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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## The Poetic Female Persona in Nizar Qabbani's Work versus Contemporary Female Poets

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**ABSTRACT**

This article draws a comparison between the poetic female persona in Nizar Qabbani's poetry and that in the works of his contemporary female poets. The study focuses on the primary characteristics of the poetic female persona in each, and examines the extent to which Qabbani succeeded in crafting a poetic female persona that resonates with those depicted by female poets of his time. The analysis begins with a definition of the poetic persona, followed by an exploration of the distinctive features of the poetic female persona as written by women. It then delves into the characteristics of Qabbani's poetic female persona and culminates in a comparison between the two.

**KEYWORDS**

Poetic Female Persona; Nizar Qabbani; Contemporary Female Poets

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### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Literature Review

The poetic persona is a contingent existential self (Assadi, 2023 a), an incidental or instantaneous entity that represents the poet's immediate state within the poetic space (Ali & al-Utbi, 2022). It is a character created by the poet, distinct from the poet's own self. This persona is the voice through which the poet speaks, stripped of personal subjectivity. The poet dons the mask of a character they wish to describe internally (Al-Samman, 2022), using it to convey the experiences and ideas contained within the poem, thereby presenting events from a particular perspective. The poetic persona may serve as a persuasive device, as the poet selects a character with whom they empathize, share burdens, or one that resonates with the audience. The poet then speaks through this character (Ghoneim, 2020), creating the illusion that the speaker is the chosen persona and not the poet themselves. There is no barrier to this character being entirely fictional, woven from elements of history, the present, or mythology. What matters is not the identity of the character, but rather the opportunities it affords the poet (Booth, 2012).

#### 1.2 Characteristics of the Poetic Female Persona in Works by Women:

The primary characteristics of the poetic female persona as written by women can be summarized as follows:

##### 1.3. Authenticity, Intensity, and Equanimity of Emotion:

This is one of the most prominent features. Contemporary female poets have managed to faithfully express their repressed desires from the realm of the unconscious, capturing their daydreams with originality (Jussawalla & Omran). In most love poems, each poetess portrays herself as a passionate lover, overwhelmed by love and consumed by yearning (Fakhreddine & Stetkevych, 2023). The collective effort of these poets appears to have been directed towards creating an idealized image of the enamored woman (Assadi, 2021 b).

An examination of the poetic female persona in Nizar Qabbani's romantic poems reveals that these characteristics are also present in his work. The poetic persona often portrays herself as a passionate lover, eager to meet her beloved, as reflected in the following lines:

*"And his love sleeps within my bones."*

And she says:

*"Visit me once at dawn,  
And spread your wings over me.  
I have prepared my heart—now adhere to me,  
You know your place."*

And also:

*"Do not ask me the name of my beloved,  
I fear the fragrance will intoxicate you.  
By God, if I were to reveal even a single letter,  
Lilacs would crowd the paths.  
Do not search for him within my chest,  
I have left him to drift with the sunset."*

And she says:

*"O my beloved, my lips burn with longing,  
So be gentle with this gathered redness.  
Embrace me, embrace me, and crush my bones,  
Devour my mouth and shatter my ribs,  
Hold me like the winter, for in love,  
I cannot bear the frailty of spring."*

And she says:

*"Why did you abandon me?  
If you knew that I love you  
More than I love myself,  
Why?"*

And she says:

*"You still ask me about my birthday.  
Then record what you do not know:  
The date of your love for me,  
Is the date of my birth."*

And she says:

*"Within me lives a beautiful beast,  
Whose name is Man.  
He has warm eyes,  
From which honey drips.  
I touch his bare chest,  
I touch him and blush.  
For centuries, he has been hidden*

*Within my chest... he does not depart.  
He sleeps beneath my garments,  
He sleeps as if he were my fate."*

**1.4. The Capacity to Suggest Through Imagery:**

This characteristic is evident in the work of many female poets (Moawad, 2021), some of whom have successfully restored the innate visual power of words in language. Originally, words were meant to convey sensory images, as seen in the poetry of Nazik al-Malaika:

*"The joy of orphans in an embrace of paternal love,  
The joy of the thirsty who tastes water,  
The joy of July in feeling icy breezes,  
The joy of darkness in the birth of light."*

Or in the verses of Fadwa Tuqan:

*"Sorrow falls like rain, the night of Jerusalem is silence and gloom,  
A curfew is imposed, no sound is heard in the heart of the city  
Except the bloody footsteps  
Beneath which Jerusalem shrinks like a captive virgin."*

Sensory imagery is also abundant in the female poetic persona in Nizar Qabbani's poetry, as in:

*"And I am like a child in his hand, like a feather carried by the breeze."*

And:

*"I hid my head on his chest... as if  
I were a child returned to his parents."*

And in the "Diaries":

*"My friends  
Are dolls wrapped in cotton,  
Inside a closed museum,  
Coins... minted by history, neither gifted nor spent,  
Groups of fish suffocating in their tanks,  
And glass vessels whose blue butterflies have died."*

And:

*"My homeland rejects love,  
Confiscates it like any dangerous drug,  
Pursues it,  
Pursues that delicate, dreamy, tender child,  
Clips his wings  
And fills his heart with terror.  
My homeland kills the god who blessed it with fertility,  
Who turned its stones to gold,  
And covered its land with grass."*

And:

"Man, like a mythical creature, lives in our minds,  
 We imagined him a dragon... with ninety fingers,  
 And a drunken crimson maw.  
 We imagined him a bat... moving with the darkness,  
 We imagined him a pirate, we imagined him a serpent."

And:

"With nails in our hands and nails in our feet,  
 And above our necks a sharp, rabid sword,  
 And on our bed, an ugly, pockmarked slave,  
 He crucifies us with our breasts,  
 And whips us with a scourge,  
 For millions of years... while the executioner rejoices."

### **1.5. Clarity of the Poetic Experience and the Organic Unity of the Poem:**

Most contemporary female poets have demonstrated an ability to grasp the components of their poetic experiences with a conscious mind, arranging them logically before even considering committing them to paper. One of the distinguishing features of Nizar Qabbani's general writing style is his refusal to rush the creative process, not allowing agitation or impulsiveness to dominate his poetic expression (Mummelthei, 2020), as he considered these to be antithetical to the essence of poetry.

As for the organic unity of the poem, it refers to the coherence of theme and the emotions it evokes, along with the corresponding organization of imagery and ideas in a manner that allows the poem to evolve naturally toward its conclusion (Jambak et al., 2024). This feature is evident in Nizar Qabbani's poetry (LaRose, 2028), where each poem revolves around a singular theme, interwoven and clarified as the poem progresses, culminating in a fully realized concept. This characteristic is observable in both his classical poems and those composed in free verse or the modern meter form. The subject matter remains consistently singular, even in his collection *Diary of an Indifferent Woman*, where, despite the diversity of poems and the variety of ideas presented, all thoughts ultimately converge under a single overarching theme: the expression of the oppression faced by women in Eastern Arab society, and the subsequent rebellion against male dominance (Mummelthei, 2020).

### **1.6 Excellence of Imagination:**

The imaginations of contemporary female poets have transcended the boundaries of mere visual imagery (Abduljabbar, 2019). They have ascribed qualities of one sensory perception to another, attributing colors to sounds, transforming scents into melodies, and imbuing visuals with fragrance. Such instances abound in Nizar Qabbani's poetry, as illustrated by the following examples:

"His mother did not soften

Nor did mine

And his love slumbers in my bones

If my mother hid my shawl in her box

I have a shawl woven from clouds

Or if they closed the window so I wouldn't see

I opened a window made of illusions

I love the scent of the wound for his sake

So have they perhaps perfumed my sorrow?"

Or in another example:

*"Groom me*

*Adorn me*

*Color my pale nails*

*For I am in haste*

*A garment that harvests the sun*

*Passion and lips that paint the four seasons*

*I do not name it*

*Even if its name is the pluck of a lute*

*And the whisper of the farm"*

And elsewhere:

*"You see him in the laughter of the streams*

*In the flutter of the playful butterfly*

*In the sea, in the breath of the meadows*

*And in the song of every nightingale*

*In the tears of winter when it weeps*

*And in the generous rain when it pours forth"*

And finally:

*"Why do the flowers turn to coal in our vases?*

*Because we have killed the scent*

*And assassinated the fragrances"*

These examples reflect the depth and complexity of Nizar Qabbani's imaginative faculties, wherein the sensory experiences are intertwined, leading to a rich and evocative poetic expression.

## **2. Analysis**

### **2.1. Crafting Musical Structure:**

Several contemporary female poets have adhered to the classical structure of the poem (El-Gendy, 2019), while others have divided the poem into multiple stanzas that share the same meter but differ in rhyme, with each stanza presenting a specific idea that connects to the following one (Fakhreddine & Stetkevych, 2023). Some poets oscillated between the traditional form of the poem and free verse, relying on a single metrical unit as a musical entity repeated throughout the poem.

Nizar Qabbani varied his approach in crafting poems that express the female poetic self (Assadi, 2021 a). He composed some in the classical structure, as seen in poems like "Ana Mahrouma" ("I Am Deprived"), "Al-Shaqeeqtan" ("The Two Sisters"), "Hikaya" ("A Tale"), "Washaya" ("Slander"), "Habibi" ("My Beloved"), "Al-Qamees Al-Abyad" ("The White Shirt"), "Ila Rajul" ("To a Man"), among

others. He divided several of his poems into multiple stanzas that share the same meter but differ in rhyme, with each stanza presenting a specific idea that connects to the subsequent one, as seen in his poems "Limaadha?" ("Why?") and "Awdat Ayloul" ("The Return of September"). He also wrote some of his poems in free verse, such as "Nifaaq" ("Hypocrisy"), "As'aluka Al-Raheela" ("I Ask You to Leave"), and "A'anf Hobben A'ashtuhu" ("The Most Violent Love I've Ever Lived"), as well as in his collection *Diary of an Indifferent Woman* and others.

## **2.2. The Richness of Feminine Imagery and Expressions in Poetry:**

These are images and expressions that rarely appear in the poetry of men, as exemplified by Alia Al-Ja'ar when she addresses love:

*"You changed my phrase  
So that you seemed like the dewy blossom"*

Or by Aatika Al-Khazraji:

*"I love him, I do not deny it; he is my destiny  
And my master, and I am one of his loyal subjects"*

Or by Alia Dalati:

*"Let me be intoxicated  
From your arm, and immerse me further"*

Many other expressions are found in women's poetry, such as "perfume and nectar," "the jasmine's slumber," "the enchanted violet," "Oh, your hands overflow with longing and tenderness," and "I wish I could spread my eyes as a bed for him."

A characteristic feature of women's poetry is their unique utilization of their personal tools, such as kohl and perfumes, in a manner distinct from their significance to men (Assadi, 202 b). These items become feminine symbols imbued with deep connotations, integral to their very being and impossible to dispense with, to the extent that they sometimes bestow a sense of sanctity and humanity upon them due to their intense association. The female poet often lingers over what catches her attention and what she needs, even if these things might seem trivial, naive, or even ridiculous to men and society at large. As Nabeeha Al-Khateeb says:

*"The breezes teased the hem of my dress  
As drowsiness toyed with the edge of my eyelid"*

She also mentions her rings and necklace in another context:

*"O 'Ahd, what if I were to remove my rings?!  
And sever a necklace that once was my glory!"*

Suad Al-Sabah utilizes a woman's personal items in her address to her lover:

*"I hid in my hair for my lover a jasmine blossom."*

Suad Al-Sabah underscores the woman's relationship with her belongings. Out of her intense love for her lover, she commands him to leave her being, which is symbolized by her personal items:

*"Sir,  
Leave My bed sheets  
The spray of water that flows over my body in the morning  
My pins... my combs  
And my Arabic kohl"*

This emphasis on the importance of a woman's possessions is also prevalent in many of Nizar's poems, where the female poetic self in the poem "The Two Sisters" says:

*"The lipstick... Sister*

*On the balconies of suspicion*

*My rendezvous with it  
Where are my paints... my comb... and the jewelry?*

*I am in a longing as fierce as a hurricane  
Hand me the dress from its hanger*

*and from the brocade*

*Bring me the finest one"*

And she says:

*"On my sideburn, a rose button fell asleep  
And from my shirt, a button slipped away"*

And she says:

*"Did my French scent intoxicate you?  
My love, I perfumed myself for you  
In the corner, the bottle calls you  
The perfume asks me to ask you"*

And she says:

*"Won't you congratulate me, you miser?  
On this new shirt of mine  
Its threads sing songs  
So, you ungrateful one, say something  
It widened at the points of my sleeve  
And tightened... and tightened over my breasts"*

And she says:

*"Yesterday ended... My taffeta dress  
Did you see my dress?  
I fulfilled in it all your desires  
And whims... and embellishments  
And many various frills  
Its sleeves are the grass of the lakes  
Its buttons... like a herd of stars  
What is my story? Three hours  
And I revolve around my mirror"*

But the woman's relationship with her belongings is not always one of love and friendship. Sometimes, the poetess wages war on her belongings, as Suad Al-Sabah did in her poem "Female 2000" when she shattered her belongings and climbed over their shards to realize herself. She says:

*"I could have,  
Like all the women of the world,  
Flirted with the mirror*

*I could have beautified myself...  
 Put Kohl in my eyes  
 Coddled myself...  
 Not refused  
 Not gotten angry  
 Swallowed my tears  
 And swallowed oppression  
 Avoided the questions of history  
 And fled from the torment of the self  
 But I betrayed the laws of womanhood  
 And chose to confront words"*

Here, the poetess chose to be herself, apart from her belongings, renouncing them because she saw them as shackles that confine women within a narrow circle (Assadi, 2023, a). Therefore, she launched a fierce attack to renounce these things and to shake off the dust that had accumulated on her, considering it a defiance of the laws of oppressed femininity, which had been dazzled by the glitter of appearances. This rebellious, rejecting approach toward women's belongings is also found in Nizar's poems, where the female poetic self revolts against women's possessions as a way of rejecting her reality and rebelling against her oppressed and unjust condition (Assadi, 2023 b). Such a rebellious attitude is evident in the poems of *Diary of an Indifferent Woman*, in which the female poetic self rejects her situation and rises against the oppression and discrimination she experiences in an overtly patriarchal society (Ghasemi Arani et al., 2020). She says in Poem No. 4:

*"My magazines are scattered... and my music bores me"*

And she says, strongly and angrily rejecting her belongings:

*"My dresses!"  
 Why have I come to hate them?  
 Why don't I tear them apart?  
 I gaze upon them indifferently  
 As if I don't know them  
 As if... I was never in them  
 I move them and fill them  
 For whom do the dresses hang... their red and blue?  
 Their wide and narrow?  
 Their bare and closed?  
 For whom is my silver! For whom is my gold?  
 For whom is French perfume?  
 That shakes the earth around me"*

Nizar raises the bar of protest to the highest degree when the female poetic self not only revolts against her belongings but also against her body. She says:

*"For whom does my chest grow?  
 For whom did its cherries ripen? For whom did its apples bloom?  
 For whom? Two Chinese dishes... made of shell and of pearls?  
 For whom? Two golden cups... and there is no one to intoxicate?  
 For whom is a calling lip... upon which the sugar froze?  
 For Satan? For worms? For the impenetrable walls?  
 I raise them, and the sunlight waters them  
 Ears of my blonde hair"*

We observe similar defiance and rebellion in Poem No. 6 from the collection *Diary of an Indifferent Woman*, where she states:

*"I secluded myself for hours today, reflecting on my body's issues,  
 I regretted that it is my body, regretted its softness,*



*And I revolted against its designer, its shaper, its sculptor,  
I grieved for its sight, why did God shape it, round it, perfect it?  
Why did God torment me with its allure and torment it?  
And hung it on the highest of my chest as a wound I cannot forget."*

### **3. Results:**

Regarding this feature (the abundance of feminine images and expressions in Nizar Qabbani's poetry), Şalāh Faḍl presents what critics have said about the most common and recurrent words in Qabbani's lexicon, and the semantic fields that organize this lexicon of sensory words. These words often describe the woman's body, her parts, her belongings, and how to connect with them, making up approximately 75% of this lexicon. Faḍl classifies them according to his stylistic approach into four domains:

- a. Words connected to the woman's body, her parts, her clothes, and the tools she uses for adornment, such as the waist, breasts, hair, mouth, chest, nipple, eyelashes, and dress, reaching a total of 35%.
- b. Words related to the sensory natural world, referring to its objects like jewels, pearls, gold, silver, marble, jasper, jasmine, cherries, buds, winter, and summer, making up 40%.
- c. Words denoting sensory actions like desire, gaze, smile, kiss, scent, crying, appointment, question, flirtation, burning, and others, reaching 20%.
- d. Non-sensory words characterized by a limited degree of abstraction, though well-defined, such as sadness, nostalgia, imagination, longing, torment, hatred, love, dignity, God, and Satan, constituting 5%.

Although Faḍl's study (which aligns with the research conducted by Shākīr al-Nābulī in his book *The Light and the Game*) supports our research and validates our stance on the abundance of feminine expressions in Qabbani's poetry, we believe, for the sake of credibility, that it is necessary to point out the inaccuracy of Şalāh Faḍl and al-Nābulī's claims regarding the narrowness and limitation of Qabbani's lexicon (Bishara, 2023). Nevertheless, we accept from their research the prevalence of feminine expressions in Qabbani's poetry, particularly in poems where the lyrical self is a woman, as we have previously provided examples.

#### **3.1 Delicacy of Expression:**

Women's poetry is distinguished by its softness, in contrast to men's poetry, aligning with their temperament, which tends toward tenderness, sweetness, smoothness, and gentleness, and shies away from strength and robustness. An example is found in Nāzīk al-Malā'ika's words:

"You taught my tightly-closed heart the generosity of dew and the humiliation of flame."

Or Fadwā Ṭūqān's lines:

*"And he would depict to my heart the encounter,  
What will come, and what will be,  
And how eyes will meet eyes."*

Examples from Nizar's poems where the lyrical self is a woman include:

*"I love the fragrance of the wound because of him,  
Do you think they scented my sorrow?"*

And:

*"Do not ask me what my lover's name is,  
I fear for you the intoxication of scents,  
By God... if I uttered a single letter,  
Lilac would pile up in the streets.*

*Do not seek him here in my chest,  
I left him running with the sunset."*

And:

*"Why did you abandon me?  
If you knew  
I love you more than myself,  
Why?"*

Or:

*"I forgave him... and inquired about his news,  
And cried for hours on his shoulders,  
And without realizing, I left my hand  
To sleep like a bird between his hands."*

### **3.2. Ornamentation of Poetry with Rhetorical and Musical Adornments:**

Such as paronomasia, antithesis, and Quranic citations, which align with the nature of women, who tend to adorn themselves, their clothes, their homes, and all aspects of their lives. An example of antithesis is in Nāzik al-Malā'ika's line:

*"Our enemy who loves us or our beloved foe."*

An example of complete paronomasia is found in 'Ātika's poetry:

*"Where is Baghdad today from us,  
And how can a heart, shaken by longing, be soothed?"*

These rhetorical and musical adornments are abundant in Nizar's poetry, particularly in poems where the lyrical self is a woman. In most of Nizar's poems written in the classical structure, we find rhyme in the first verse, as in:

*"His mother did not soften... and neither did mine.  
And his love sleeps in my bones."*

Or:

*"Visit me once,  
And spread your wings over me."*

And:

*"My French scent, did it intoxicate you?  
My love, I perfumed myself for you."*

And:

*"Continue smoking... it seduces me,  
A man... in the moment of smoking."*

And:

*"Does he think I'm a toy in his hands?  
I'm not thinking of returning to him."*

Examples of antithesis in her words:

*"Or they shut the window so I wouldn't see,  
I opened a window of illusion."*

Or:

*"People were not compassionate toward our love,  
And the vineyard's branches were compassionate."*

And:

*"And tell me that you won't... no, don't tell me,  
And sail with my hair that shaded you."*

Or:

*"And the embroidery and ornamentation,  
Sprays of light, sprays of shade."*

Or:

*"And the one who opens doors closes them,  
And the one who lights fires extinguishes them,  
Oh, the one who smokes silently and leaves me,  
In the sea, I raise my anchor and cast it away."*

Examples of paronomasia in her words:

*"My French scent, did it intoxicate you?  
My love, I perfumed myself for you.  
I created the atmosphere for you,  
And a chest... do you remember how it pampered you?"*

And:

*"Enough hypocrisy!  
What's the use of all this embrace?"*

Or:

*"To throw myself in a seat...  
Hours in this temple."*

And:

*"Hide me in it for days,  
Imprison me in it for years."*

### **3.3. The Precise Depiction of Emotions, Psychologies, and Reactions:**

Contemporary female poets have rendered a precise depiction of their emotions, psychologies, and reactions, distancing their poetry from the traditional sphere within which women had long been confined. Their poetry has seen a reduction in the focus on the physical beauty of the beloved, with an increased emphasis on describing the emotional experiences and admiration for the

psychological attributes of their beloved (Al-Samman, 2022). The predominant tone of their love poetry is one of sadness and lamentation over unfaithfulness. They have made love their primary human concern. In his poems where the poetical "I" is female, Nizar Qabbani has also emphasized the portrayal of love's emotional and sentimental experiences, dedicating some poems to lamenting the unfaithfulness and lack of commitment of the beloved, and rarely indulging in the physical allure of the beloved.

#### 4. Discussion

Attention to color, its description, and the meticulous observation of its role as a reflection of human emotions, and as a form of those emotions, is one of the preoccupations of women who extensively engage with it. Women's discourse is characterized by the use of words that express a precision in description surpassing that of men, with women possessing a rich color vocabulary. Some researchers attribute this focus to socio-cultural factors that enhance women's interest in clothing (Ali & al-Utbi, 2022). Clothing and adornment (feminine items) are seen as a form of language that supports verbal behavior, thereby fulfilling women's aspirations for distinction, and gaining acceptance and admiration from others. Al-Afifah contends that women's perception and engagement with color are based on its relation to emotional states, its association with expressive values, and emotional experiences (Ghasemi Arani et al., 2020). Female poets have frequently employed color in their poems, with Nazik al-Malaika using color extensively in her poems, where almost no poem is devoid of mention of colors or their sources, as exemplified by her lines:

*"An era of deep blackness, and the color of stars Reminds me of the eyes of wolves"*

*"Explode white upon the rock In a color and light that defies all human filth"*

Soad al-Sabah's lines:

*"Does a rose grow from a noose? Or do red flowers bloom from the eyes of the dead?"*

Nabila al-Khatib's lines:

*"Or did you come to choose for me Between white and black"*

*"So that the white does not persist in my eyes I frame it with kohl!"*

Examining Qabbani's poems in general, we find that he employed bold and strong colors, specifically: red, green, black, white, and blue. These colors form a fundamental basis upon which Qabbani operates, creating and blending them. The following is a summary table of color appearances in Nizar Qabbani's poems where the poetical "I" is female:

**Table 1. Summarizing the Appearance of Colors in the Poems of the Female Poetical "I" by Nizar Qabbani**

Color	Collection	Poem	Line Containing the Color
Red	<i>You Are Mine</i>	<i>Betrayal</i>	Red-beaked birds pecking at our window
	<i>You Are Mine</i>	<i>Fire</i>	So be gentle with the gathered red
	<i>Poems</i>	<i>Message from a Resentful Lady</i>	And her red lines cry on your cheeks
	<i>Wild Poems</i>	<i>The Fiercest Love I Lived</i>	And paints the walls red and blue in minutes
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 1	Like the red heart of a peach
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 27	For whom the garments sag... its red and blue
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 30	And a red, drunken cheek
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 36	And they broke your red seal
Green	<i>Poems</i>	<i>Why?</i>	With the rising green
	<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Lolita</i>	Everything... has turned green

<b>Color</b>	<b>Collection</b>	<b>Poem</b>	<b>Line Containing the Color</b>
	<i>Drawing with Words</i>	<i>Anger</i>	And the green and black eyes
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 1	Here, a sun and a wonderful green summer
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 36	Oh, my green lamp
<b>Black</b>	<i>Poems</i>	<i>Pregnant</i>	And a black truth... fills me
	<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Words</i>	And the black rain in my eyes
	<i>Beloved</i>	<i>My Friend and My Cigarettes</i>	And let it leave my black hair
	<i>Drawing with Words</i>	<i>Anger</i>	And the green and black eyes
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	<i>Message to a Certain Man (Section 2)</i>	And slaughters spring, longing, and black braids
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 3	Like a black-lipped whale swallowing me
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 4	I am in my black shell
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 12	Am I... or a black cat?
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 23	And her black walls
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 26	Suffering from a black complex
	<i>Alphabet of Jasmine</i>	<i>New Message from an Old Friend</i>	You were on my black dress
<b>White</b>	<i>Poems</i>	<i>The White Shirt</i>	The white shirt
	<i>The Metal Man</i>	<i>I Bite the Whiteness of My Sheets</i>	I bite the whiteness of my sheets
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 6	I touched his white domes
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 11	As if it were a white flower emerging from the rock
<b>Blue</b>	<i>You Are Mine</i>	<i>Betrayal</i>	The blue of the birds, our news?
	<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Small Affairs</i>	On the blue of my dress
	<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Matches and Fingers</i>	And blue veins protruding
	<i>Wild Poems</i>	<i>Message from Underwater</i>	The blue wave in your eyes...
	<i>Wild Poems</i>	<i>The Fiercest Love I Lived</i>	And paints the walls red and blue in minutes
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	<i>Message to a Certain Man (Section 2)</i>	Seizes the blue letters
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 8	On my blue notebook (3 times)
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 23	And crystal vessels, her blue pillow is dead
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 27	For whom the garments sag... its red and blue
<b>Yellow</b>	<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Voice of the Harem</i>	A yellow newspaper folds me if you read me
<b>Golden</b>	<i>Beloved</i>	<i>My Hair is a Golden Bed</i>	My golden hair
	<i>Alphabet of Jasmine</i>	<i>New Message from an Old Friend</i>	An apple of gold

Color	Collection	Poem	Line Containing the Color
<b>Blonde</b>	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 1	I will nurse every comma with blonde word milk
	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 5	Golden ears of my blonde hair
<b>Lilac</b>	<i>You Are Mine</i>	<i>My Beloved</i>	Lilac piled in the paths
<b>Purple</b>	<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Tell Me</i>	My purple dress was spring
<b>Pink</b>	<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Words</i>	For a pink evening on the balconies
<b>Crimson</b>	<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Lolita</i>	And my crimson ribbon
<b>Gray</b>	<i>Diary of an Indifferent Woman</i>	Poem No. 21	My sorrow is gray
<b>Silver</b>	<i>Alphabet of Jasmine</i>	<i>New Message from an Old Friend</i>	Oh, letters of silver

**Table 2. Summarizing the Frequency of Colors in Nizar Qabbani's Poems with the Female Persona**

Color	Frequency of Appearance in Poems
Red	8
Green	5
Black	11
White	4
Blue	11
Yellow	1
Golden	2
Blonde	2
Lilac	1
Purple	1
Pink	1
Crimson	1
Gray	1
Silver	1

It is evident from the above that Nizar Qabbani frequently used colors in his poems featuring the female persona. Thus, his poems in the voice of the female persona bear a considerable resemblance to those of female poets concerning the prominent use of colors.

#### **4.1. Use of the Feminine First-Person Pronoun**

Raja Samarin argues that speaking in the masculine form is a flaw in feminist poetry, and even if justified by the need to adhere to poetic meter, it is considered a deviation (Ghoneim, 2020). It is heartening that most female poets exhibit genuine femininity, seldom adopting a masculine tone in their poetry. An examination of female poets' collections reveals the use of the feminine first-person pronoun and feminine references in both form and content (characteristics specific to women or their belongings), contrasting with the masculine pronoun used for the addressee/male (the beloved) in love poems. Soad Sabah states:

"O my master

Do not reproach my madness

For I am primitive in my desires

*And my love - like me - is primitive."*

Such pronoun variations (feminine first-person pronoun versus masculine pronoun for the addressee) are also found in Qabbani's poems featuring the female persona, as seen in the following lines from the poem "Fire":

*"O my beloved, on my lips the longing has burned*

*So be gentle with the collected red*

*Embrace me, embrace me, and break my bones*

*Devour my smile, and break my ribs."*

Or:

*"French scent of mine, does it intoxicate you?*

*My beloved, for you I have perfumed myself*

*To a smaller... smaller... point of perfume*

*An arm extended to welcome you."*

The use of the feminine first-person pronoun is not limited to poems where the poetess expresses feelings towards a man. There are poems where the female persona expresses her selfhood and emotions spontaneously or deliberately showcases a defiant, rebellious female persona, as in Soad Sabah's lines:

*"And I know that they are transient*

*And that I am the one who remains."*

Such usage of the pronoun is present in Qabbani's poems as well, for instance:

*"Letters I will scatter like the red peach pit*

*For every prisoner who lives with me in my greater prison*

*Letters I will embed in the flesh of our lives as a dagger*

*To shatter, in its rebellion, a previously unbreakable ice*

*To remove the lock of a coffin prepared for us to be buried."*

The poetess may use the feminine first-person pronoun with pride, even incorporating the masculine pronoun into her possessions, as seen in Soad Sabah's text:

*"How I wished you would become, one day, My earring or bracelet."*

Or:

*"People know me by you*

*For you are my private fragrance."*

Such a tendency is found in Qabbani's poems with the female persona, such as in the poem "Lolita":

"I no longer find satisfaction in a piece of sugar

And dolls... thrown between my hands

The game has become more dangerous

A thousand times

You have become the greatest game for me

You have become the sweetest game in my hands."

At times, the female persona in women's poetry may annul herself and merge with the beloved's pronoun, seeing her existence as contingent on him, as in Soad Sabah's lines:

*"You are the continents, And the seas are you, And I am you."*

Similar sentiments appear in Qabbani's poems in the female persona, such as:

*"And how can I escape from him? It is my destiny*

*Does the river have the power to change its course!"*

And:

*"For you are in my life the air*

*And you... to me, are the earth and the sky."*

Occasionally, the female persona in women's poetry perceives herself as fulfilled and powerful when her being derives from her beloved, as in Nabila Khateeb's lines:

*"Take me to a time other than my own*

*So that you may make of me another*

*Change my history*

*My thoughts... my fire*

*My age... my era*

*My blood cells*

*My father's genes even to the seventh grandfather*

*And strip me from myself and reshape me."*



A similar orientation is found in Qabbani's poem "Minor Affairs":

*"When you smoke  
I kneel before you Like your gentle cat  
And all is safety  
And when I am ill  
And you carry your precious flowers  
My friend, to me  
And you place my hand in yours  
My color and health return to me  
And the sun sticks to my cheek."*

The female persona in women's poetry may also be perceived as insignificant if people only consider appearances and fail to grasp her true self, as in Nabila Khateeb's lines:

*"My face  
Stamped with name and marked by eyes and skin color  
These are signs  
When people define me by them  
I become insignificant."*

Such a perspective is echoed in Qabbani's female persona in:

*"I am a woman  
I am a woman  
I came to the world by day and found my sentence of execution  
And I did not see the door of my court or the face of my judge."*

The female persona may elevate herself in women's poetry beyond being one among many women who fall before men, as expressed by Nabila Khateeb:

*"He was never the master of my soul  
And I refused to belong  
Once to his slaves*

*He does not know*

*Who I am among women*

*And how he adores me*

*Who still does not know my qualities."*

This voice is also heard in Qabbani's poem "Love and Oil":

*"When, my lord, will you understand?*

*That I am not like your other friends*

*Nor a feminine conquest added to your victories*

*Nor a number in your records*

*Or a head among thousands on your pillows*

*And a statue on which you increase in your fevered auctions*

*And a breast on marble... recording your fingerprints."*

The female persona may also envision herself unaccompanied by another, picturing herself as solitary, revolving in the silence of repression, confusion, and timelessness. At times, she is rebellious and defiant, while at other times, she is silent, confused, and fearful. As Nazik al-Malaika states, in rebellion:

*"The night asks who I am*

*I am its deep black anxious secret*

*I am its rebellious silence."*

And in fear and confusion:

*"And the self asks who I am*

*I am like it, confused, staring into the darkness*

*Nothing gives me peace."*

We find Qabbani's female persona expressing rebellion, lamenting to his notebook and declaring defiance:

*"I will write about my friends*

*For each story*

*I see*

*I see my own self*

*And a tragedy like mine*

*I will write about my friends*

*About the prison that absorbs the lives of prisoners*

*About the time consumed by the columns of magazines."*

And:

*"I cover the letter with a wound*

*And write on wall*

*Of sulfur and salt*

*And I spit on idols*

*Whose emotions are of salt*

*And whose eyes and logic are of salt."*

Or:

*"The hands of this clock Like a black-lipped whale swallowing me*

*Its hands like a snake on the wall*

*Like a guillotine*

*like a hangman's noose*

*Like a knife tearing me apart."*

## **5. Conclusion**

It is evident from the research that the poems of contemporary female poets using the feminine first-person pronoun are characterized by genuine emotion, intensity, and coherence. They possess the ability to suggest through imagery, clear poetic experience, organic unity, and a beautiful, imaginative, and musical expression (Booth, 2012). The poetry is also marked by abundant feminine imagery, delicate expression, and embellishment with verbal and figurative adornments, rhythmic patterns, and intensive color usage, alongside the feminine first-person pronoun (Mummelthei, 2020).

After studying the characteristics of Qabbani's poems featuring the female persona, it is observed that they closely resemble the characteristics of contemporary female poets' works that utilize the feminine first-person pronoun. Qabbani's success in crafting a female poetic persona reflects those present in the works of his contemporaries, encompassing the features seen in the poetry of contemporary female poets who use the feminine first-person pronoun.

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