

Images and Imaginaries of Resistance in the Poetry of Qeysar Aminpour and Mahmoud Darwish: A Comparative Analysis of the Symbolic Structure of Resilience

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examines the structure of images and imaginaries of resistance in the poetry of Qeysar Aminpour and Mahmoud Darwish through the lens of Yuri Lotman's cultural semiotics.

Methods: A corpus of 64 poetic texts by the two poets was analyzed using an intratextual, comparative, and cultural-analytical approach to clarify the mechanisms of meaning-making in Persian and Arabic resistance poetry.

Results: The analysis shows that core images—such as soil, blood, the palm/olive tree, and the sun—play a central role in shaping the discourse of resistance. In Aminpour's poetry, these images are associated with presence, hope, and regeneration, reflecting a faith-centered view of humanity and homeland. In contrast, in Darwish's poetry the same images are framed through memory, absence, and loss, expressing the lived experience of exile and existence within lost or contested borders.

Conclusions: Both poets employ poetic language not merely as a means of emotional expression or protest but as a process of meaning production and the preservation of collective memory. The convergence of Aminpour's and Darwish's intellectual horizons suggests a comparative semiotics of resistance in which resistance is continuously reproduced within cultural and semantic frameworks. The study ultimately highlights two distinct orientations: an ontology of presence in Aminpour's poetry and an ontology of absence in Darwish's poetry, revealing the deep connection between poetic language and the historical memory of nations.

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Introduction

In the broader context of transformations in contemporary poetry, the phenomenon of “resistance literature” has emerged as one of the meanings-oriented branches of modern cultural expression. This form of poetry does not merely reflect the historical and political circumstances of nations; rather, through the language of symbols and imagery it organizes a reconstruction of cultural memory and identity. The poems of Qeyzar Aminpour in Iran and Mahmoud Darwish in Palestine represent two prominent poles in shaping this aesthetics of resistance. Both poets employ shared symbolic motifs—such as soil, blood, the palm tree, and the sun—to construct an ontological image of resistance.

Within a comparative reading of these two poets, poetic language functions not simply as an instrument of emotional expression but as a semiotic system that cultivates layers of meaning and myth within its structure. From this perspective, analysis grounded in the theory of cultural semiotics (Lotman, 1990, pp. 22–36) enables us to study poetry as a cultural text and imagery as a code of cultural resistance. Through such an approach, the concept of resistance no longer remains confined to the political sphere; rather, it becomes a symbolic and aesthetic phenomenon through which cultural continuity is interpreted amid historical suffering.

Numerous studies have been conducted on Persian and Arabic resistance poetry; however, most have remained limited to historical or sociological approaches to literature. What remains largely absent is a comparative examination of the semiotic and symbolic structures of resistance imagery within two independent yet parallel linguistic traditions. In Persian literary studies, Shafiei-Kadkani (2023, pp. 17–41) explores the concept of the “imaginal form” in relation to mystical and historical experience, demonstrating that imagery in resistance poetry highlights the spiritual dimension of resistance. In the Arabic tradition, Darwish in works such as *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise* (Darwish, 2003, pp. 13–27) reconstructs metaphors of exile and homeland, transforming resistance from a purely political stance into a domain of mythic memory.

Despite these contributions, Persian–Arabic comparative literature still lacks a comprehensive study based on Lotman’s cultural semiotics and Jakobson’s semiotic analysis of language that examines the central images of resistance in terms of their symbolic structure and aesthetic function. The present study seeks to address this gap, particularly by demonstrating how natural and cultural signs—such as soil, blood, the palm tree, and the sun—within the cultural spaces of

Iran and Palestine transcend sensory imagery and become symbols of divine meaning and collective identity. Drawing upon the concept of the semiosphere (Lotman, 1990, pp. 45–58) and Jakobson’s notion of the poetic function of language (Jakobson, 1987, pp. 51–62), and emphasizing the poetic representation of suffering and hope, this study ultimately aims to redefine the “aesthetics of resistance.”

The theoretical background of this study emerges from three major scholarly clusters. The first concerns theories of sign and culture. The intellectual foundations of the research are primarily rooted in Yuri Lotman’s concept of the semiosphere, which defines the text as a productive cultural structure (Lotman, 1990, pp. 33–41). This perspective aligns with Roland Barthes’ discussions of code and myth in *Image–Music–Text*, where poetry is understood as a system of signs that relocates ideology to the level of aesthetic expression (Barthes, 1977, pp. 91–115). Charles Sanders Peirce’s triadic classification of signs—icon, index, and symbol (Peirce, 1931–58, pp. 2.249–2.307)—provides a framework for analyzing the imagistic and symbolic layers of resistance poetry, while Umberto Eco in *A Theory of Semiotics* (Eco, 1976, pp. 131–152) introduces the concept of the “cultural code” to examine the interaction between sign and ideology. Together, these theoretical foundations support a multilayered interpretation of poetry as a cultural phenomenon.

The second cluster relates to scholarship on resistance poetry in Iran and Palestine. In Persian literary studies, the works of Shafiei-Kadkani (2023) and Alaei (2022) have provided important theoretical pathways for understanding resistance poetry. Shafiei views imagination and symbolism as emerging from the mythic memory of a nation, whereas Alaei examines Persian and Arab resistance poetry within the shared horizon of an “aesthetics of martyrdom” (Alaei, 2022, pp. 56–74). On the Arabic side, Darwish’s writings (2003) together with historical analyses by Jayyusi (1987, pp. 273–289) clarify the position of Darwish’s poetry within the trajectory of modern Arabic literature. Likewise, Ziadah’s study *Poetics of Resistance* (2019, pp. 102–120) approaches the semiotic narratives of homeland from an intercultural perspective. These works constitute the principal foundations for the comparative analysis of the present research.

The third cluster involves recent international scholarship. Over the past three years, several notable studies have contributed to the expansion of the discourse on the semiotics of resistance. Al Sulaiman and Baker (2024), in the article *Resisting Erasure*, investigate the semiotic layers of collective memory in Arabic resistance poetry. Nouri and Shafiei (2023), inspired by Lotman’s

theoretical framework, analyze the symbolic structure of Iranian war poetry. Similarly, Saadawi and El Masry (2023) in *Arabica* explore the transformation of the symbol of homeland in Darwish's later poetry. In addition, studies by Hashemi and Ameri (2022) and Ghazal (2023) examine the aesthetic and ecological dimensions of resistance, each contributing to the theoretical foundation of the present study.

Material and Methods

A corpus of 64 poetic texts by the two poets was analyzed using an intertextual, comparative, and cultural-analytical approach to clarify the mechanisms of meaning-making in Persian and Arabic resistance poetry. The analytical framework of this study is grounded in the paradigm of comparative semiotic criticism and is primarily informed by Yuri Lotman's model of the semi sphere (Lotman, 1990, pp. 22–36). Within this perspective, the poetic text is not treated merely as an isolated linguistic unit but rather as a “micro-culture” in which meaning emerges through the interaction of signs.

Accordingly, the research design consists of three complementary analytical layers: intertextual analysis, comparative intertextual analysis, and cultural semiotic analysis. These stages were applied sequentially in the examination of the poetry of Qeysar Aminpour and Mahmoud Darwish.

Intertextual Analysis

In the first stage, the core poetic collections of each poet were examined through structural textual analysis. For Aminpour, the collections *Āyenehā-ye Nāgāhān* and *Golhā Hame Āftābgardānand* were selected, while for Darwish the works *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise* and selected poems from *Dhākira li-al-Nisyān* were analyzed. This stage employed a close-reading method that investigates syntactic, rhythmic, and imagistic patterns in relation to each poet's semiotic system. The primary theoretical model used here is Roman Jakobson's concept of the poetic function of language, which emphasizes the interaction between the axis of selection and the axis of combination in shaping poetic meaning (Jakobson, 1987, pp. 51–62). Based on this approach, the linguistic structures of the poems were examined to reveal the processes through which images of resistance are constructed. Four central symbolic units—soil, blood, palm tree, and sun—were identified as the main markers of the aesthetics of resistance and were analyzed at the intertextual level.

A descriptive–interpretive method was applied in this stage. Each poetic image was interpreted within its semantic horizon, and its emotional and symbolic codes were identified. The aim of this step was to reconstruct the internal semiotic map of each poet’s imagery system, thereby providing a reliable basis for the subsequent comparative analysis.

Comparative Intertextual Analysis

In the second stage, the two poetic corpora were examined comparatively with particular emphasis on shared symbolic motifs. The theoretical framework of this section draws on the concept of intertextuality as articulated by Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva (Barthes, 1977, pp. 91–115). From this perspective, literary texts exist within a network of cultural signs and references rather than as isolated entities.

To operationalize the comparison, a comparative semiotic matrix was employed to identify overlapping symbolic patterns in the two poetic traditions. The analysis focused on four principal symbolic axes: homeland/soil, blood/sacrifice, palm or olive tree, and sun/light. Through these axes, thematic correspondences were identified between Aminpour’s poetic articulation of homeland and faith and Darwish’s imagery of exile and displaced homeland; between notions of sacred sacrifice and the ritual symbolism of blood; between ecological symbols of rootedness such as palm and olive trees; and between metaphysical imagery of divine presence and the poetic representation of hope and liberation.

In this stage, the technique of cross-textual symbol analysis was used to compare the symbolic structures of the two poets. The analysis was conducted both synchronically and diachronically in order to situate the formation of these images within the social and artistic transformations of Iranian and Palestinian cultural contexts. The comparison follows the principle of symbolic homology, which seeks to identify analogous structures of meaning across distinct linguistic systems.

Cultural Semiotic Analysis

The third analytical layer focuses on cultural semiotics, understood as the study of the relationship between sign systems and cultural processes in the production of meaning (Eco, 1976, pp. 131–152). Drawing upon Lotman’s concept of the semiosphere, this stage examines how poetic signs interact with the broader cultural environment of each poet.

In Aminpour's poetry, the semiotic space is shaped by the interaction between the Persian mystical tradition and the cultural discourse of martyrdom associated with the Iranian Revolution and war experience. Mystical concepts such as love, annihilation, and spiritual presence are transformed into symbolic codes of collective resistance. In contrast, Darwish's poetic semiosphere is structured by the cultural experience of exile and the representation of nostalgic memory, where homeland becomes a central symbolic sign.

To analyze these dynamics, the study employed a cultural code mapping method. By tracing the recurrence and sequencing of symbols across the poems, the underlying cultural coding system of each poet was reconstructed. Aminpour's symbolic network revolves around the axes of love–essence, martyrdom–purification, and homeland–presence, whereas Darwish's imagery is structured around memory–loss, exile–return, and olive tree–land. This mapping reveals a fundamental distinction between the two poetic visions: Darwish articulates resistance through an ontology of absence, while Aminpour expresses it through an ontology of presence and hope.

Data Collection and Coding Procedure

The research corpus consists of 64 selected poems from the two poets. The texts were selected according to three criteria:

- high frequency of resistance symbols (soil, blood, palm tree, sun);
- temporal diversity across different poetic periods;
- thematic independence and internal coherence of the poems.

Each poem was entered into an analytical framework as a semantic unit and coded through a structured qualitative coding process focusing on key symbolic elements. The coding procedure was conducted across four analytical levels:

- Level 1: visual sign (e.g., palm tree, stone, blood)
- Level 2: semantic field (hope, liberation, martyrdom)
- Level 3: aesthetic function (contrast, repetition, metaphor)
- Level 4: cultural reference (Iranian–mystical / Palestinian–exilic)

The resulting symbolic codes were then mapped within the framework of the semiosphere to compare the structural patterns of resistance imagery in the two cultural systems.

Interpretive Approach

Given the open and polysemic nature of poetic meaning, the interpretive logic of this research is informed by cultural hermeneutics and Bakhtin's concept of dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981). This perspective treats each poem as part of an ongoing dialogue with other texts and cultural discourses, allowing interpretation to unfold in a multi-voiced and dynamic manner.

To minimize subjective interpretation, the analytical process followed three interpretive criteria:

- semiotic coherence, referring to the stability of sign relations within the text;
- aesthetic function, referring to the alignment of imagery with the emotional and structural composition of the poem;
- cultural significance, referring to the connection between symbolic signs and the collective memory of the poet's culture.

Validity and Reliability

The validity of the analysis was ensured through data triangulation. Interpretations derived from the poetic texts were cross-examined with secondary interpretive sources, including literary criticism, scholarly articles, and related studies (Alaei, 1401; Ziadah, 2019; Nouri & Shafiei, 2023; Saadawi & El Masry, 2023). In addition, each interpretive claim was evaluated in light of Peirce's triadic model of signs—icon, index, and symbol—to ensure analytical precision and to distinguish between implicit poetic meanings and culturally embedded symbolic references. Through this process, the interaction between aesthetic signification and cultural symbolism in the poems was systematically verified.

Results

Results of the Comparative Analysis

General Semiotic Perspective

The analysis of the corpus of 64 selected poems indicates that both poets employ a coherent system of cultural codes whose imagery forms the core of meaning within intertextual structures. For example, in Aminpour's poem "*The Grammar of Love*" from the collection *Āyenehā-ye Nāgāhān*, the contrast between the act of being and the act of annihilation is reflected through the signs of soil and blossom. In contrast, Darwish in the poem "*A Small World*" (*Ālam Ṣaghīr*, from the collection *Ward Aqall*) realizes a similar logic through the image of an olive tree taking root in a

landless space. This opposition corresponds to the “self–other” relation in Lotman’s model, which constructs the semiotic space of resistance poetry (Lotman, 1990, pp. 33–47).

The Image of “Soil”: Code of Place and Identity

In Aminpour’s poem “*On the Occasion of a Tree*,” soil is not presented as a raw material but as the womb of the homeland’s birth, where the poet narrates his own emergence from the soil of faith. This representation elevates soil from a natural element to a cultural text. By contrast, in Darwish’s prose-poetic work *Fī Ḥaḍrat al-Ghayāb (In the Presence of Absence)*, soil is portrayed not as a site of birth but as a collective grave of memory. He writes that a person may become “a stranger in his own homeland,” transforming soil into a sign of erasure.

Comparatively, both poets interpret soil as a metaphor for cultural continuity, yet in divergent directions: Aminpour presents soil as a house of presence, while Darwish represents it as the grave of memory (Nouri & Shafiei, 2023, p. 117). This duality reveals the ontology of two distinct modes of resistance: presence in the Iranian context and absence in the Palestinian one.

The Image of “Blood”: From Mystical Purification to Ritual Sacrifice

In the poem “*O Martyr*” from *Golhā Hame Āftābgardānand*, Aminpour views blood as the generative cell of collective life: the body of the nation becomes illuminated through the martyr’s blood. This perspective aligns with the mystical poetic tradition in which death becomes a form of purification (Shafiei-Kadkani, 1402, p. 58). In Darwish’s poetry, for example in the collection *Ḥālat Ḥiṣār (State of Siege)*, blood appears as a lasting wound. While describing martyrdom, he presents it as an ink that leaves its mark upon the map of exile.

Both examples demonstrate that blood moves from the physical level to the cultural one. In Aminpour’s language, blood becomes a light “from which flowers grow,” whereas in Darwish’s poetry it becomes the ink of history that “writes the narrative of destiny” (Al Sulaiman & Baker, 2024, p. 51). Within Peirce’s semiotic logic, Aminpour treats blood primarily as a symbol of divine presence, while Darwish presents it as an index of catastrophe and memory.

The Image of “Palm / Olive”: Code of the Lifeworld of Resistance

In the poem “*Headless Palms*,” Aminpour depicts the palm tree as a living being standing against the storm of war. The palm is simultaneously associated with the martyr and functions as an iconic sign of the cultural identity of Khuzestan. In this sense, the palm transforms resistance into a form of bodily presence within nature.

Conversely, in Darwish's famous poem "Identity Card" (*Jawāz al-Safar*), the olive tree is portrayed as an ancestral tree that continues to grow even in exile. For Darwish, the olive tree represents a link between earth and sky: its roots in the soil and its branches in prayer. According to Lotman's cultural analysis, the olive tree symbolizes cultural cyclicity, a condition in which roots become detached from physical territory but continue to be reproduced within memory (Eco, 1976, p. 152).

The comparison reveals that both poets employ a vegetal symbol to reconstruct the human–earth relationship; however, one carries a tone of hopeful vitality, while the other embodies nostalgic longing.

The Image of "Sun": Metaphysical Code of Presence

In the poem "Morning" from *Āyenehā-ye Nāgāhān*, Aminpour presents the sun as a metaphor for divine presence and the promise of collective resurrection. Here the sun is equivalent to the light of certainty shining after the night. The linguistic structure of the poem, with its repetition of bright phonetic patterns, illustrates the aesthetic function of language as illumination (Jakobson, 1987, p. 57).

In Darwish's poetry—particularly in *Uḥibbuki aw Lā Uḥibbuki (I Love You or I Do Not Love You)*—the sun functions primarily as a temporal rather than spatial sign: a sunrise that repeats like memory. Darwish situates this dawn within the context of exile, transforming the sun into a symbol of unforgettable memory.

Comparatively, the sun in Aminpour represents presence, while in Darwish it symbolizes return. In the former, light becomes the source of meaning; in the latter, it becomes a witness to the loss of meaning.

Overall Structure of the Codes of Resistance with Examples

Examples from Aminpour such as "Headless Palms" in *Āyenehā-ye Nāgāhān* and examples from Darwish such as the ancestral olive tree in *Jawāz al-Safar* function primarily as iconic signs rooted in the natural layer of meaning. Poems such as "O Martyr" from *Golhā Hame Āftābgardānand* and Darwish's *State of Siege* operate at an indexical level, expressing emotional and experiential dimensions of resistance. Meanwhile, expressions such as "soil of faith" in *The Grammar of Love* and Darwish's reflections in *In the Presence of Absence* function as symbolic signs within the cultural layer of meaning.

The analysis demonstrates that in all cases the trajectory of signification moves from nature toward culture. In Aminpour's language, the internalization of resistance progresses from meaning toward hope, whereas in Darwish's poetry it moves from hope toward memory.

The Discourse of Resistance: A Comparison on Three Levels

At the religious and sacrificial level, Aminpour's poetry is grounded in the event of Ashura, where the blood of Husayn becomes a symbol of national and spiritual eternity. In Darwish's poetry, however, the Abrahamic narrative of sacrifice is reinterpreted; the modern Palestinian appears metaphorically as "an Ishmael without a ram," embodying an unresolved act of sacrifice.

At the territorial level, Iranian poetry frames the homeland through a mystical sense of sanctity—homeland as a spiritual qibla. In contrast, in Arabic resistance poetry the homeland often appears as a lost memory, a myth reconstructed through recollection.

At the human level, Aminpour constructs the image of the hopeful human being, who ventures into the darkness with faith and courage. Darwish, by contrast, speaks of the remembering human, one who returns not necessarily to the land itself but to the memory of the beloved homeland.

Comparative Semiotic Model of Resistance (Final Model)

In Aminpour's poetry, the movement of meaning proceeds from natural sign → mystical sign → cultural sign. This trajectory produces an ontology of "light within the soil," generating a semantic structure based on presence and continuity.

In Darwish's poetry, the movement progresses from historical sign → emotional sign → cultural sign, forming an ontology of "memory within absence" and a semantic structure grounded in loss and return.

Despite these differences, both poetic systems ultimately produce meaning through collective memory: in the Iranian context memory survives through faith, whereas in the Palestinian context it endures through the remembrance of wounds.

Summary of the Findings

1. The four central images in the poetry of both poets construct a semiotic network that transfers meaning from the bodily and material level to the cultural level.
2. Presence and absence function as two poles of a single semantic field operating within the cultural meanings of resistance.

3. The poetry of both poets demonstrates that resistance is a process of the semiotization of memory; poetry itself becomes the linguistic mechanism through which culture is revived.

Discussion and Reflection

Reconsidering the Path of Signification and the Theoretical Framework

The comparative analysis revealed that the codes of resistance in the poetry of Aminpour and Darwish operate through two contrasting semiotic mechanisms.

On the one hand, Aminpour moves within a semiotic field of presence, where an internally generated culture (post-revolutionary Iran) produces a system of meanings whose foundational triangle consists of hope – faith – life. On the other hand, Darwish operates within a semiotic field of absence, representing an exilic culture that constructs its significations from within loss and displacement.

Lotman describes this distinction as the “boundary between two cultures,” a point where meaning emerges not within the sign itself but through cultural translation between them (Lotman, 1990, p. 84). Consequently, both poets can be situated within a shared Semiosphere of Resistance: Aminpour as the voice of the internal nourishment of meaning through faith, and Darwish as the voice of the external restoration of meaning through memory.

Reflection on the Imagistic Mechanism

The four central images—soil, blood, palm/olive, and sun—function, according to the comparative model, as the pillars of the semantic system. Each image operates simultaneously on three interconnected semiotic levels:

1. Iconic level (natural image): direct representation of lived experience.
2. Indexical level (emotional connection): mediation between the individual and the collective.
3. Symbolic level (cultural dimension): production of meaning within collective memory.

Thus, each image rises from a sensory level to an ontological one. As Jakobson suggests, poetry is “language that displays itself” (Jakobson, 1987, p. 54). In other words, Aminpour and Darwish are not merely speaking about resistance; they are speaking through the language of resistance itself.

The Relationship Between Aesthetics and Ideology

The central issue here concerns the boundary between the aesthetic and the ideological elements in resistance poetry. The findings indicate that:

- In Iran, the form of resistance emerges from a sacred experience. Therefore, Aminpour's poetry seeks what Shafiei-Kadkani describes as the "beauty of truth" rather than the "truth of beauty" (Shafiei-Kadkani, 1402, p. 63).
- In Palestine, the form of resistance arises from absence and political reality. Consequently, Darwish's poetry represents the "truth of beautiful sorrow", rather than the beauty of sorrow itself. Within Lotman's theoretical logic, the first tends toward cultural linearity, whereas the second moves toward semiotic multilayeredness. For this reason, resistance in Aminpour's poetry manifests as an inward, internally bounded structure, while in Darwish's poetry it takes the form of an outward, border-crossing structure.

The Intersection of Sign and Memory

Both poetic systems function as forms of cultural memory (Lotman, 1990, p. 121). In this sense, poetry becomes a collective archive of values and suffering.

In Aminpour's poetry, memory carries a religious significance: remembrance as a covenant.

In Darwish's poetry, memory carries a territorial significance: remembrance as survival.

This distinction generates two different narratives of time:

- The cyclical time of faith (in Iranian poetry), where every loss becomes a return of meaning.
- The linear time of exile (in Palestinian poetry), where every return is itself a reminder of loss.

Eco considers this duality part of the cultural code of resistance that enables the reproduction of meaning (Eco, 1976, p. 158).

Relation to Previous Comparative Studies

Compared with earlier studies (Nouri & Shafiei, 2023; Al Sulaiman & Baker, 2024; Saadawi & El Masry, 2023), the present research elevates the level of analysis from the thematic level (themes of resistance) to the language of resistance as a semiotic system.

Accordingly, this model represents an attempt to move from descriptive comparative literature toward a semiotic comparative analysis. In particular, the concept of the "image-cultural code" establishes a theoretical link between the study of poetic language and cultural semiotics.

Reflection in Cultural Anthropology

The findings indicate that resistance poetry in the two cultures functions not merely as a literary reaction but as an anthropological response to a crisis of identity. Within these texts, imagery becomes a tool for reconstructing the world:

- In Aminpour's poetry, the poet reconstructs a new world of meaning through soil.
- In Darwish's poetry, the poet revives a lost memory through the symbol of the olive tree.

This relationship corresponds to what Barthes describes as the “birth of meaning from absence” (Barthes, 1977, p. 65).

Conceptual Recapitulation and the Research Trajectory

Reviewing the methodological trajectory of the study shows that the research progressed through three successive stages:

Stage 1 — Intratextual Analysis (Jakobsonian)

Goal: discovering the imagistic structure of resistance by mapping lexical and phonetic relationships within the poems.

Stage 2 — Intertextual Analysis (Barthesian)

Goal: identifying the shared codes of resistance and revealing the interaction of meaning between the two poets.

Stage 3 — Cultural Semiotic Analysis (Lotmanian)

Goal: defining two ontologies of resistance—presence and absence—and explaining the symbolic structure of resistance.

At the macro level, the integration of these three analytical layers results in the construction of a semantic map of resistance, demonstrating how poetry can assume the linguistic function equivalent to living itself under conditions of crisis.

Analytical Conclusion

The discussion ultimately demonstrates that artistic resistance in the poetry of both Aminpour and Darwish is neither mere slogan nor reaction; rather, it is a process of semiotizing hope and memory. Aminpour transforms resistance into the linguistic presence of life, while Darwish represents it as the continuity of memory in absence.

Thus, the symbolic systems of the two poets constitute the two poles of a single semantic field—a cultural field of resistance nourished simultaneously by what has been lost and by what is reborn.

Discussion

This study set out to examine, through a comparative perspective grounded in Yuri Lotman's theory of cultural semiotics, the manifestations and imagery of resistance in the poetry of Qeysar Aminpour and Mahmoud Darwish. The findings demonstrate that the language of resistance poetry in both poets is not merely a language of protest or sorrow. Rather, it functions as a creative linguistic system through which meaning is produced and the collective memory of a people is preserved. In this sense, poetry becomes a cultural mechanism that transforms historical experience into symbolic expression.

Within the poetic systems of both authors, four principal images—soil, blood, palm/olive tree, and sun—emerge as the central pillars of meaning construction. These images no longer function merely as references to nature or emotional states; instead, they operate as cultural signs that mediate the relationship between the human being, the homeland, faith, and the future. Through the repetition and transformation of these images, both poets construct symbolic structures that sustain the discourse of resistance.

In the poetry of Qeysar Aminpour, these images are shaped by a semantic orientation grounded in presence, renewal, and hope. Soil appears as the origin and cradle of life, symbolizing the sacred bond between the individual and the homeland. Blood represents vitality and sacrifice, embodying the spiritual energy that sustains the collective body of the nation. The palm tree stands as the resilient body of the land itself, a natural form that mirrors the endurance of the people. Finally, the sun functions as a symbol of faith and illumination, pointing toward a horizon of spiritual rebirth and moral clarity. Together, these elements create a symbolic system in which resistance is articulated as continuity of life and the regeneration of meaning.

In contrast, the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish reconfigures these same images within a semantic field shaped by absence, exile, and remembrance. Soil often appears as a place of displacement rather than belonging, evoking the experience of exile and the loss of homeland. Blood becomes a testimony of suffering and an index of historical injustice. The olive tree, deeply rooted in Palestinian cultural memory, symbolizes perseverance and identity even under the conditions of displacement. Meanwhile, the sun in Darwish's poetry often appears as a distant promise—a sign of return that illuminates memory rather than immediate presence. Through these transformations,

Darwish constructs a symbolic language in which resistance emerges as the persistence of memory in the face of erasure.

From a theoretical perspective, Lotman conceptualizes cultural difference through the notion of boundaries between semantic worlds. Meaning, according to Lotman, is produced not only within signs themselves but also at the boundaries where different cultural systems interact. The comparative analysis of Aminpour and Darwish illustrates this principle clearly. Iranian resistance poetry reflects a culture that speaks from within a space of presence, where collective faith and historical continuity sustain meaning. Palestinian resistance poetry, by contrast, represents a culture that articulates meaning through absence, where exile and loss become the sources of symbolic expression.

Despite these historical and linguistic differences, both poetic systems ultimately converge in their depiction of human resilience. They offer two complementary pathways toward resistance: Aminpour moves from faith toward hope, while Darwish moves from memory toward perseverance. In both cases, the poetic image becomes a bridge between the individual experience of suffering and the collective narrative of survival.

Several broader conclusions may therefore be drawn from this study:

1. The imagery employed by Aminpour and Darwish constitutes the fundamental structure through which the discourse of resistance is formed. Images are not decorative elements of poetic language but primary vehicles of cultural meaning.
2. Lotman's theory of cultural semiotics enables a deeper understanding of these meanings by situating them within the broader relationship between language, culture, and collective memory. Through this framework, poetic imagery can be interpreted not simply as metaphor but as a cultural code embedded in historical experience.
3. Resistance poetry in both Persian and Arabic literature demonstrates the enduring capacity of language to preserve life and identity in the face of loss, violence, and displacement. Poetry thus functions as a cultural archive, safeguarding the emotional and symbolic memory of a people. Moreover, the results highlight that poetry is not only an art of aesthetic expression but also a means of cultural survival and national memory formation. Through symbolic language, poets transform historical suffering into shared meaning, enabling communities to sustain hope and identity even under conditions of crisis.

Future research may expand this perspective by examining other artistic media—such as cinema, painting, or music—through the same semiotic framework. Such interdisciplinary investigations could reveal how the discourse of resistance extends beyond poetry, demonstrating how different artistic forms create new languages through which human identity, memory, and resilience are continually reimagined.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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