

The Analysis of Romanticism Traces in Akhavan Sales Poetry, Focusing on his Poem, Winter

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Abstract

Winter is one of the most famous poems composed by Akhavan Saless and is one of the best samples of the contemporary poetry. This poem composed in Dec. 1955 was published in Winter verse collection. The general atmosphere of the poem reflects feeling of defeat, disappointment and frustration overwhelming the Iranian community post-coup d'état, Aug. 1919, 53, through a metaphoric and symbolic expression. In the present research paper, the romantic aspects of winter have been studied and the romanticism has been traced in this poem through employing the components and features of Winter such as naturalism, metaphorizing, disappointment and pessimism. To achieve this objective firstly, we present a definition and general perspective of Romanticism; then, we trace the grounds for reflecting romanticism in Akhavan's poetry so that we find the reflection of romanticism in his Winter.

Keywords: Akhavan Saless, Winter, Romanticism, Naturalism, Metaphor, Disappointment and Frustration

I. Introduction

Mehdi Akhavan Saless's poetry similar to the works composed by most of the contemporary poets and authors that pursued enthusiastically the achievements of the National Movement were not immune from the consequences of the coup d'état; specifically, the most vivid feedbacks of this political crisis may be found in his poetry. But he is a poet whose attitude about historical and political events is more emotionally than politically, because he is a poet by nature not a politician or historian [1-3].

This emotional trend provides the ground for reflection of romanticism in his poetry. Akhavan's poetry may not be fully and in all of its aspects categorized in romanticism school because some of the components and features of romanticism are manifested in his poetry and some of the components are expressed outside the romantic scope.

The trend of Akhavan Saless to romanticism or the romantic aspect of his poetry may be sought in his frustrating political-social poems within the scope of emotional reflection of defeat [4].

Winter is one of the most famous poems composed by Akhavan Saless that reflects the frustrated and sad voice of a generation in a symbolic expression. What is found in Winter as the expressions of romanticism, indeed, are the conceptual axes and general atmosphere governing the poem. From this viewpoint, naturalism, symbolic and metaphoric expression, seclusiveness, and frustration as the most important components of Winter are also considered as the most significant romantic aspects of the poem. In the present research

paper, we study the relation of components and romantic aspect of Winter [5].

II. Problem Description and Research Questions

Mehdi Akhavan Saless is one of the most outstanding contemporary poets who present a new genre of Nimaic poetry through benefiting from Nima's suggestions and innovations.

The poem composed in Nimaic form in which the poet used traditionalism, and capacities and delicacies of Khorasani Style accompanied with modern language is the poet's starting point of departure.

Post-coup d'état Akavan Saless was changed into a poet who composed poetry in a symbolic language and whose poetry was the reflection of a defeated and frustrated generation. From this viewpoint, Akhavan's poetry is classified into the political-social category and Winter is one of his most important and famous poems.

Akhavan's poetry has apparently a non-romantic trend and is more inclined to symbolism. But according to a more comprehensive definition of romanticism, there is a tint of romanticism embedded in any artistic work created in any atmosphere. In this research paper, with consideration to the components and features of romanticism, we are going to analyze the romantic aspects in Winter and respond to the following questions:

1. What is the relation of Akhavan's poetry, especially, Winter with romanticism and how romanticism is reflected in this poem?
2. What are the characteristics of romanticism in Akhavan Saless' Winter?

3. How can we relate romanticism in Akhavan's poetry with the frustration and disappointment governing his poems?

Objectives of the Research

1. Analysis of romanticism in Akhavan Saless' poetry focusing on Winter.
2. Analysis of the most important features of Winter.
3. Analysis and expression of the relation between the frustration and disappointment governing Akhavan's poetry and romanticism.

Research Assumptions

1. It seems that romanticism in Akhavan's poetry is philosophical and social romanticism that is reflected more in his social poems such as Winter.
2. The most important features of Winter are indeed the romantic features of this poem.
3. Romanticism in Akhavan's poetry is focused on the post-coup d'état frustrated atmosphere the reflection of which is found in Akhavan's poetry.

III. Research Background

Many books have been written about Mehdi Akhavan Saless in which the traditionalistic, social, and symbolic aspects of his poetry have been analyzed, but, no separate pamphlet has been published about romanticism on Akhavan's poetry. In some of the researches, the romantic aspect of Akhavan's poetry has been referred to.

Mohammad Mokhtari in his two books entitled "Man in Contemporary Poetry", and "Seventy Years of Romantic Poetry" have discussed the Iranian romanticism and its branches. In "Seventy Years of Romantic Poetry", Mokhtari, aiming at expressing and analyzing different angles of Persian Romantic Poetry, classifies Iranian romantic poetry into two categories: Individualistic and Social. He categorizes Akhavan's poetry as social romanticism the most important features of which are the amalgamation of love, politics, and social problems. A separate chapter of "Man in Contemporary Poetry" has been allocated to analyzing Akhavan Saless' poems. In this book, Mokhtari expresses all of the aspects of Akhavan's poetry within the framework of Defeat Poetry; he believes that most of the components of Akhavan's poetry may be reviewed in this domain [4-6].

In the book entitled "Perspective of the Iranian Contemporary Poetry" written by Mehdi Zarghani, several pages have been allocated to the Iranian romanticism. The author, benefiting from Mohammad Mokhtari's classifications, categorizes Iranian romanticism into two categories, individualistic romanticism and social romanticism. In individualistic romanticism, he refers to poets such

as Fereydoon Tavalloli, Golchin Gilani, and Parviz Natel Khanlari and in social romanticism, he analyzes the poems composed by Houshang Ebtehaj, Esmaeil Shahroodi, and Nader Naderpour. He does not discuss about Akhavan Saless' poetry from this viewpoint because he believes that there is no trace of romantic aspect in Akhavan's poetry.

IV. Romanticism

Romanticism is not only a literary school but also a universal movement and include different areas such as literature, philosophy, social and political sciences, architecture, music, painting, cinema, etc [7-8].

Remembering the fact that many authors and critics have given definitions about romanticism and each of them have cast a glance on this school from a special angle, hereby we review some definitions proposed by the famous European critics and poets. Romanticism means "Retrospection to Nature" (Rousseau). "Retrieval & Resurrection of Life & Thoughts Dominant on Mediaeval Centuries" (Heine), "An Attempt to Escape Reality" (Waterhouse).

"Affection more than Wisdom and Heart in contrast with Reason" (George Sand). "Releasing Unconscious Mind, A Dream Endowed Existence" (Lucas), "An Imagination in Contrast to Reason & Reality" (Nilsson) [7-10].

The most important component and principles of romanticism school are:

Individualism and seclusiveness, disappointment and frustration, paying special attention to death, dereism (escape from reality) and flight into metaphysics and mental world, excessive desire to commit sin, paying special attention to liberalism, naturalism, giving priority to rural and primitive life in contrast with urban and mechanized life, considering more importance for feeling against wisdom" [11].

Rare works may be found in which all of the features of romanticism are described; this provides the ground for classifying romantic works into smaller sub-categories. Those classifications are topical and expresses genres such as lyric, political, social, philosophical, and revolutionary romanticism [10-12].

V. Romantic Aspects in Political-Social Poetry

One of the most important factors of romanticism emergence is the extensive political and historical changes during the period of romanticism prevalence. From this viewpoint, the emergence of romanticism is focused on the changes such as machine invention and industrial revolution, revolution in Italy, Austria, and France, Independence War in America, Napoleon Empire and European Wars while concentrating on prevalent

literary components and excessive rationalism of neoclassicism [13].

Dr. Hossein Payandeh, while providing a list of historical events effective on the emergence of romanticism, writes about its historical and political origins: "any literary school is the product of challenging interaction of the forces the origin of which should be sought in the historical background and social circumstances of the emergence time of that school. If we consider romantic period during 1798-1832, it should be said that romanticism is the product of a very turbulent and revolutionary period during which the cultural, social and economical fundamentals of the modern age were formed [13].

The romantic poets, not only were headless of the political and social turbulences but also felt sympathy about it in different forms. This romantic attitude may be found especially in the works of the contemporary poets that have been composed about Coup d'état of 1953, but what relates the political-social poetry especially Akhavan's poems with romanticism are some features such as frustration and disappointment, seclusiveness, emotional attitude about political and historical phenomena, and the prevalence of a kind of idealism upon which the existing situation was criticized and sought for their ideals in far past, the ideals that might have existed in ancient times or may be reflected in the future.

- Grounds for Emergence of Romanticism in Akhavan Saless' Poetry

As it is well-known, Mehdi Akhavan Saless (whose penname is M.Omid) is one of the most successful and greatest contemporary poets. Eight verse collections have been published from Akhavan that covers three periods of his poetry. The first period, "Arghanoon Verse Collection", that is composed in classic forms and pre-Nimaic atmosphere. The second period that is the most important of Akhavan's poetic career is featured with the collections of poems, "Winter", "End of the Book of Kings" and "From this Avesta" which are the most brilliant poems of Akhavan and the contemporary poetry. The third period during which the collections such as "In Small Yard", "Autumn in Prison", "Hell but Cool", and "I Love you my Ancient Homeland" have been composed and is a retrospection to tradition and are focused on narration and fabling" [14].

What illustrates more vividly the three middle verse collections composed in the second period of Akhavan Saless' poetic career, in spite of their artistic features, are a reflection of general atmosphere of the Iranian community post-coup d'état of 1953. The 1950s (1951-59) is considered as an important period not only in the political-social life of our country but also in the personal life of many of the artists and intellectuals. The experience

of a short-period of relative liberty during the first decade of the 2nd Pahlavi king's reign that was in coincidence with the development of parties' activity, freedom of speech, and the national movement in which Dr. Mosadegh came to power as the prime-minister, brought new hopes for the people, especially for the intellectuals and artists. But all of these hopes were frustrated after the coup d'état of 1953.

"The bitter defeat of the national movement had a significant effect in all of the domains of society. This effect is traceable more vividly in the contemporary literature. It may be said that the coup d'état, its consequences, and the atmosphere governing the society of post-coup d'état period create a new chapter in the contemporary literature. This event, as one of the most important political-social incidents plays a significant role in trends and classifications of the contemporary poetry" [15].

The reflection of political defeat in Ahavan's poetry is embedded in the deep structure of his poems. The defeat that overwhelms Akhavan's mind makes him revise his themes and thoughts. The defeat and resulted frustration play an essential role in all of the features of poet's life and poetry. "In most of Akhavan's poems, sensation of defeat is manifested as the most important artistic theme. Thus, we may call Akhavan as the greatest defeat poet of the contemporary poetry. Rare poems of Akhavan are in which no trace of frustration and pessimism are found.... Indeed, he is the emotional critic of our defeated history" [16-17].

This feature, i.e., the emotional attitude of the poet about political defeat provides the ground for emergence of social and philosophical romanticism in his poems. In order words, social romanticism in Akhavan's poetry is formed when the poet narrates the life of the defeated people in a symbolic language and with the help of natural elements. There is no trace of rational criticism of the events and their consequences; whatever constitutes the major core and axis of the narration is the poet's affections and emotions. "The philosophical aspect of his romantic trend is formed when the poet combines the political theme with the social defeat and finally the philosophical concept of defeat".

Romanticism in Akhavan's poetry is basically a social romanticism and the best samples of the amalgamation of romanticism with social anxieties and political thoughts may be found in his poems. According to a public's definition of romanticism, in Iran, fancifulness, sensationalism, and lyrical mentality of romanticism are more outstanding and pay less attention to its social dimensions. The interesting point is that "Among different periods and branches of romanticism in the contemporary poetry, social and political genres are more original and unsensational than the other branches from various

aspects. Because of social atmosphere and collective frustration overwhelming this period, the romantic poems of a poet such as Akhavan Saless in most of the cases are not limited to sadness and agony resulted from abortive loves and enters the social domains. Since this kind of romanticism emerged from literary and social changes of the society is more natural and spontaneous. But since these changes have essentially and mainly had a social background and motivation in Iran and no romantic revolution in poetry in its European concept have occurred in Iran, therefore, the whole process of poetry transformation may not be considered as a romantic trend".

From among the afore-mentioned components of romanticism, the themes such as individualism and seclusiveness, inclination to solitude, frustration, and disappointment, special attention to death, naturalism, the priority of sensation against wisdom, and dominance of nihilism on individual and social relations in life may be found in Akhavan's poetry. From this viewpoint, we analyze one of the most famous poems composed by Akhavan Saless, "Winter" and find its romantic aspects.

Winter

No response will be given to your greeting
Heads are bended towards chest
No one straightens his head to respond greetings and to visit friends
Eyes cannot see but before feet
Since the road is dark and slippery
If you bring your hands out to shake someone in affection
He will bring his hand out of his armpits reluctantly
Because the cold weather is very stinging
The breath that comes out of your warm chest changes into a dark cloud
And stands as a wall before your eyes
When your breath is like this, what do you expect of
Your far or close friends.
My brave man, O Messiah, my old Christian with worn dirty shirt
The weather is so dastardly cold, O...
Your words be hopeful and be happy
You respond my greeting and open the gate!
I am your every-night guest, the sad gypsy-like
I am the same suffered kicked stone
I am the cursed creature of creation, the inharmonic song
I am not from Rome or Zanzibar, I have no peculiarity
Open the door, I feel homesick
O, my friend, my host, your monthly and yearly guest is trembling at the gate like waves
There is no hail, no death
If you hear a sound, it is the dialogue between cold and teeth.

Tonight, I have come to pay my debt
To put my debt beside the glass of wine
Why are you saying that it is late at night, it is dawn and morning has come
It is a trick for you, it is not the red color of morning twilight that tinted the sky after dawn
O, friend, my ears have frozen, that is the trace of winter's slap
The sun, the candle of universe, I do not know whether it is turned on or off
Is hidden in the thick coffin of darkness
O, friend, bring the glass of wine for me, there is no difference between day and night
There is no response to your greeting
The weather is gloomy, the gates are closed, the heads bent on chests, and the hands are hidden
The breaths have changed into clouds, and the hearts are weary and sad
The trees are skeletons covered with crystals
Earth is gloomy and the ceiling of sky is low
The sun and moon are dusty
It is winter

Romantic Aspects in Winter

Winter is one of the outstanding masterpieces of the contemporary poetry that seems as a political-social poem composed in a symbolic language in the first glance. The symbolic aspect of the poem caused its non-artistic frankness to be reduced but the dominance of artistic aspects and special approaches chosen by the poet prevent the poem to be changed into common complaints and moaning. The sadness and agony embedded in the poem is not expressed explicitly but illustrates a kind of sadness overwhelming the atmosphere of the poem that is unique among the poems composed in that age; it is an individualistic sensation that binds to the ideals of a generation. This poem is the narration of the seclusiveness of a defeated generation and the coolness overwhelming a society overcome with suffocation.

The whole atmosphere of the poem and the description given of the frustrated and solitary man and the frozen society as well as the painful sensation of regret embedded in the poem besides the new and effective form that is fully in proportionate with affective and emotional atmosphere of the poem. Considering form, rhyme, theme, language, sensation, mysterious and sad atmosphere, new descriptions, sympathy with nature, reflection of human affections, self-narration, etc... Winter is a novel poem and with respect to those elements, this poem is considered romantic. These characteristics may be found vividly in its descriptions. In describing phenomena, the poet mingles his own sensations with the theme and cast a direct and objective glance on the subject. The poet also illustrates modes such as sadness and agony.

Naturalism

Naturalism in Akhavan's poetry casts a new glance on symbolic poetry and functions of metaphor and symbol. The presence of nature and its dependent elements in a descriptive language does not praise nature. The romantic poet tries to discover the relations embedded in nature and sometimes he joins his findings with individualistic sensations or the situation of the society. Indeed Winter in a symbolic language is not expressed as one of the seasons of the year but as a hard and bitter historical period. The poet with a bitter description of time and place similar to romanticists makes the atmosphere of the poem gloomy and ghostly. In fact, he chooses the natural objects and times compatible with his own modes and morale. Iranian Romanticists admire night from among times and autumn and winter from among seasons more and illustrate the imaginative and poetical events in their works.

Calendar and historical times are selected in compatible with the poet's seclusive and frustrated morale. The descriptions given from nature have an overlapping relation with the poet's mode and complete each other. This description is not a mere report and description of the nature but is the interpretation of individualistic sensation and affection accompanied with the expression of poet's mode and society. None of the natural objects and elements appears in poetry without the poet's affectional occupation.

Metaphorizing and Symbolism

Indeed, metaphorizing is one the junctions where symbolic poetry and romantic poetry join because in romantic poetry, connotation dominates denotation. In classic poetry, the word significance is explicit and vivid and the natural elements reflect their own reality and the same elements are real. But in romantic poetry, implications and symbolic concepts of words are dominant on realistic functions. In romantic texts, metaphor, mystery, and semi-visionary have a more contribution compared with sensational similes because the ambiguity and implication exist more in this kind of images. Metaphor in a romantic work is not an amusing decoration of reality but is a way to experience those realities, a way for thinking and living, a visionary display of reality. In romanticism, as Coleridge says, metaphor is a process in which the words make a reality from their inward and apply this reality to the world we are living in.

The metaphors and symbols in Winter may be analyzed as a romantic feature and as a symbolic component. The most important metaphors of the poem are: Manly Christian who is the metaphor of taverner. The ceiling of sky is the allusive metaphor genitive. The candle of universe is a metaphor of sun or in the atmosphere of the poem play the role of a

column supporting pedestrian lamp. The gloomy earth is an allusive metaphor. The winter's slap is a metaphor genitive and allusive metaphor. It is also personification. Crystal is a metaphor of a piece of ice.

The symbols of Winter are:

The thick coffin of darkness: The suffocating atmosphere of the country, deadly prisons.

Winter is the symbol of frozen and suffocating political atmosphere.

Darkness is the symbol of ambiguous future and fate.

Cold is the symbol of torture, terror and fear and red color after dawn is the messenger of freedom and hope.

Frustration and Disappointment

The reflection of disappointment and frustration and inclination to bitter and pessimistic writing is considered as the achievements of romanticists. Romantic poets focus their attention on mysterious world of unconsciousness and dark aspects of mind and have affective contemplation on the deep layers of their own self. They gradually are used to this kind of depression and favorable sadness.

The whole parts of Winter is the narration of frustration and disappointment. The poet's disappointment escapes from his individualism and ego and enters in social domain and narrates the historical frustration of the generation whose heads are bent on their chests and illustrates the depth of catastrophe and social suffocation. The social and philosophical frustration that is the intrinsic attribute of the poet is drawn once more onto the public field. The philosophical frustration dominated on Akhavan's poetry indicates his world outlook. He believes that human life is rotating on the axis of a circle and there is no escape of this bitter repetition.

The frustrating reaction of romanticists towards political-social phenomena and events has precedence After the defeat of the French Revolution that the romantic poets' and authors' ideals and hopes were not realized, most of the them were affected by disappointment and frustration which was reflected in their works. But they did not surrender themselves to absolute disappointment and frustration and focused their hope on an ideal future and promised golden future and a brilliant horizon.

But what distinguishes the reaction of Akhavan Saless towards political defeat from European similar example is the fact that he had no hope to a brilliant future. Throughout Akhavan's poetry, frustration and disappointment continue up to the end of the poem and this transforms into an organized thought in the poem.

VI. Conclusion

Winter composed by Mehdi Akhavan Saless is one of the masterpieces of the contemporary literature. This poem has been analyzed more from sociological point of view than a political-social poem but what makes Winter closer to a romantic poem is some of its axial features that have a close relation with romanticism. Naturalism and illustration of sensations and affections through employing natural elements is one of the axial components of romanticism that has a special application in Winter. The atmosphere of the poem that is winter season and has a symbolic function, as well as employing the elements pertaining to night and day are considered as the romantic aspects of the poem; especially, when the poet illustrates the frozen atmosphere of the society by using the characteristics of winter such as biting cold.

Symbolic poetry is very dependent to metaphor and symbol. This feature is very evident in Winter. On the other hand, metaphorizing and employing symbols for expressing individual affections are among the topics of romanticism and this is one of the other axes of the relation of Winter and Romanticism.

Disappointment, frustration, and pessimism constitute a major part of the semantic system of romantic works in such a way that we may consider them as one of the most important components of romanticism. This feature plays an axial role in Akhavan Saless' Winter and the frustration and disappointment overwhelm this poem. But the frustration and disappointment of Akhavan is different from the common lamentation in romantic works especially in its lyric genre. The frustration embedded in Akhavan's poetry is systematic and is considered as a kind of thought and systematic confrontation with political-social events. From these points of view, we can describe the philosophical romanticism in Akhavan's poetry. The other aspect of romanticism in Winter is reflected in seclusiveness and solitude of the people. Although the poem has an addressing voice but from the beginning to the end, the poem is the monologue of the narrator and it does not lead to a mutual dialogue. The people have their head bent on their chests and are in solitude, they pass by each other with indifference, they are pessimistic about the affectional hand stretched out towards them and their reaction is ignorance. This collection of features classifies Winter among the political-social romantic poetry that occasionally come close to philosophical romanticism.

Notes:

1. Masoud Jafari Jazi in the article entitled "Pioneers of Persian Romantic Poetry" considers any kind of innovation in form and contents as romanticism. The author refers the reader to Taghi

Rafat's statements who defend innovation and avant-gardism. The author compares the statements of Rafat with Victor Hugo's and other Europeans' and concludes that on the basis of those similarities, we may consider Rafat as a romanticist. In the same way, by analyzing the poems and works of Dehkhoda and Shams Kasmaei, their thematic and formalistic innovation of their poetry and works, he considers them romanticists. In fact, the author deems the challenge of the modern and classic poetry and the rebellion against classic tradition as romanticism. While these features in all of the literary trends and poetic currents are traceable. Principally, any school revolts against the established artistic and literary system and suggests a new genre.

2. The term "Pre-Nimaic" was used with consideration to the "Post-Nimaic" theory proposed by Ali Babachahi. In that theory the Persian Poetry is classified into four periods: Pre-Nimaic period (Classic poetry and all of the poems that are classified before Nimaic Change in Poetry), Nimaic Period (including Nima's poetry and his followers), Non-Nimaic (trends such as white poetry, volume poetry, new wave, etc...) and Post-Nimaic (poetic trends after 1970s such as Motion Poetry, Language Poetry, and Post-Modern Poetry).

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