

**Resistance Manifestations in Rabie Bouchama's Poetry: An Analysis of
Selected Samples from His Diwan**

ZERROUKI Houria^{1*},

¹ Higher School of Teachers – Ouargla (Algeria) houriazerrouki966@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This study aims to define the concept of resistance and to state how it manifests itself in the following ways: the call to struggle, pride in the righteous martyr and their lamentations, and depicting the injustice of the French destroyer by a well-known Algerian poet, it is Rabie Bouchama, who filled his poetry with the spirit of struggle through his depictions of the suffering experienced by the Algerian people during the colonial period.

Key words: Resistance, Coloniser, Struggle, Martyr, Injustice

Introduction:

The Algerian revolution gained prominence among major world events because of the suffering endured by the Algerian people and the sacrifices made in the aftermath of a significant victory over one of the major modern colonial powers. The people's shared suffering served as a powerful source of inspiration for the writers. It is no wonder that they were the sons of Algerians who themselves endured similar colonial pressures and oppression. The great poet Mufdi Zakaria, the Prince of poets, Mohammed Eid Al Khalifa, Mohammed Shabouki, Rabie Bouchama, and others were among the poets imprisoned by the oppressive authorities. Their compositions about poetry of resistance, a significant area of Arabic literature, were also reasonable responses to colonial grievances.

Their poetry was imbued with the spirit of struggle, the urging of the people toward freedom, as well as their eagerness to band them together and mobilize political support for. The only task left is to secure victory over colonialism, which has become an indisputable historical inevitability in front of people's will, yearning for freedom and independence.

When we say “colonial resistance”, we notice that the linguistic connotation of the term “resistance” revolves around the meanings: confrontation, rejection, overcoming, and struggle. In El Wassit Dictionary: 1- Resistance to violence with violence: confrontation decided to resist corrupt elements, 2- Popular resistance: a popular movement for struggle with political principles, its elements are armed, and it resists the ruling authority. It is said, ‘He resisted the enemies of his country’: he struggled against them and opposed them by force. To resist him in wrestling means overcoming him¹. Resistance is not restricted to a single form, but can take several forms, such as resistance to disease, resistance to nostalgia, resistance to ignorance, and so on.

We strive to trace the actions of one of the Algerian poets, a poet who was exposed to a tense historical stage that the Algerian people endured. As a result, he was a vivid representation of its

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* Corresponding author.

social suffering and political activities. He was also an echo of the political events that were taking place in Algeria. He carried the voices of those who opposed the colonial policy, he also sharpened dormant souls and resurrected dead consciences, as all of the opinions and principles he expressed and the positions he recorded in his production are only an essential part of his career and his behaviour in both his public and private life². The man of letters is more aware of danger³, thus he reflects on what was going on in and around his homeland. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following questions?

- Who is the martyr poet Rabie Bouchama?
- What are the manifestations of revolutionary resistance in the poetry of the poet Rabie Bouchama?

Rabie Bouchama:

The origins of the poet go back to the city of Setif. He was born in December 1916 AD, in the municipality of Guenzet of Bani Yala, affiliated with the district of Bougaa, province of Setif. He attended a French school from the age of seven until he was twelve, and at that age, he memorized the Koran under the guidance of Sheikh Siddiq bin Abdul Salam. After completing his studies, he dedicated himself to learn from the revered Sheikhs and scholars of Bani Yala. After being a disciple of Sheikh Said Salehi for several years, he mastered grammar, tajweed and Quranic recitations under the guidance of Sheikh Ayashi Mezghish. He had demonstrated a strong interest in knowledge collection. It was believed that the martyr poet was self-made, relying on himself to shape his intellect and character. In his early years, he had a highly rich and varied library of classical heritage.⁴

The poet joined the Association of Scholars movement in 1937 and, along with a group of the town's youth, started a youth club in his hometown. He also helped Sheikh Salehi with the Friday Mosque's teaching seminars. Nearly a year later, he was sent to Paris with Sheikh Saeed Salehi to support Sheikh Wartlani's reform efforts in France.⁵

After being impressed by his level of achievement, Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis told him that he needed to complete his studies at the Zaytuna Mosque. The poet's financial difficulties prompted an apology. He subsequently spent 10 months in Constantine, a productive period of his life during which he was impacted by the character, ideas, and values of Ibn Badis, which remained with him till the end of his life. He spent his time educating and reforming after returning from Constantine. Additionally, he aroused the suspicions of the colonial authority, and twice the ruler's successor summoned him in the name of the governor of the mixed municipality of Bougaa and threatened to exile him to the Sahara.⁶ However, the circumstances in France at the time had significantly undermined its power and influence, so the poet relocated to Kherrata in 1942 and became a teacher at its school.

On the other hand, Rabie Bouchama's plan was limited to accomplishing his mission in several elements, which we mention respectively:

1. Conducting extensive, well-planned publicity in favour of the association.
2. The creation of new branches in Paris.
3. To renovate and reorganize the ancient central branch.
4. Raising funds to arrange the association's resources and settle debts.

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5. Getting ready for the industrial mission of the Institute.
6. Setting up stores to instruct youth.
7. Attempting to increase communication and meetings with the Arab and Islamic communities in Paris, particularly with their educated members.
8. Continually, the call to Allah Almighty, advocating for the dissemination of virtue, noble morals, counsel, guidance, direction, and so on.⁷

The poetry of Rabie Bouchama is characterized by the dominance of themes of patriotism and freedom. Anyone who deals with his poetic legacy will discover that the poet captured vividly with his pen the events of the Algerian Revolution and denounced the colonial policy. Jamal Qanan confirmed that:

" Among the impressions left on anyone who wants to discover the poetic works of Rabie Bouchama is the dominance of the subject of patriotism and freedom on other topics, and nearly there is no poem without a condemnation of colonialism and its methods and policy, as well as the call to awaken the determination and tighten the resolve to provide the reasons and prepare the means to overcome this situation. This position may appear to be at contradiction with the poet's true dedication and profession; he fights under a reformist movement and advocates for a goal that cannot be accomplished without revolutionary means, the establishment of a political organization that takes it upon itself to organize, prepare, frame, and engage the masses in the crucial fight against the occupation to end his presence in the country..."⁸

When a squad of gendarmes went to the school of El Thabat (The Stability) in El Harrach to find its director, who was the same martyr poet Rabie Bouchama, he was taken into custody on January 16, 1959. Then, he was imprisoned after being detained on suspicion of ripping the French flag. There, he suffered from severe psychological difficulties as the colonizer took control of his mind and emotions. A few prisoners claim that he was severely tortured during the procedure. Throughout their stay with him, they said that they persisted in torturing him. Then, the fountain of creativity exploded when he brought forth the emotional state that raged within his chest into a poetic framework that complements this event.

At first, Rabie Bouchama's writings were completely destroyed by the colonial authorities, who, at least according to popular belief, burned all of his documents and poetry. Nonetheless, Qanan took on the responsibility of compiling and editing the remaining poems using handwritten drafts, some of which had titles provided by the poet and others that Qanan had made. Rabie Bouchama also wrote several songs, personally created their melodies, and taught them to children, according to the memories that have been recovered from his family members.⁹ However, Qanan confirmed that the poet used to send his wife a copy of each poem he wrote, and she was doing all in her ability to hide it. The poet's family sought to remove everything that might make things worse once they heard and saw the pain that was being inflicted on him. From his interview with the poet's family, he could only collect a few worn pages, which he compiled into a Diwan (Poetry Collection).

After he had collected and revised the poet Rabie Bouchama's Diwan, Qanan divided it into several sections, each with a particular title. For instance, the poet's anthology was in the first section, followed by national poetry, poetry for recognition and appreciation, poetry inspired by passion, poetry for nature between beauty and cruelty, poetry for self-suffering, poetry for social causes, and, finally, poetry for revolution. Furthermore, the poet composed several songs and taught them to children.

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The martyr poet Rabie Bouchama passed away after having joined the ranks of the liberation revolution, which broke out on November 1, 1954. He showed commitment and dedication to the national struggle. On May 14, 1959, he was executed, and thus his name was added to the list of martyrs of the Algerian nation.

Aspects of Resistance Literature in Rabie Bouchama's poetry:

Even though the martyr poet Rabie Bouchama wrote a great deal of poetry during the revolution, a search of his poetry does not turn up any poems that discuss significant events like the events of November or the August 20, 1955, attack on North Constantine.

In response, Qanan states: (... As for his production during the revolution, it appears to have been prolific. It is surprising that we do not find for the poet a single poem in which he talks about the first of November, nor the subsequent brutal crackdown launched by the colonial forces on the defenseless people and on the villages and towns, especially from someone so attuned to the slightest movement and sign along the revolution to record it).¹⁰

Qanan continues: (We have proof that the poet composed a poem on the Eight-Day Strike and that he worked on it for the whole time that the strike was going on. Furthermore, he documented the act of resistance that involved the throwing of a bomb inside the Milk Bar, according to testimony from one of his friends. The opening line of the poem is as follows:

Halt, Peugeot, you've lingered too long in this space

The Liberation Army has shattered your grace ¹¹

Among the manifestations of resistance adopted by the poet in the Diwan compiled by Qanan, we find:

1) Calling for Struggle:

This manifestation is regarded as one of the main themes emphasized by the poets of resistance in their poetry. It is a clear message to the Algerian people urging them to fight the French colonizer and drive him to the dustbins of history. ¹²The martyr poet, Rabie Bouchama, called out to Algeria's youth in a loud voice, saying:

O boy of homelands, rise anew,
And raise the flag—its crimson hue.
Step forth for sacrifice, be brave,
With a steadfast foot and heart that gave.
Face the foe with fearless grace,
A laughing light upon your face.
Serve them doom in a shadowed cup,
From a hand where void wells up.
Drink its twin without dismay
Let not the sting of pain dismay ¹³

In order to draw the attention of the nation's sons and even the youngest among them, to an essential duty: The movement and rising to defend the country, the poet employed a rhetorical expressive vocative device combined with the imperative structure in the opening verse. It appears that the poet uses purposefully the imperative verb in every verse, such as: Lift, progress, throw,

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water them, sip, etc., as a direct call for this segment to join the battlefield Through these commands, he instructed them to step forward and offer themselves to the nation's sake, aiming to stir within them the feelings of war and determination to confront the enemy. He addressed them in another place, and he said:

Enough has passed—no more, no less,
O son of mothers in distress.
Be shrewd, and foil the tyrant's scheme,
A mighty foe with a shattered dream.
Hurl back the stones from whence they came,
And never sleep, nor bow to shame.
Forgive them not, nor ever bend—
For softness is a silent end.¹⁴

This time, it is direct and explicit poetic speech addressed by the poet to the nation's sons without adopting a vocative form. Through this discourse, the poet's persona emerges as strong and battle-hungry, asking them to forget the past and dedicate their lives to defending their rights through actions that are symbolized by confrontation, struggle, lack of sleep, intolerance, and absence of softness because the latter creates neither strength nor vigilance.

2) Pride in Martyrs:

The term " martyr " (Arabic: Shahid) is typically used to refer to (... whoever is martyr in a war between Muslims and disbelievers to defend the word of Allah, Blessed and exalted be He. The angels of mercy witness the martyr, i.e. to be present at the time of his death- hence the term shahid has the meaning of one who is witnessed or attended.).¹⁵ Our righteous martyrs offered themselves as a sacrifice for the homeland. Here, the poet Bouchama praises and glorifies the martyr Amirouche in his speech, saying:

Hail the heroes—youths of flame,
Boys of valour, carved in name.
Sing of Amirouche, bold and true,
Crown his praise with honour due.
Revolution's steadfast knight,
In the fierce battle, he stands upright.
He strikes the foe with doubled might,
With a cunning heart and fearless fight.
He teaches lessons, sharp and clear,
In bitter struggle, year by year—
For freedom's cause, he shows the way,
Through darkest night to break of day.¹⁶

The poet glorifies and praises the nation's youth who sacrificed their lives for its sake. He offers particular praise to the martyr Amirouche, who helped ignite the Algerian revolution, a hero who waged his struggle with courage against the colonizer. According to the poet, Amirouche was marked by intelligence and acumen in battle. This figure left his profound mark in the struggle for his country until fear swept through the depths of his enemy.

A valiant martyr and leader who humiliated the neck of the wicked usurpers. And stood as the highest example to be emulated. He uplifted the dignity of the people, raising their heads towards the sanctuaries of light and the sacred heights of the heavens. The poet often praises the righteous

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martyrs and their heroic deeds throughout his works. Since it is not the place to recount them all, one example will be sufficient to illustrate the point.

3) Elegy for the Martyr:

Bouchama fills his poetic discourse with profound reflections on the stature of the martyr and his elegy:

O martyr—
In life's full bloom, you passed,
Thirsting for freedom, for glory vast.
You shunned the ease of a gentle breath,
And scorned the joys that shame bequeaths.
You lived beneath the banners grim,
Of tyrants' rule, cold and dim—
A plague viler than any pain,
A sickness deep in every vein.¹⁷

The poet laments the loss of martyrs, young souls who were victims for the sake of liberating their homeland, through a rhetorical question framed as a vocative to attract attention. In another part of the poem, the poet noted that even forests, rocks and birds all mourn for the martyr deaths; therefore, how can the sons of the homeland not grieve?

4/ The Injustice of the French enemy:

In his speech, the poet expressed, on many occasions, the injustice of the French colonizer, saying:

How strange, this colonizer's guile
A butcher cloaked in lawless style.
He sees his brother, flesh and bone,
As low as the beasts he's known.
He claims to guard the people's peace,
Yet brings no justice, no release.
He is, among all foes that reign,
The vilest enemy of man.¹⁸

The poet marvels at the usurping enemy of the nation, comparing him to a butcher in the manner he slices meat and describing how he dehumanized human beings and animals and how he entered the homelands claiming to protect their security but doing the exact opposite. Not to mention the harm and devastation he caused to the villages; it is the corrupt enemy that uses fire to strike and kill others. The poet's recall of the colonizer's grievances was intended to fortify the nation's sons' will to fight against colonialism.

5 / Nostalgia for family:

Poet Rabie Bouchama saw himself as a stranger, even in his homeland. He was separated from his family, including his wife and children, because the oppressive authorities were looking for him to put him in jail. Thus, he had no choice but to leave his family behind and go to a place that only his wife knew about, and he wrote to her every poem he completed. He expressed his love and longing for his family by saying:

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My wife, how are you, and all our own?
O dearest love, for your youth I'd atone.
How are my daughters, and Tawfiq, their guide?
May God keep their bond and bless it with pride.
I've been away, and I do not know—
Did joy find you, or sorrow's blow?
My heart, it trembles, stirs, and aches,
With every beat, your name it wakes.
It longs for you through night and day,
In endless turmoil, swept away.¹⁹

This is an example of the poet's resistance to his love and longing for his wife, children, and family. Despite being in his homeland, he was a stranger. Through this discourse, the poet strives to endure despite his longing for his family. He asks his wife about her health, about their children and all his relatives. In another section of the poem, he believes that writing is his only way to express himself, his only means of breathing freely. The poet conveyed this emotional state through poetic writing, thus expressing a genuine poetic experience.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, the following notes can be concluded:

1. Anyone who reads the Diwan of the poet Rabie Bouchama will find that the resistance has many manifestations, including: the call to struggle, the reminder of the injustice of the enemy, the elegy of the martyr, nostalgia for the family, etc.
2. What the poet suffered during the colonial period because of the injustice, cruelty, enslavement, and alienation felt even within his own homeland ignited the fountain of creativity and poetic genius, which has led him to believe that the only solution to exit the unjust colonizer is the resistance.
3. The poet evoked the issue of Palestine and what is happening in it, as it is the cause of every Arab Muslim, to encourage the Algerian people to continue their struggle against the colonizer.

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Footnotes:

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- ¹⁶ Diwan of Rabie Bouchama, p. 208.
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