



## A Comparative Study of Postwar Literature (Iranian Defense and Vietnam's War) a Komunyakaa's and Aminpour's Poems

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**Abstract.** The comparative study tries to find the common points in two different authors' works and in this kind of studying so many other common but the hidden points may be revealed. Postwar literature is somehow one of the best literary genres for finding the common factors and features that the poets have tried to present in their works elements such as desire to be winner, cruelty, inhumanity, and absurdity of the war. The Iranian poet late Qaisar Aminpour (1961-2007) and Yusef Komunyakaa (1947) from Bogalusa, Louisiana, are among the great American and Iranian poets whose works so many times have been interpreted and analyzed. The finding the outstanding and the most important points and themes in the postwar poems of these two poets is the main aim of this literary comparative study.

**Keywords:** Comparative study, postwar literature, Komunyakaa, Aminpour.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The post/war literature is one of the divisions that in all of the world in different division and subdivisions have been reflected and this reflection were mirrors for soldiers and refugees pains, and suffering. The comparative literature tries to show the similarities and differences of emotions and sensation that witnesses of the wars (soldiers and refugees). Iranian eight years defense (The first Persian Gulf war was a great source of inspiration for the Iranian poets to show Iranians' loneliness at the front of universal imperialism. The Vietnam War also shows Vietnam's sinless and innocent people who tried to protect themselves against invaders. Aminpour's and Yusef Komunyakaa poetry try to be an epic like resistance that Iranians and Vietnams had against the invaders.

What it truly meant for African Americans to fight in Vietnam. Writing from a veteran's viewpoint nearly two decades later, Yusef Komunyakaa demonstrated how the Vietnam War highlighted and obscured the racial differences between Black and White soldiers as well as the Vietnamese people. According to Komunyakaa, Vietnamese citizens whose rights Black Americans fought to protect were also impacted by the discrimination against them, which was not just started by white people. In "To Du Street," the Vietnamese woman working as a bartender is unsure about whether to give Komunyakaa a drink due to his race. She first "skirts each white face for approval" (13) before deciding that Yusef was worthy of her service, just like a number of previous American presidents had done. It's still possible, though, that her prejudice originated in Vietnamese culture.

Farther more, we notice Iran's modern history is replete with acts of resistance, selflessness, and stability along the country's path to freedom and liberty. This path was connected to the most significant goal of revolutionary literature (the poetry of the revolution).

## 2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1-What are the similarities of the post/war selected works?
- 2-How the effects and problems of post/war have been reflected in poetry?

## 3. THE POSTWAR LITERATURE

### 3.1 In general, post war literature was released after World War 1.

By the time the world emerged from the war, it had undergone enormous sociological changes (officers and conscripted men fighting alongside each other and learning about each other's lives, for example), and there had been a tremendous death toll on all sides. The ideals of the late 1800s and early 1900s were incompatible with the modern world. The literature changed as a result.

Having said that, "post-war" can refer to any period of time following a conflict, however in the context of the English Literature Canon, it refers specifically to World War I. The period between the two World Wars was referred to by Malcolm Cowley as the "second flowering" of American literature. The 1920s and 1930s saw a new maturity and rich diversity in American literature, and important works by a number of influential authors from those years were released after 1945. Among the pioneering names who have emerged in writing this type of literature are the poets chosen to analyze their poems in this research: Qaisar Aminpour and Yusef Komunyakaa.

### 3.2 Qaisar Aminpour

The Iranian poet, Qaisar Aminpour (1961-2007) is known as one of the best defense literature writer, who with his brilliant works and magical pen, sang in the recording of eight-year Iranian war and the following years with such concepts as emotion, commitment, love, ideal and peace, proved his great talent in this field. He is as one of the guides of the right path of the flow of defense poetry forever in the history of Iranian's literature. Aminpour was a contemporary and influential poet whose belief in the identity of the revolutionary people on the one hand and his commitment to the epic creation of Islamic warriors on the fronts of right against wrong on the other, caused passivity to be forgotten along with literature.

By composing the poetry of the Eight-Year War, he made the epic of the defense and the years that followed with the nature of a poem about the war on the Iranian literature forever will be everlasting. In fulfilling his mission and ideal, Aminpour was one of the poets who on the fronts of right against wrong, he whispered the passion of epic and hope for the heroes, and the fire of love for the full support of the people. To keep alive the people of the revolution and this land who sacrificed their lives for the freedom and liberty of Iran. Perhaps the best word to describe Qaisar Aminpour's image of as a poet of defense is in Morteza Kakhi's words as a literary critic and friend of Qaisar Aminpour, where he called Aminpour the king of war poets. But besides the fact that we can call the emperor without any doubt the king of war poets; We cannot simply ignore the fact that in the most epic and martial poems of Aminpour's defense/ war literature, the bright colors of peace can also be observed and in a way he can also be called a poet of peace. In fact, Aminpour's poetry from two angles of idealism and commitment undoubtedly made it possible to create a flow of war literature.

Aminpour's poems, like those of his companions in this age and time, had a clear and unequivocal view to reflect and increase the enthusiasm and motivation among the soldiers on the one hand and on the other hand among the youth and men who in the form of popular forces and Basij consciously and with a sublime ideal. For this reason, Aminpour's poems in the first years of the epic of the eight years of the defense/war literature, using a sharp rhythm, a clear and passionate language, were close. Like one of his masterpieces that he wrote:

Suddenly, they proudly attacked  
They drove the tornado around  
They washed the earth overnight with blood  
They raised their swords to the sky  
They kept their promise and left  
They left but always stayed

In the face of this sonnet, every audience is confronted with more masculine men than any interpreter and exponent of the concept of masculinity who, with a steely spirit, a loving heart and a fearless secret, had only one goal in order to stay on the path of their country's honor. He was referring to a land that has always been tied to

the freedom of Iran and Iranians. For this reason, in many poems of the first years of Aminpour's poetry in line with the era of defense, we rarely see the first-person narrative and "personal self" of the poet, and he tries to express the concept of resistance through his poetic art and aesthetic look. Interpret the epic this time in the coming together of Iran and Iranians for the victory of the right over darkness in the form of "becoming us".

Qaisar Aminpour has left us many works in the form of books, which are the most important collections of poems that have been published in the field of defense poetry:

I wanted to  
Say a poem about war  
I can not see  
I no longer have the pen of my heart  
I said :  
The pens must be dropped  
Cold weapons are no longer effective  
A sharper weapon must be picked up  
A must for war  
I read from the barrel of the gun  
- With the word bullet –  
I wanted to  
Say a poem about war  
A poem for my city - Dezful –  
I saw the word "missile"  
Should be used  
But  
Rocket  
The beauty of my words diminishes  
I said that my poem is incomplete  
Which is not better than city houses  
Leave my poem too  
Because people's earthen houses  
Be crushed and bloody  
It must be said that it is an earthy and bloody  
poem I have to recite the poem of anger  
Eloquent poetry shout –  
Although unfinished ...

Wartime poetry is the poetry of passion and motivation. The poetry of defense has had its ups and downs. " Aminpour " like other poets of this path, at the beginning of the path, considered creating enthusiasm and motivation among the youth to rush to the front lines of war. As his poetic duty and using his accurate knowledge of the rhythm of words, found his way in this Smoothed the route:

Suddenly, they proudly attacked  
They drove the tornado around  
They washed the earth overnight with blood  
They raised their swords to the sky  
They kept their promise and left  
They left but always stayed (Aminpour, 1989: p. 41)

In these sonnets, the poet speaks of a one-handed and fearless group, a group that have united to achieve their goal. In such poems, usually "I am personal" is not very important and is seen only in the position of moving to "us".

### 3.3 Yusef Komunyakaa

Yusef Komunyakaa (1947) was raised in Bogalusa, Louisiana, a Deep South town known for its poverty despite its abundance of artistically inspiring natural surroundings. The neighborhood was ruled by a "Calvinist work ethic." He grew up surrounded by folks who thought they could achieve the "American Dream" if they worked hard enough. The intellectually curious Komunyakaa and his carpenter father frequently disagreed over this worldview, but the writer draws on a wealth of early experiences to create a body of work that is informed by these experiences. Much of his work, including some on his experiences in the Vietnam War, was inspired by familial relationships, his upbringing in a small Southern town, and the musical atmosphere made possible by the closeness of the blues and jazz hub in New Orleans.

Komunyakaa describes his early years in Bogalusa, Louisiana, which was formerly a hub for Klan activity before becoming a focal point for Civil Rights initiatives.

Black soldiers frequently felt invisible, or at the very least, inconsequential, to America's effort overseas after reading accounts of the War at home. "Anyone with white skin caught outside protected areas after dark is courting horrible death," a journalist wrote about Vietnam.

Fourteen years after serving in the Vietnam War, in the spring of 1984, Komunyakaa started remodeling an ancient New Orleans home. As layers of plaster were peeled back to reveal the house's original oak walls, Komunyakaa was immediately inspired by this metaphorical "peeling away," as memories of war that he had long suppressed began to resurface. The poems appeared out of nowhere as Komunyakaa lowered his ladder into the muggy Louisiana air. "Starlight Scope Myopia," "Somewhere Near Phu Bai," and "Missing in Action." Even though Komunyakaa started writing while serving in Vietnam, it took him nearly fifteen years to turn his wartime experiences into poetic material that he could put on paper. These terrible images have been hidden by Komunyakaa. He states, "I had deliberately avoided Vietnam related literature and had seen only one 'Vietnam War' movie" in *Control is the Mainspring* (Blue Notes 14). Komunyakaa, like other War survivors, tried for years to put the horrific things that happened to him while he was in the service behind him. Paradoxically, he has made every effort to ensure that he and others remember the years since 1984.

Through this experience, Komunyakaa was able to develop a journalistic technique that he would later employ in his lyrical endeavors to fairly evaluate the time he spent fighting.

To "get down to the guts of the thing" and start writing poetry about the Vietnam War, Komunyakaa needed fourteen years. But this poet is not the only one who finds it difficult to write about horrific wartime material. Poetry critics have frequently noted how difficult it is to include the Vietnam War into poems. For instance, Jeffery Walsh has maintained that "poetry of a traditional kind has proved inappropriate to communicate the character of the Vietnam War, its remoteness, its jargonised recapitulations, its seeming imperviousness to aesthetics" (Walsh 204). When Komunyakaa reads "Untitled Blues," he finds himself attempting to "look into the eyes/of the photo, of a black boy/ behind a laughing white mask" (3-5). In an interview with William Baer, Komunyakaa was asked about the prevalence of racial psychological warfare. He said, "Back home, the anti-war movement and the Civil Rights Movement were both gaining momentum." For the black GIs, the issue was thus very much alive, and there was constant conversation. "Our mighty [white] leaders talk about patriotism, which is supposed to be the foundation stone of our nation," asserts a black soldier in the historical fiction *The Courageous and The Proud*. However, those leaders are unable to see that the way Black people are treated in America is the root of much of their anger. As a Black person, how should I feel about traveling to a location where I have a good probability of not returning and, even if I do, being treated like a second-class citizen? Yusef Komunyakaa had to start with the experience of the Vietnam War as well, since earlier poets had countered the abstractions of the War with their own particular experiences of racism at home. Similar to Komunyakaa, the majority of Vietnam War soldiers were from working-class and lower-middle-class backgrounds. A relatively small number of men from other social strata were compelled to participate in the Vietnam War, despite the fact that it was justified as being in the country's best interests. America's "expendables" were those who fought in Vietnam from 1965 to 1969 (Polner 162). Komunyakaa asserts that racial distinctions become hazy during times of war.

"You are only trying to stay alive.

You're going to try to protect your fellow soldiers,  
black or white" (Baer 3).

Although racial discrimination and division persisted in the private lives of troops, this assertion held true in the heat of combat.

The poem "Tu Do Street" focuses on the intimacy and segregation that Black and White Americans who were fighting in Vietnam shared. "Music divides the evening" (1) is how he starts the poem. This dichotomy, this feeling of divide, extends not only between the musical preferences of white and black soldiers, but also between adversaries during times of conflict. According to Komunyakaa, soldiers brought this "division" and their prejudiced racial attitudes to Vietnam. "Tu Do Street" suggests a "brotherhood" between Caucasian and African American soldiers, although it focuses the soldiers' integration on Vietnamese prostitutes rather than the sharing of near-death experiences. These males search for a womb-like haven of safety and security as they go into private rooms with the women. In order to create a lyrical maze that logically leads American soldiers back home with each other while fancifully leading them underground—possibly with the Viet Cong and prostitutes—the poet emphasizes lines created and broken. Vietnam and Black America claimed that segregation like this was commonplace. "Black soldiers, attracted by common music, language, or hate, live when they can in black hootches and spend their off-duty time together in black dominated 'soul' bars". One such poem by Komunyakaa that addresses the importance of Black nightclubs and African Americans' need for a sense of their own identity is "Hanoi Hannah". The poet describes how the North Vietnamese used every tactic at their disposal to demoralize the American soldiers. They specifically hired this female radio DJ to incite homesickness by playing black music and making ironic remarks about the irony of African Americans' struggle in Vietnam. Ray Charles! His voice

Calls from waist-high grass,  
& we duck behind gray sandbags.  
"Hello, Soul Brothers. Yeah, Georgia's also on my mind."  
"You're dead as King today in Memphis."...  
"It's Saturday night in the States. ...  
Soul Brothers, what you dying' for?" (1-3, 21-22, 27)

Hannah takes advantage of the unclear role that African-American soldiers have in the war by posing this issue in her fluent Black English.

Kevin Stein states, in regard to "Hanoi Hannah," that "[Komunyakaa's] poems become politically charged, though always understated, as he offers a black American's perspective on psychological warfare strategies that accentuate racial division( 6) 44 Similar to several authors of the Black Arts Movement, Komunyakaa recognizes the need for political and social transformation in America and harbors remorse regarding the Vietnam War. But he thinks that lyrical sensitivity—rather than an overt challenge to white power stunned by confrontation—is what's needed to bring about this shift. Komunyakaa stands out from both the Black militant poets of the late 1960s and early 1970s as well as other seasoned poets due to his nearly two-decade wait to publish poetry about Vietnam.

Richard K. Barksdale states that in some of the recent poetry written by young Black writers, there is a broad humanistic concern that emerges from behind the confrontational rhetoric to identify the evils of the day, analyze them critically from a political perspective, and offer their desperate solutions for the moral and spiritual salvation of humanity. (Black Poets of Today, 161) There is no doubt that Black troops' memories of Vietnam differ from those of their White colleagues. The Viet Cong pamphlets in "Report from a Skull's Diorama" that stated, "VC didn't kill Martin Luther King," and the Confederate flags that fly in "Re-creating the Scene" both offer visual depictions of what life must have been like for African Americans

Komunyakaa, sensing the hypocrisy of considering the Vietnamese as both allies and foes, draws a comparison between the American soldiers' conduct and those of Judas, the biblical figure. Vietnam and Black America claimed that segregation like this was commonplace. "Black soldiers, attracted by common music, language, or hate, live when they can in black hootches and spend their off-duty time together in black dominated 'soul' bars" (213). 43 One such poem by Komunyakaa that addresses the importance of Black nightclubs and African Americans' need for a sense of their own identity is "Hanoi Hannah."

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The majority of Komunyakaa's poetry rejects the idea that words should serve as "fists" and "daggers." Komunyakaa's poems lean more toward the idea of integration, peace, and equality than they do toward the violent overthrow of white racist authority and the moral superiority of Black suffering as the call to explicit direct political action. While Komunyakaa certainly tackles the subject of racial oppression, a large portion of his work questions human ability to recognize this inherent duality—the ability to create beauty and the ability to destroy brutally—by depicting nature as a force that is both beautiful and brutal.

Through the use of literary devices specific to the Black Arts Movement and Black Aesthetic of the 1960s, these poets portrayed in poetry the ways in which Black participation in the War helped the white majority society's aim at racial annihilation. While Baraka compared the oppressive state of African Americans to that of those living in Third World nations, Nikki Giovanni wrote to demonstrate that Black youth would have been better off fighting for civil rights in the United States rather than being wasted on the War.

Aminpour portrayed the objectivity and reality of society. Especially for the adolescent and young generation who in those years were either not born yet or if they were born at a young age did not have memories, and mentality of those years. So this time, in order to keep alive the eight-year epic of the defense, the mission of the poets was to educate a generation to be one of their most important role models; May there be fathers, mothers and the past who simply lost their lives and worked hard to establish Iran. Aminpour's pen, along with his always honesty with poetry, began to create hope and reflect on epics that evoke concepts such as self-sacrifice, martyrdom, perseverance and resistance. The concepts that the teenagers and young people of the post-war years were supposed to depict in the shadow of fear of rain rockets and escape from the red sirens

The Black Arts Poets of the 1960s reclaimed the right to express, with artistic pride, their Blackness, while many writers of the 1940s demanded an end to "race-consciousness" in African American poetry (Bibby 40). They seized the discourses of liberty and revolution created by the American engagement in Vietnam through the use of imagery, language, and subjects. Certainly, "blackness" was employed by Baraka and Giovanni in their works as a physical and cultural symbol of destructive power meant to upend the establishment of white supremacy. Along with Yusef Komunyakaa, who wrote nearly two decades thereafter on the war from the perspective of a veteran, these poets identified with the Vietnamese people due to their shared dark skin and experience of racial oppression. They depicted this "epidermal difference" as the bond that unites all people of

color and subjects them to white American imperialism's subjugation. This viewpoint is expressed by Peter X in Black Vanguard:

Black is the foundation color; all other colors are derived from black. White is the colorless state with no color. Why can't those of us who are black, brown, yellow, or red call ourselves black, if others who are blond and light-skinned, brunette and dark-skinned, or red-haired and freckled, can call themselves white? Without a doubt, Komunyakaa was influenced by Baraka, Giovanni, and other Black Arts Movement poets who opposed the Vietnam War. But Komunyakaa decides to abandon his radicalism in the Vietnam jungles and presents the experience of Black soldiers in the war from the viewpoint of a personal veteran. Even while his allusion to the Vietnamese woman as "a tom water flower" is unlikely to prevent the US from getting involved in another bloody war, the image sticks in readers' minds and challenges them to keep thinking critically about the conventional definition of "enemy."

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