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A Critical Assessment of Comparative Research Articles in Resistance Literature

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ABSTRACT

Following the expansion of resistance literature in Iran after the 1979 Revolution and the Iran–Iraq War, a substantial body of academic research emerged in this field. Comparative studies constitute a significant part of that scholarship, yet their methodological quality has not been examined systematically. This article critically assesses 83 comparative research articles on resistance literature published, from the inception of the selected journals through the end of 2023, in four Iranian academic journals devoted to resistance or comparative literature. Using a descriptive-analytical corpus survey, the study evaluates topic selection, theoretical framing, originality and problem orientation, comparative method, cross-cultural rationale, geographical distribution, and the precision of research scope. The findings show a strong concentration on poetry (65 articles; 78.3%) and on recurrent themes of resistance, while fiction and theoretical or methodological questions receive far less attention. Seventy-nine of the 83 articles do not employ an explicit literary-theoretical framework, and only a minority articulate a clear comparative rationale. Other recurrent problems include treating comparison as a listing of similarities, weak integration of the two objects of comparison, repetitive topics and authors, overly broad claims, and insufficient attention to the historical and social grounds of similarity and difference. The article concludes with practical recommendations for improving comparative research in resistance literature through stronger theoretical training, narrower and problem-driven topics, genuinely relational comparison, interdisciplinary contextualization, and broader transnational collaboration.

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Introduction

Resistance literature in modern Iran has developed within a long history of writing concerned with domination, war, political repression, collective suffering, liberation, sacrifice, and the defense of social or national values. The field gained substantial institutional visibility after the 1979 Iranian Revolution and, especially, after the beginning of the Iran–Iraq War in September 1980. It would nevertheless be misleading to treat resistance literature as a wholly post-revolutionary phenomenon. Earlier Persian writing had already responded to domestic authoritarianism, foreign occupation, constitutional struggle, social injustice, suppression of civil freedoms, and other forms of political and cultural conflict. Across these different historical contexts, recurrent themes include opposition to tyranny, freedom and liberation, the representation of collective suffering, encouragement of endurance and resistance, commemoration of the dead, and hope for future victory.

The growth of literary production around revolution, war, imprisonment, exile, occupation, and political struggle created a corresponding field of academic inquiry. The establishment of an M.A. concentration in resistance literature at Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman in 2008 and the subsequent development of specialized journals further institutionalized research in this area. As the number of articles increased, the need shifted from simple quantitative expansion to qualitative evaluation. A mature field cannot be sustained only by multiplying studies; it must also evaluate the intellectual problems those studies formulate, the methods they use, the textual evidence they analyze, and the contribution they make to existing knowledge.

Comparative research occupies a particularly important position in this process. Comparative approaches can connect Persian resistance literature with Arabic, Afghan, Russian, South Asian, or other literary traditions; they can also compare resistance writing across periods, genres, ideological contexts, and media. Aqanouri and Gholamhosseinzadeh define the comparative approach in resistance-literature studies as an attempt to identify relations, similarities, and differences between the resistance literature of one period and another or between Iranian resistance writing and that of other countries (Aqanouri & Gholamhosseinzadeh, 2016: 14). Such studies therefore stand at the intersection of two fields. Their objects belong to resistance-literature research, while their method or intellectual claim also invokes comparative literature. They should consequently satisfy the scholarly demands of both.

This double affiliation creates special methodological risks. A paper may identify two writers from different traditions and simply place lists of similar motifs beside one another; it may invoke the "American school" or another historical label without explaining what that label contributes to the analysis; it may treat the absence of direct influence as sufficient justification for comparison; or it may select a broad topic whose scale makes sustained textual analysis impossible. Conversely, comparative work can become especially valuable when it explains why similarities and differences emerge, how historical and cultural conditions shape literary form, what changes when a motif crosses languages or traditions, and what the comparison reveals that two separate single-author studies would not.

The present article examines these methodological questions through a corpus of 83 scholarly articles in resistance literature that explicitly adopt a comparative approach. It asks two central questions: (1) What are the most recurrent methodological and research-design problems in comparative studies of resistance literature? and (2) What practical measures can improve the quality, originality, and explanatory power of future research? The purpose is not to dismiss the substantial work already carried out in the field. Rather, critical assessment is treated here as a form of disciplinary self-correction: identifying successful directions, recurring limitations, and areas in which methodological clarification can help the field develop.

Review of Literature

Several earlier studies provide the background for the present assessment, although none examines exactly the same corpus and problem. Anushiravani's "The Pathology of Comparative Literature in Iran," published in the special comparative-literature issue of Nameh-ye Farhangestan in 2010, identifies major structural and methodological weaknesses in Iranian comparative-literature scholarship and emphasizes the need for systematic planning, specialized training, appropriate teaching materials, and stronger research resources (Anushiravani, 2010). The article is important for the present study because it distinguishes genuine comparative inquiry from the simple juxtaposition of literary texts and criticizes superficial uses of imported methodological labels.

Momtahen and Lak (2015), in an introductory study of the problems of comparative resistance-literature studies in Iran and other countries, discuss both quantitative and qualitative weaknesses in Iranian war and resistance writing. Among the issues they identify are thematic repetition, limited professional experience among some writers of war literature, the attraction of established authors to other literary genres, and insufficient attention to psychological dimensions of resistance literature. Their study focuses primarily on the literary field rather than on the methodological structure of comparative research articles, but it demonstrates the need to examine the conditions under which scholarship in the field is produced.

Aqanouri and Gholamhosseinzadeh (2016) conduct a statistical and approach-based analysis of research on resistance literature through the end of 2011. They classify the dominant research orientations and find that studies concerned with defining the nature and components of resistance literature are especially frequent, while bibliographical and source-oriented research remains comparatively underdeveloped. Their work provides an important quantitative precedent for examining the distribution of topics and approaches.

More recently, Bagheri and Sangari (2023) investigate the scientific problems of resistance-literature research through interviews with eleven university professors and specialists. They classify the field's difficulties into scientific/research and structural/organizational levels and recommend, among other measures, policy-making, methodological guidelines, strategic planning, data banks, professional networks, fundamental status studies, and stronger national and international scholarly exchange.

These studies demonstrate increasing concern with the quality of scholarship in resistance literature and comparative literature. Yet the specific intersection of the

two fields remains underexamined. The present study therefore focuses on comparative research articles in resistance literature as a distinct corpus and asks not only whether they compare two objects, but how comparison is conceptualized, what theoretical structures guide it, whether the comparison produces new knowledge, and whether the scope of the claims is proportionate to the evidence.

Method and Corpus

The corpus consists of 83 scholarly articles on resistance literature with an explicit comparative orientation. The articles were collected from four Iranian academic journals: Adabiyat-e Paydari [Resistance Literature] and Adabiyat-e Tatbiqi [Comparative Literature] at Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, Adabiyat-e Tatbiqi [Comparative Literature] at Tarbiat Modares University, and Kavoshnameh-ye Adabiyat-e Tatbiqi [Comparative Literature Research] at Razi University. The survey covers each journal from its earliest relevant issues through the final issues published in 2023.

The study uses a descriptive-analytical corpus-survey method. Each article was examined in relation to several recurring dimensions that emerged from the material: literary genre and topic; degree of thematic concentration; presence or absence of an explicit theoretical framework; articulation of a comparative rationale; claims to originality and problem solving; balance between similarities and differences; integration of the two objects of comparison; attention to cultural, historical, and social contexts; geographical range; and the precision of the temporal, textual, and thematic scope.

The numerical results are descriptive rather than inferential. The study does not claim that these four journals contain every Iranian article ever written on comparative resistance literature, nor does it attempt to establish causal relations statistically. Its purpose is to identify recurrent methodological tendencies in an influential and sufficiently large corpus. Because coding involves interpretive judgment—for example, deciding whether a paper has an operational theoretical framework rather than merely naming a theory—the findings are best understood as a critical map of the field rather than as a fully reproducible systematic review.

A further theoretical clarification is necessary. Iranian comparative-literature scholarship has often organized the history of the discipline through labels such as the French, American, and Slavic schools. These labels are useful for describing particular historical emphases, but they should not be treated as an exhaustive map of contemporary comparative literature. Comparative literature has expanded far beyond a fixed set of "schools" to include translation studies, world literature, postcolonial and transnational approaches, imagology, reception studies, intermediality, and interdisciplinary relations. Remak's influential formulation, for example, defines comparative literature both as the study of literature beyond the confines of one country and as the study of relations between literature and other domains of knowledge and artistic expression (Remak, 1961: 3). Accordingly, the present article retains the original corpus's concern with the historical French/American/Slavic typology but evaluates the papers more broadly in terms of whether they articulate a defensible comparative problem and method.

Findings and Critical Assessment

Topic Selection and Thematic Concentration

The first major imbalance concerns topic selection. Of the 83 articles, 65 examine poetry, 15 examine fiction or the novel, and only 3 address theoretical foundations or the criticism of teaching materials. Poetry therefore accounts for 78.3% of the corpus, fiction for 18.1%, and theoretical or methodological topics for only 3.6%. This concentration raises an important question. Resistance literature in Iran includes poetry, novels, short stories, memoirs, drama, children's literature, documentary writing, prison writing, exile literature, and hybrid forms; why, then, has comparative scholarship concentrated so heavily on poetry?

Part of the explanation lies in the long institutional prestige of poetry within Persian literary studies. Modern Persian fiction has a shorter academic genealogy, and scholars trained in traditional Persian literature have often found poetry a more familiar object of textual analysis. Momtahen and Lak (2015: 5) also associate the imbalance with the relative newness of modern Persian narrative prose. Another factor is the enormous production of war memoirs and testimonial narratives. Yet the mere quantity of memoir does not automatically generate sophisticated comparative literary criticism. A large portion of such material is documentary or oral-historical rather than formally literary, and the development of internationally visible resistance fiction has been more limited than the production of war testimony. The point should be stated cautiously: memoir can possess considerable literary value, but the field still needs clearer distinctions among testimony, oral history, literary memoir, documentary narrative, and fiction.

The thematic distribution within the 83 articles is even more concentrated. Forty-seven articles—56.6% of the corpus—are devoted principally to identifying "components of resistance," "manifestations of resistance," or related thematic features in different texts. Rhetoric is the principal focus of 7 articles, ritual literature of 6, anti-colonialism of 5, criticism of 4, imagology of 3, poetic music of 2, and narrative elements or narrative structure of 2. Epic, stylistics, theoretical foundations, discourse analysis, women's studies, and poetic elements each appear only rarely.

Early work identifying the features of resistance literature was necessary when the field was still defining its concepts. The problem is repetition after the basic inventory has already been established. Once "homeland," "martyrdom," "freedom," "oppression," "hope," "enemy," "sacrifice," and related motifs have been catalogued repeatedly, another article that merely identifies the same motifs in two additional poets may produce little new knowledge. The comparative label does not in itself create originality.

A related problem is the mismatch between titles and actual analyses. Some articles announce specialized questions but gradually return to a familiar inventory of resistance themes. Sepahvandi's study of personal and collective identity in the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish and Qeysar Aminpour, for example, devotes a substantial portion of its analysis to homeland, resistance, and symbolism rather than maintaining a sustained conceptual analysis of identity (Sepahvandi, 2020: 23–40). Similar slippage appears in studies announced as imagological analyses of East and West in the poetry of Ahmad Shawqi and Bahar, analyses of social inequality in Ahmad

Mahmoud's Hamsayeha and Alaa al-Aswany's The Yacoubian Building, political-social conflict in Khalil Hawi and Mehdi Akhavan Sales, prison poetry in Bahar and Darwish, the phenomenon of war in Shawqi and Bahar, or social and humanistic poetry in Akhavan and Iliya Abu Madi. Despite different titles, some of these studies converge methodologically on the same process: locating familiar resistance-related themes and placing examples side by side.

This tendency has consequences for future researchers. Students entering the field often learn research practice by reading published articles. If high-frequency models repeatedly define originality as "the same topic in two authors who have not previously been compared," that logic becomes self-replicating. The result is a cycle in which new pairings replace genuinely new questions. The problem is therefore not only topic repetition but a limited conception of what constitutes a research problem.

More productive comparative topics would ask, for example, how prison poetry changes across different legal and political regimes; how the same resistance image is transformed when it enters a new genre or language; how gender changes the rhetoric of martyrdom or exile; how translation mediates resistance discourse; how digital media alter the circulation of protest poetry; or how narrative form differs when war is represented by combatants, civilians, women, children, refugees, or later generations. Such questions shift the focus from identifying a shared motif to explaining a literary process.

Insufficient Theoretical and Comparative Frameworks

A second major problem is the weak use of explicit theoretical frameworks. A theoretical framework is not a decorative introductory section or a list of famous theorists. It is the conceptual structure that defines the research problem, identifies the analytical categories, and explains how evidence will be interpreted. Dashti defines it as a theory selected because it is appropriate to the research problem and used to analyze data according to that theory's principles (Dashti, 2010: 27). Quivy and Van Campenhoudt similarly emphasize that a conceptual framework helps the researcher break with unexamined assumptions and intuitive preconceptions (Quivy & Van Campenhoudt, 1991: 90).

In the corpus examined here, 79 of 83 articles—95.2%—do not employ an explicit literary-theoretical framework, while only 4 articles make substantial use of literary theory. This does not mean that every comparative article must be dominated by a fashionable theory. Historical influence studies, reception research, textual genealogy, or carefully designed thematic comparison can be rigorous without adopting a complex critical school. The problem is that many articles neither use a literary theory nor replace it with a clearly specified comparative method.

One recurrent cause is excessive definitional material. Several papers spend their introductions rehearsing broad definitions of resistance literature, committed literature, Palestinian resistance, or related concepts, leaving little space for the analytical framework that might differentiate the study from earlier work. Sheikh and Hassanzadeh's comparison of Sahar Khalifeh's al-Sabbar and Simin Daneshvar's Savushun, for example, devotes the introduction, problem statement, and opening discussion to general definitions of resistance literature and Palestinian resistance (Sheikh & Hassanzadeh, 2015: 206–209). Similar patterns appear in Tak-

Tabar Firouzjaei and Adeli's study of Palestine in the poetry of Seyyed Ali Mousavi Garmaroudi and Ali Fouda, and in Rastegari et al.'s study of narrative style, point of view, and resistance themes in Umm Saad and the memoir Da.

The need for conceptual clarity is even greater because these articles claim a comparative dimension. In only 18 articles—21.7% of the corpus—is a comparative framework stated with sufficient clarity to identify the logic of the comparison. Some papers do not discuss comparative literature at all despite using "comparative" in the title. Others merely write "American school" in the abstract, keywords, or method section without defining the school's assumptions or explaining how those assumptions shape the analysis.

Babasalar and Khodour's comparison of resistance in the poetry of Nasrollah Mardani and Badawi al-Jabal, for example, states that the study is based on the American school and even lists the term among the keywords, but it does not operationalize the American tradition as an analytical framework (Babasalar & Khodour, 2019: 5–6). Al-Buyeh Langroudi and Ansari's study of the image of Imam Husayn in contemporary Persian and Arabic Ashura poetry includes comparative literature among the keywords but provides little methodological account of what the comparative designation requires (Al-Buyeh Langroudi & Ansari, 2010: 15). Momtahen's comparison of Bahar and Shawqi refers generally to "the customary method of comparative literature," a phrase too vague to specify method, scale, or type of relation (Momtahen, 2010: 165).

A particularly widespread misunderstanding concerns the American tradition. In 20 papers, authors justify choosing the "American school" primarily by stating that no direct historical contact or influence exists between the two writers or texts. Sanchouli and Noumosalman, comparing Mohsen Motlaq's Zendeh Bad Komail with Ghassan Kanafani's Men in the Sun, argue that the absence of historical contact means that the American school is therefore the appropriate method (Sanchouli & Noumosalman, 2020: 78). Ganjali and Safari similarly define their comparison of Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Qeysar Aminpour as American because it disregards historical relations and proceeds on "the primacy of similarity" (Ganjali & Safari, 2014: 360).

This is methodologically insufficient. The American expansion of comparative literature did indeed challenge a narrow requirement that every comparison prove direct influence through documentary historical links. It did not, however, establish "unrelated similarity" as an adequate research method. Anushiravani explicitly warns against this reduction and notes that the American tradition does not deny literary relation or influence; rather, it does not make archival proof of direct contact a prerequisite for every meaningful comparison (Anushiravani, 2010: 41, 45). Similarities still require interpretation. Shared political structures, transnational circulation, genre conventions, translation, colonial histories, ideological formations, religious narratives, or analogous social crises may explain why comparable literary patterns emerge.

This point is particularly relevant to resistance literature because it is unusually sensitive to social history. Literature of war, occupation, revolution, prison, anti-colonial struggle, and state violence develops in intensive interaction with political and social conditions. A study comparing two literary

responses to coups, for example, should investigate not merely that both texts contain fear, repression, or political betrayal, but how different coup histories, state institutions, class formations, and literary traditions produce specific narrative forms. Naderifar and Mohammadi's comparison of al-Samman wa al-Kharif with Dr. Nun Zansh ra Bishtar az Mossadeq Dust Darad acknowledges the comparable importance of the Egyptian Free Officers' coup of 1952 and the Iranian coup of 1953 (Naderifar & Mohammadi, 2021: 138). Within the typology used by some Iranian comparative-literature textbooks, such an inquiry might have been described as "Slavic" because it emphasizes sociohistorical infrastructures (Jamal al-Din, 2010: 22). More broadly, however, it can simply be framed as a historically contextualized comparative study. The essential requirement is not allegiance to a label but a method capable of explaining the relation between literary form and historical condition.

The most productive revision, therefore, is to move away from formulaic school-naming and toward explicit comparative design. Authors should state what type of relation they are examining—documented influence, reception, translation, typological analogy, shared historical condition, imagological construction, genre transformation, intertextuality, transnational circulation, or interdisciplinary relation—and then select evidence appropriate to that claim.

Limited Originality and Weak Problem Orientation

Originality is another recurring weakness. A scholarly article should contribute a new problem, argument, corpus, method, archive, or interpretation. Newness does not necessarily mean discovering two writers who have never previously appeared in the same title. A comparison becomes intellectually new when bringing the two objects together produces a question or conclusion unavailable in separate studies.

The corpus shows substantial repetition in the choice of authors. Mahmoud Darwish appears in 8 articles, Malek al-Sho'ara Bahar in 8, Farrokhi Yazdi in 6, Qeysar Aminpour in 6, Ahmad Shawqi in 4, Nasrollah Mardani in 3, Fadwa Tuqan in 3, Mehdi Akhavan Sales in 3, and Ma'ruf al-Rusafi in 3. Repetition is not intrinsically a problem; major writers deserve sustained research. The difficulty arises when the questions asked of them remain essentially unchanged.

Two 2015 articles illustrate the issue. Akbari et al. compare manifestations of resistance in Fadwa Tuqan and Sepideh Kashani, while Gheybi and Ahmari compare concepts of resistance and endurance in Fadwa Tuqan and Tahereh Saffarzadeh. In both cases Tuqan is one pole of comparison, and in both the principal objective is to extract resistance-related concepts. Moreover, the poets had already been studied separately in theses and articles. The first study nevertheless defends its originality primarily by noting that no previous independent research had compared exactly those two poets (Akbari et al., 2015: 25).

This criterion is too weak. If the new comparative paper merely combines findings already established in two separate bodies of scholarship, it may add a pairing without adding a problem. Originality requires a relational question: what becomes visible only through the comparison? Does the comparison reveal different constructions of gendered resistance? Different relations between nationalism and Palestinian/Iranian political history? Different lyric strategies of

mourning? Different rhetorical uses of motherhood, martyrdom, landscape, or exile? Does translation affect the apparent similarity? Are formally similar images produced by different ideological systems? Such questions transform comparison from aggregation into analysis.

The same principle applies to claims of novelty based on corpus selection. Two previously unpaired texts can generate a significant article, but only if their pairing is theoretically and historically motivated. Conversely, frequently studied authors can yield original scholarship when the researcher introduces a new archive, framework, formal problem, or transnational question. The field therefore needs to move from "Has anyone compared A and B?" to "What unresolved problem can comparison between A and B explain?"

Inadequate Comparative Method

A fourth problem concerns the mechanics of comparison itself. Comparison is not equivalent to listing similarities. A rigorous comparative study must determine which features are commensurable, identify both convergence and divergence, and explain the significance of the pattern. Ganj-Karimi et al. emphasize that similarity alone is insufficient: differences must also be examined, textual quality should be considered, and processes such as adaptation and innovation should be evaluated (Ganj-Karimi et al., 2020: 89–90).

In much of the corpus, however, similarity becomes the primary or even exclusive objective. Gheybi and Ahmari's comparison of Fadwa Tuqan and Tahereh Saffarzadeh concentrates on shared resistance concepts and does not adequately account for differences in the poets' historical positions or poetic practices (Gheybi & Ahmari, 2015: 227–247). Yazdani and Khaligh's study of Shahnameh traces in the poetry of Afghan resistance poets Mohammad Kazem Kazemi and Abdul Sami Hamed likewise privileges commonalities. Hajbabaei and Moradi define comparative literature as a field that studies "relations and intertextual similarities," a formulation that risks reducing comparison to resemblance (Hajbabaei & Moradi, 2017: 107). Hejazi and Rahimi's study of patriotism in Akhavan Sales and Iliya Abu Madi similarly introduces the project primarily through the search for analogous patriotic themes (Hejazi & Rahimi, 2011: 73).

The emphasis on similarity sometimes shapes research questions themselves. Khalili Jahantigh and Ghasemian define the principal objective of their study of Bahar and Mahmoud Darwish's prison poems as identifying shared features, shared suffering, and similar dispositions in two colonized societies (Khalili Jahantigh & Ghasemian, 2015: 132). Amiri Dehnavi et al., comparing Ismail Fasih's Sorayya dar Eghma with Alaa al-Aswany's Chicago, formulate the central question in terms of similarities in representing the Other (Amiri Dehnavi et al., 2015: 5). Such questions can be legitimate starting points, but they become analytically limited when they do not proceed to ask what differences mean and what conditions produce both convergence and divergence.

A second imbalance appears when similarities dominate the entire discussion and differences are postponed to the conclusion. Pasandi and Ezhei's study of commitment and resistance in Salman Harati and Samih al-Qasim is largely organized around common features, with differences appearing only briefly at the end (Pasandi & Ezhei, 2017: 40–41). The reverse problem also occurs: some papers devote substantial space to differences

without a clear account of why the objects belong in the same comparative design. Ganjali et al.'s study of poetic music in Ma'ruf al-Rusafi and Farrokhi Yazdi and Al-Buyeh Langroudi and Ansari's study of contemporary Persian and Arabic Ashura poetry illustrate the need for a more integrated comparative procedure.

The structure of an article can itself reveal whether comparison is actually occurring. A recurrent weak pattern is to analyze author A in a long independent section, then author B in another independent section, and finally attach a short list of similarities and differences. In such cases the paper can often be divided into two separate single-author studies with little loss. Babasalar and Khodour's comparison of Nasrollah Mardani and Badawi al-Jabal and Sabzianpour et al.'s comparison of anti-colonial motifs in Savushun and Soheir El-Qalamawy's al-Tall al-Kabir exemplify this problem. The two analytical strands remain insufficiently interwoven.

Other studies shift inconsistently among methods. Habibi et al., in a comparison of war poetry in the Shahnameh and al-Mutanabbi's divan, first discuss similarities in an integrated manner, then treat differences separately, later return to another section of commonalities and divergences, and finally repeat many of these points in the conclusion. The result is redundancy rather than cumulative argument.

A genuinely comparative structure is relational at every stage. Instead of "Text A / Text B / similarities / differences," the article can be organized by analytical problem: construction of the enemy in both texts; images of the body in both; temporal structure in both; rhetoric of sacrifice in both; transformation of a shared myth in both. Within each subsection the two objects remain in active dialogue. The purpose is not only to establish what is similar or different, but to explain why. Jafari and Karami formulate this principle clearly when they argue that comparative literature should not stop at identifying resemblance, difference, or influence; it should explain how a relation operates and what transformation it produces in the receiving literary system (Jafari & Karami, 2022: 78).

For resistance-literature research, "why" questions are indispensable. Similar prison imagery may arise from translation and direct literary influence, from shared religious symbolism, from analogous carceral institutions, or from recurrent embodied experiences of confinement. Similar martyr figures may emerge from different theological, nationalist, socialist, or secular traditions. Without contextual explanation, formal resemblance remains description rather than comparative interpretation.

Insufficient Cross-Cultural and Transnational Rationale

The original corpus also reveals a problem that can be described more precisely as an insufficient cross-cultural or transnational rationale. Some earlier Iranian methodological discussions treated linguistic difference, international scope, and cultural difference as strict defining conditions of comparative literature. Zeinivand, for example, excludes studies conducted wholly within a single national literature from comparative literature even when they use comparative techniques (Zeinivand, 2012: 100). This position reflects one influential tradition within the discipline, but contemporary comparative literature is more plural. Intranational multilingualism, minority literatures, diaspora, translation,

interdisciplinary comparison, and world-literature circulation have complicated any simple equation of "comparative" with "two nations and two languages."

The problem in the present corpus is therefore not simply that some articles compare works written in the same language. It is that a number of papers do not articulate what intercultural, interliterary, historical, or methodological relation makes the comparison illuminating. This distinction matters.

Yazdani and Khaligh's comparison of Shahnameh traces in the poetry of two Afghan resistance poets is criticized in the source corpus for failing a linguistic-difference criterion. Yet the stronger methodological question is different: what does the relationship between Ferdowsi's epic legacy and modern Afghan Persian poetry reveal about the transregional circulation of Persian literary memory? A comparison across Iran and Afghanistan can be highly significant even when the texts share Persian, provided that it addresses historical circulation, cultural refunctioning, political borders, or the transformation of a shared literary archive.

The same qualification applies to Khakbaz and Dari's comparison of colonialism in Reza Amirkhani's Bi-vatan/Bivatan and Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner. Hosseini's diasporic location, English-language authorship, Afghan background, and transnational readership make the case methodologically complex. The relevant question is not whether the author is "Persian-speaking" but how language, migration, publication context, and transnational cultural position shape the literary representation under study.

By contrast, some comparisons remain weak because the two objects occupy almost the same cultural and linguistic system and the study offers no additional comparative rationale. Kia and Ghanbari Naniz compare Mashhad al-Shuhada with Rawzat al-Shuhada, two Persian works by Iranian authors, without establishing an interliterary or theoretically productive distinction strong enough to justify the disciplinary label "comparative literature" (Kia & Ghanbari Naniz, 2013: 265–289). Joukar et al.'s comparison of epic modes in Persian poetry on the Russo-Persian wars and the Iran–Iraq War likewise compares Iranian Persian-language corpora. Such a study can certainly be a valuable diachronic comparison within Persian literary history; the methodological issue is whether it should be presented as comparative literature in the disciplinary sense or as internal historical poetics.

Najjarian and Shahin's comparison of elegies for Imam Husayn by Hassan and Mihyar al-Daylami raises another instructive case. Cultural identity, language of composition, historical location, and literary tradition do not map neatly onto national categories. Mihyar was Iranian by origin but wrote Arabic poetry. Rather than applying a mechanical nationality test, comparative research should explain which literary systems, languages, communities, or reception histories are being compared.

The geographical distribution of the corpus also shows strong concentration. Palestine appears in 26 articles, Egypt in 15, Iraq in 12, Afghanistan in 6, Lebanon and Syria in 4 each, Jordan and Sudan in 2 each, and Yemen, Kuwait, Tunisia, Algeria, Pakistan, and Russia in only 1 article each. Palestine's prominence is understandable because of the centrality of occupation and resistance in modern Arabic literature. Nevertheless, the distribution indicates large unexplored areas. Resistance

literatures of Latin America, Africa, South Asia, Eastern Europe, indigenous communities, and diasporic or refugee populations offer substantial opportunities for future comparative work. Greater geographical range would also reduce the tendency to compare the same small group of Persian and Arabic poets repeatedly.

Overgeneralization and Insufficient Attention to Detail

A final recurrent weakness is excessive breadth. Research methodology consistently emphasizes the need to define a manageable corpus and a precise temporal, geographical, generic, and conceptual scope. When the title promises to explain an enormous domain, the article is forced either into superficial generalization or into a small sample that cannot support the title's claims.

Moharrami and Behzadi's "Analysis and Comparison of the Themes of Resistance Poetry in Afghanistan and Iran" and Marouf and Naderi's "Analysis of Positive and Negative Imaginary Regimes in Arabic and Persian Resistance Poetry" illustrate the problem (Moharrami & Behzadi, 2015; Marouf & Naderi, 2015). "Resistance poetry in Iran and Afghanistan" spans multiple historical periods, political contexts, generations, and poetic movements. "Arabic resistance poetry" extends across numerous countries and very different struggles. An article that samples only a few poets cannot legitimately generalize to the whole domain without a carefully justified sampling design.

The issue is particularly clear in the latter study, which examines three Arabic-language poets and five Persian-language poets yet formulates conclusions about Arabic and Persian resistance poetry at large. Differences among Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, and other contexts cannot be absorbed into a single undifferentiated category. Zeinivand's warning is relevant: overly broad research designs tend to escape their own analytical framework and make precise conclusions difficult (Zeinivand, 2012: 100).

Excessive breadth can also occur inside an apparently narrow title. Gheybi and Ahmari's study of resistance concepts in Fadwa Tuqan and Tahereh Saffarzadeh and Al-Buyeh Langroudi and Ansari's study of Imam Husayn in contemporary Persian and Arabic Ashura poetry define identifiable corpora but often move rapidly from one motif to another, supporting each with only a small number of examples. The result is coverage without depth.

A strong comparative article does not need to discuss every motif present in two writers. It may be more valuable to select one sharply defined problem and analyze it thoroughly. For example, instead of "resistance themes in poet A and poet B," a study might examine the rhetoric of maternal mourning in a specific collection by each poet, the transformation of a particular Qur'anic or epic intertext, the syntax of prison space, or the representation of the enemy's body during a defined historical period. Narrower scope does not reduce significance; it often makes significance demonstrable.

Recommendations

1. Broaden the generic range of research beyond poetry. Comparative work should engage more systematically with the novel, short story, drama, literary memoir, children's and young-adult literature, prison writing, documentary narrative, digital forms, and hybrid genres.

2. Prioritize under-researched problems rather than simply under-paired authors. Promising areas include women's roles in resistance literature, gendered memory, translation and circulation, digital media, ecological dimensions of war, refugee and diaspora writing, intergenerational memory, disability, trauma, and the relation between resistance discourse and literary form.
3. Require a clear correspondence between title, research question, corpus, analytical categories, and conclusion during peer review. An article announced as imagology, discourse analysis, narrative study, or stylistics should actually perform that kind of analysis rather than reverting to an inventory of resistance motifs.
4. Strengthen graduate training in comparative literature, resistance literature, literary theory, rhetoric, stylistics, research design, and bibliography. Students should encounter comparative literature as a discipline with multiple methods rather than as a technique of placing two authors side by side.
5. Require authors to state an explicit comparative rationale. Instead of merely naming a historical "school," researchers should identify whether the study concerns influence, reception, translation, typological analogy, shared historical structures, intertextuality, imagology, genre, circulation, or another relation.
6. Shift originality claims from "these two writers have not previously been compared" to a problem-oriented formulation that explains what new question, archive, interpretation, or mechanism the comparison reveals.
7. Design the body of the article comparatively. Organize sections around shared analytical problems so that both texts remain in dialogue throughout the paper, rather than analyzing each separately and postponing comparison until the conclusion.
8. Balance similarity and difference and, more importantly, explain both. Comparative scholarship should move from classification to causation and interpretation by examining the historical, cultural, ideological, formal, and translational conditions behind convergence and divergence.
9. Develop interdisciplinary collaboration with historians, linguists, translation scholars, cultural-studies researchers, sociologists, media scholars, and area specialists when the research problem requires expertise beyond literary close reading.
10. Expand international scholarly collaboration and geographical range. Collaboration with scholars working on Arabic, Afghan, African, Latin American, South Asian, Russian, European, and diasporic resistance literatures can improve access to primary texts, historical contexts, and current comparative scholarship.
11. Define the corpus precisely by period, geography, genre, author, text, and analytical problem. Broad labels such as "Arabic resistance poetry" or "Iranian and Afghan resistance poetry" should be avoided unless supported by a genuinely representative and methodologically justified corpus.
12. Encourage journals to ask for transparent methodological statements and, in corpus-based critical surveys, explicit inclusion criteria, coding categories, and limitations. This would make future assessments more reproducible and cumulative.

13. Direct research funding and institutional support toward neglected genres, languages, archives, and bibliographical projects, including databases that map existing resistance-literature research and help scholars identify genuine gaps.
14. Prioritize publication quality over numerical output. Peer review should reward conceptual clarity, methodological rigor, detailed textual evidence, and explanatory comparison rather than merely the presence of two national or literary objects.

Conclusion

This study examined 83 research articles on resistance literature with a comparative orientation, drawn from four Iranian academic journals through the end of 2023. The corpus demonstrates that comparative resistance-literature scholarship has developed sufficient volume to justify systematic self-assessment, but it also reveals several recurring methodological concentrations and weaknesses.

The first is thematic imbalance. Poetry accounts for 65 of 83 articles (78.3%), while fiction and theoretical research receive far less attention. More than half of the corpus concentrates on identifying components or manifestations of resistance, often returning to the same poets and familiar concepts. This pattern has helped consolidate the vocabulary of the field, but its continued repetition now risks reducing comparative research to the redistribution of already established themes across new author pairings.

The second major issue is weak theoretical and methodological framing. Seventy-nine articles do not employ an explicit literary-theoretical framework, and only a minority clearly articulate the logic of their comparative method. The difficulty is not the absence of fashionable theory as such. A rigorous comparative study can be historical, bibliographical, formal, or reception-based. The problem is the absence of an operational account of why these two objects should be compared and how the comparison will generate knowledge.

Related to this is the reductive use of historical "schools" of comparative literature. Naming the American school because two writers did not influence one another directly does not constitute a method. Likewise, assigning a study to a French, American, or Slavic school cannot substitute for defining the type of relation under investigation. Contemporary comparative literature is broader than this tripartite typology. The more productive question is whether the article explains influence, reception, translation, typological similarity, shared historical conditions, genre transformation, imagological construction, intertextuality, or another defensible relation.

The third problem is the conception of originality. Many papers treat an unprecedented pairing of two writers as sufficient novelty even when the topic and results reproduce previous single-author studies. The field needs a stronger problem-oriented understanding of originality: comparison should reveal a mechanism, difference, transformation, historical relation, or conceptual tension that would remain invisible if the two objects were studied separately.

The fourth issue concerns the actual practice of comparison. Many articles privilege similarities, postpone differences to the conclusion, or analyze the two writers in separate blocks and only later assemble lists of commonalities and distinctions. Such

structures weaken the explanatory force of comparison. A genuinely comparative article keeps the objects in active relation throughout the analysis and asks not only what is similar or different but why.

The fifth issue is cross-cultural rationale. Earlier Iranian methodological writing sometimes treated linguistic and national difference as strict requirements of comparative literature. Contemporary scholarship makes such a rule difficult to maintain in absolute form, especially in multilingual, diasporic, transnational, and interdisciplinary contexts. Yet the corpus still reveals a genuine problem: some papers use the disciplinary label "comparative literature" without explaining what interliterary, intercultural, historical, or conceptual relation makes the comparison meaningful. Reformulating the problem in this way preserves the author's original concern while avoiding an unnecessarily rigid definition of the discipline.

Finally, several studies adopt scopes too broad for article-length analysis. Claims about "Arabic resistance poetry," "Persian resistance poetry," or entire national traditions cannot be supported by a handful of poets unless the sampling logic and limits of generalization are explicitly stated. Detailed analysis of a smaller, well-defined problem is usually more valuable than superficial coverage of a vast field.

These findings should not be read as an argument against comparative approaches in resistance literature. On the contrary, resistance literature is especially well suited to comparison because war, occupation, revolution, migration, imprisonment, collective memory, and political violence cross linguistic and national borders while taking different literary forms in different contexts. The challenge is to transform comparison from juxtaposition into explanation. Stronger theoretical training, explicit research design, narrower problem-driven corpora, genuinely relational analysis, interdisciplinary contextualization, and wider international collaboration can make comparative resistance-literature scholarship more original, precise, and globally legible.

The study also has limits. Its corpus is restricted to 83 articles in four Iranian journals and therefore cannot represent every comparative study of resistance literature published in Iran, in conference proceedings, in theses, or in journals outside the selected set. Future research could expand the database, test the categories used here across a larger corpus, analyze citation networks, compare Persian-language scholarship with international resistance- or war-literature research, and examine changes over time. Such work would turn methodological self-critique into a cumulative research program rather than a one-time diagnosis.

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