



Nizar Qabbani: Journal of An Indifferent Woman

George Nicolas El-Hage Ph.D.

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Nizar Qabbani is the most celebrated and popular poet in contemporary Arabic Literature. He remains one of the most prolific and influential Avant-guard poets of Modern Arabic Poetry. His writings constitute a School of thought, a movement, a trend, that produced a large number of followers across the Arab world who tried to imitate Nizar and adopt the path that he pioneered, but none earned the fame and prestige that Qabbani achieved. Nizar started his career writing about love, romance and romantic and erotic topics. These were fiery subjects and mostly taboo at the time. He was severely criticized by the conservative establishments, but this never deterred him. His goal was to expose the injustice imposed on women, to openly discuss love and passion without shame, and to free the Arab spirit from the years of bondage in the dungeons of past traditions. His poetry later evolved into the political arena, and he wrote the most moving and effective political poetry criticizing the then current Arab regimes and exposing their failures, complacency and ultimate defeat in facing the national responsibility that they were entrusted with. In his poetry, Nizar continued the theme of love poetry that was started by Omru' al-Qays in Pre Islamic Arabia and then popularized by the two Umayyad poets: Jamil Bin Mu 'ammar and 'Umar Bin Abi Rabi 'a. In his poetry, Nizar combined the elegance, transparency, sexuality, and piety of the three poets and brought poetry to the homes and dining tables of the millions in the Arab world who loved him and admired his poems. He wanted to make poetry like bread a daily nourishment available to every person who could read Arabic. On the other hand, when Nizar Qabbani wrote his political poetry, he was focused, critical, harsh, punitive, severe and unforgiving. He was bleeding for his nation and eulogizing its failures and defeats. When Nizar wrote about love, he dipped his plum in Jasmine and rose water. But when he wrote his political satire, he dipped his pen in blood. This book is not about sex and seduction. This book is an existential document written by an abused woman awaiting her execution. She knew that there is "No Exit," yet she chose to overcome her fate and write. This is a surrealist diary of a frustrated female pushed to her limits by the costumes, traditions, and beliefs of a rigid society that treats women as slaves and empowers men to rule over them. This nameless female, a modern Scheherazade, stood face to face against her assassin in her attempt to triumph over death by documenting her story, and consequently, the story of the millions of women who were sacrificed daily in the bedchamber of Shahrayar . However, the frustration, anger, despair and dejection of all these women is also evident and is shared by men at the end of the book as the " men" admit their guilt and sin that has accompanied them since the "Age of Ignorance" in Pre-Islamic Arabia.

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