hamlet in "Proteus," where, alluding to Ophelia's mad song in Hamlet, Stephen describes himself: "My cockle hat and staff and his my sandal shoon". (1999, P.94)

Of course, Nizami also was modeled the main character of "Khosrow and Shirin" by his lost wife Afaq. "The lofty character of Shirin, heroine of the second *Masnavi* of the *Khamseh*, was undoubtedly modeled after Afaq" (Chelkowski, 1975, P.3).

1.4. Social status

Nezami Ganjavi was grown up in a large family who had been eminent in terms of social status. He especially had an aristocratic breeding species from his mother's side; Shakespeare was born in a family whose father has received blazon as the noble man of Queen Elizabeth. So they exposed in terms of social status after the queen, nobles, and knights and were respected by the general public. Thus, both Shakespeare and Nizami grew up in the families who had a substantial position socially.

1.5. Economic prosperity

Nezami Ganjavi was supported by the family in early childhood economically and

since his family were financially self-sufficient; he could acquire knowledge and develop her own literary taste without the need to work and after the formation of the family, he had the help of rulers at that time; for example, Amir Arsalan gave him a village which had the least income and provided poet's life since he could spend all his efforts leisurely for his art.

Shakespeare never had financial problems. He had the family who was nobles, which was awarded to those who had no need financially and even could donate their neighbors. Shakespeare progressed after the marriage also, and his financial situation could be better day by day. So both poets were well economically.

1.6. Their relationship with kings

Nezami Ganjavi's life was simple and naive. He combined his artistic and literary creativity with wise and spiritual deliverance; he never praised kings except for the inevitable situations, and didn't deal his poetic solitude with the world; the rulers of the day had special consideration for him and always respected him.

Shakespeare, as well as Nizami, was not interested in kings and didn't fawn; even he had a critical eye on them. However, he was always the first consideration of Queen Elizabeth and King James I.

1.7. Impression

Both Nizami and Shakespeare accepted their literary style from poets, philosophers, and other great works. For example, Nizami was inspired by Ferdowsi's *Shahname*, Gorgani's *Vis o Ramin*, Shahi's *Kelile and Demneh*, numerous poets, and other works. As Shakespeare was inspired by Morrow, Marlowe, and reading works such as "Virgil and Caesar," "Plautus and Terence" were effective on his mind.

On the other hand, both Shakespeare and Nizami have had their own innovation in the literature of their own time. Although, before Nizami, storytelling was common; but, he was so heretic with his inimitable style, as well as allegorical literature and spoken language; Shakespeare also began a new chapter in the drama of England. Hence, many later poets and writers of literary style have adapted them as samples. "The popularity of Nizami's Khamsa

led to several imitations" (Anonimo, 2009, p.200). For example, according to the researchers, more than two hundred people have written *Khamsa* to imitate Nizami. Among the poets who imitated Nizami are: Amir Khosro Dehlavi, Jami, Hatefi, Qasemi, Vahsahi, Ufi, Maktabi, Faizi Fayyazi, Ashraf Maraghi, Azar Bigdelli, Khajoo Kermani, Halayi Joghatayi, Maulana Hashemi Kermani, Maulana Navidi Shirazi. Many writers and poets after Shakespeare always tried and are trying to close their works to his style.

1.8. Familiarity with the techniques of war, by the influence of society

England was at war at the time of Shakespeare's life and Ganja, Nizami's homeland too. Despite the spirit of subtle and quiet nature of two poets, both were influenced by the process of domestic and foreign wars of their own time, which is visible in the reflection of the war on some of their works. In some of the Shakespeare's drama such as "Hamlet," "Othello," "Henry V," and... one can encounter with the advent of soldiers, combatants, military hierarchy, and methods, which describe the beauty of these scenes in detail and is representative of the familiarity of the poet to the tactician, affected by ill-country. "Shakespeare wrote a lot about the nation at war or existing in an uneasy peace, during which religious strife and bigotry could result in a treason trial and one's head being stuck on a pike at Traitor's Gate" (Milner, 2008, P.41). In the works of Nizami, description of horseback riding scenes, weapons, spears and fencing informs his skill in the use of weapons of the time, the power of fighting, and self-defense, which was necessary for life in the turbulent society of Ganja in that time.

On the other hand, the ideas of Shakespeare and Nizami against the rulers of their own society were influenced by the issue of the war. For example, Shakespeare was suffered by war, riots, executions, and plots in Elizabethan times; when he saw King James I and his court system are steeped in luxury and decadence in the troubled and chaotic country, he expressed in his plays that the English court life is corrupted.

Nizami, who was extremely upset by the mainstream of chaos and conflicts in Ganja was

happy when Tugrul Ben Arslan could purify the territory of Ganja from enemy forces; on the other hand, he preached in his poetry those who are always on top of the government, and had pleasure rather than fix the chaos. Shakespeare and Nizami were not indifferent about the security of their country; their response is a representative of their patriotism.

2. The history of the story of Khosrow and Shirin

The story of "Khosrow and Shirin" has been part of the history of Iran fabulously, which related to the reign of Parviz; when the basics destruction of Sasanian and defeat of Iran was provided by Arabs. Therefore, it was not born out of Nizami's mind; but it was quoted heart by heart to have been gotten by him. So before Nizami systematized this story, it was narrated by other poets, which among them: Ferdowsi, Iranian famous poet in "*Shahnama*" and F. Gorgani in "*Vic and Ramin*" can be noted.

3. The history of the story of Romeo and Juliet

Shakespeare is known as the father of English playwright. It should be noted that he got always the subject of his plays from other sources. In response to a question which was raised about the origin of these two stories, it should be said that as Nizami is not the creator of "Khosrow and Shirin" and was helped by the works of the ancients to create it, Shakespeare also was not created the original story of "Romeo and Juliet" for the first time but this story has a long history. "Romeo and Juliet was not an original story. Shakespeare actually based it on an ancient tale. Like all of Shakespeare's plays, he found his sources in history. He recycled old stories and adapted them into his language, in his own time" (Rice, 2012, P.37).

"The earliest known version of the story, published in 1476, was written by an Italian novelist, Masuccio Salernitano" (Coleman, 2008, P.4). "The original relater of this story appears to have been Luigi da Porto, a gentleman of Vicenza, who died in 1529" (Shakespeare, 1836, P135). This story with the title "Romeu e Julieta" incorporated in his historic final collection of stories by the name of "Novellamente Historia

Nrtrovata Di Due Nobili Amanti" which has been published in 1530. As Hudson puts it:

Bandello's Novelle. In 1554 was published in Italy a 1 volume of prose tales, Novelle, by the poet and story-writer Matteo Bandello (i 480-1562), which included the story of Da Porto, with most of the characters and incidents which appear in the later versions used by Shakespeare. In the story of Da Porto, and also in that of Bandello, Juliet is made to waken from sleep while Romeo still lives. (1916, P. xii)

In any case, undoubtedly the story is real, which occurred in Verona in Italy. Still, the house of Capulet is there; even it is an interesting place for lovers of this historic and beautiful story. Lovers from all over the world go there and place letters and romantic dreams between the joints of its walls. Of course, it is obvious that the source review can't help to understand the drama; because Shakespeare changed or complicated in his own taste the motivations which were in his sources. He changed history and myths to create a unique tragic consequence.

4. Thematic similarities between the two stories

Looking at the theme of the two stories, the extreme proximity of the two works can be realized. For example:

a) As "Khosrow and Shirin" are from a high family, "Romeo and Juliet" are from the two wealthy and prominent families of the city.

b) Romantic adventures in both stories start in a moment. "Khosro and Shirin" lost their heart with hearing participles and seeing a picture in a moment, and "Romeo and Juliet" fell in love with a look.

c) In the way of love of both groups, "Khosrow and Shirin" and "Romeo and Juliet," problems and obstacles raised which form the story.

d) "Khosrow and Shirin" and "Romeo and Juliet" both got successfully married.

e) As Khosro had a competitor such as Farhad; Romeo also had a hard work competitor like Paris.

f) Khosro killed Farhad with guile and deception, and Romeo killed Paris with his own hands.

g) As Shirin had competitors such as Mary and Shekar and finally she herself was the victor of Khosro's heart; Romeo forgot Rosaline's heart-rending love with Juliet's superiority and gave his love completely to her.

h) Both couples tried to finish this love quest with good faith and foresight to achieve their aspirations and communicate with each other. Shapour is the common friend of Khosro and Shirin and their love relationship; priest Lawrence is Romeo and Juliet's mediator.

i) During each story six characters died: in the story of Nizami, we encounter with the death of Hormuz (Khosro's father), Mahin Banu (Shirin's aunt), Farhad, Mary, Khosrow and Shirin and in the story of Shakespeare; Mercutio (Romeo's friend), Tybalt (Juliet's cousin), Romeo's Mother, Paris, Romeo and Juliet.

j) In both stories, two people committed suicide from the high intensity of love, their beloved's death, and not having a desire to continue life without her. In the story of Nizami, Farhad and Shirin, and in the story of Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet.

k) In portraying the heroes of love, Nizami described the Khosro's love along with change; Shakespeare made a change in Romeo's personality through the knowledge of true love and made him a dynamic hero.

l) Both Shirin and Juliet were loyal to their love and endured the hardships of the way of love to reach it. However, both were loving and very attractive to other men like Farhad and Paris, but didn't leave a moment of thinking about their true love; both can be considered the main hero of the story. Both Shirin and Juliet drove their throat with the dagger and died beside the corpse of their beloved.

m) The end of both stories has tragic and shocking feeling with the horrible and catastrophic death of the heroes. In both stories, the heroes were killed at the climax of the story and the overflowing and slapping paper of love, which was rounded throughout the story, has been closed in a sad way on the page of their untimely death.

n) Both stories have a historical background. Still, works from Bisotun and some clear points of the story of Khosrow and Shirin

are seen in the mountains of Kermanshah. In Verona, there is still a balcony of Capello's house, which is the celebration of lovers and is visited as a sight-seeing place.

o) The subject and the theme of both stories are expressing love and reaching the beloved and consequently, the self-sacrifice of the heroes in the way of love, which is of the fascinating and sophisticated subjects of literature.

5. Introducing the equivalent characters in the two stories

a) Shirin-Juliet

These two characters are similar in many aspects of the two stories, including:

Beauty, happiness, love with a glance, shame and madness, restraining the cravings and emphasis on the official marriage, restlessness in love, having a dynamic personality, and suicide for love.

b) Khosrow-Romeo

These two characters are similar in different perspectives, such as:

Beauty, happiness and music, romantic and subtle language, having another lover except Shirin and Juliet, love in a moment, violence and conflict, dynamic personality and so on.

c) Farhad - Paris

Among the similarities between these two characters, these points can be mentioned:

A competitor of love for heroes of the two stories, death by the hands of heroes of the stories, engage in unilateral love and so on.

d) Maryam, Shekar-Rosaline

The similarities between these three characters can be pointed out:

Presence on the margin of the story, competing for the love of heroines, and helping to manifest the main character of the heroin more.

e) Shapur - Priest Lawrence

These two characters are close in some ways; for example: interface between lover and beloved, empathy with them and planning to bring the lover and beloved to each other.

6. Conclusion

Comparative literature is a branch of literary criticism, which compares the literary

relationship of nations and speaks of the reflection of a nation's literature in another one. On the other hand, the comparative study tries to throw a light beam to their covered wings by comparing and contrasting the special literary works of the different nations. As de Zepetnek put it:

First, Comparative Literature means the knowledge of more than one national language and literature, and/or it means the knowledge and application of other disciplines in and for the study of literature and second, Comparative Literature has an ideology of inclusion of the Other, be that a marginal literature in its several meanings of marginality, a genre, various text types, etc. (1998, P.13).

In fact, what is important in Comparative literature is research on literature crossing and different languages and cultures, finding sophisticated and numerous literary links in the past and present, and overall provide a plan which has historical links in literary influence.

In sum, all the purposes of this essay have been representing the same effect, proximity, and transatlantic links between different nations. It was found that Nizami Ganjavi and William Shakespeare, two prominent poets of the world literature, have many similarities in their lives story and the same condition throughout their lives, which caused spiritualities, attitudes, and similar emotions, that are evident in writing their eternal works.

In response to this fundamental question that has Nizami been the first writer of "Khosro and Shirin" and has Shakespeare been, the creator of the unique story of "Romeo and Juliet" or not, we got that neither Nizami nor Shakespeare has been the creator of these stories; however, in fact, these two stories, have had a long history. "Khosro and Shirin" had been a bit of Iranian history, which is legendary, quoted heart by heart, and recreated by so many poets throughout time; each one put it in verse or prose by his own will. The love story of "Romeo and Juliet" in principle, had an Italian background that was quoted in different languages until finally, Shakespeare wrote the story in English.

A comparison of the stories of the two works leads us to the conclusion that both stories

are very similar to each other in terms of the content of the story. For example, both lovers are from aristocrat, famous, and distinguished families; in both works, love comes in a moment; any two couples deal with endless problems on the way; both hero and heroines had competitors; both heroes caused the death of competitors; the heroes in both stories are fun and savory; in both stories, someone plays the role of interface and mediation, which is Shapoor in Nizami's work and Lawrence in Shakespeare's work; during each story, six people died; in each story, there are two cases of love suicide; the end of both stories is tragic; both lover and beloved were killed in a catastrophic way; both stories have a historical background and still monuments of their works are visible in the world; the theme of both stories is love; the design of both stories is the same in the context of the existence of crisis and conflict, emotion, peak, and knot.

The characters in both stories are pictured with ultimate accuracy and with respect to steadfastness and moderation. The main characters in both stories are heroes of love that are "Khosrow and Shirin" and "Romeo and Juliet" who had an active presence almost from the beginning to the end of the story in different events and situations; all four have a dynamic personality; other characters are introduced throughout the story. Nizami and Shakespeare did not leave the audience to themselves to convey the thought and message of the story; however, through the introduction of unparalleled characters, personalities, and their behavioral patterns, attracts them to the adventures of the story. Some characters in both stories have a parallel and equivalent role, function, and the effect: Khosrow and Romeo, Shirin and Juliet, Farhad and Paris, Maryam and Shekar, and Rosaline, Shapur and priest Lawrence.

However, the similarities between these two works are very wonderful; because there were several centuries and the remarkable cultural and historical difference between these two poets; also it was impossible for Shakespeare to study Nizami's works due to the lack of communication tools. So the cause is nothing but

the extent of literature in the world, the interest of different people in thoughts, beliefs, various cultures and feelings towards the story and storytelling, understanding the meaning and reaction of common and unfavorable concepts like love, friendship, sacrifice, honesty, loyalty, lies, hatred, betrayal, death and so on, everywhere in the world and through various humanities.

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