

## Post-Modernism Features in Fireside Gypsy Story, Written by Monirou Ravanipour

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### ABSTRACT

Theorists believe that theoretical roots of post-modernism stem from its origin i.e. modernism but they have different ideas about designation of borders between modernism and post-modernism and determination of characteristics of post-modernism. Political, social and economic transformations and also changes in human philosophical attitude in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century formed under the name of modernism. In this paper, we try to investigate modernism school and causes for its formation for short. We assumed that this school has been internalized in Iran after social, economic and political changes across the world. We finally conclude that although some post-modernistic components are not present in stories, some of these dimensions can be observed in the works of contemporary Iranian writers like Ravanipour.

**KEYWORDS:** post-modernist, Ravanipour, Fireside Gypsy, story

### INTRODUCTION

Persian dictionaries define "post-modernism" as disagreement with modernism in literature, arts, architecture and late 20<sup>th</sup> century thoughts. "Post-modernists believe that a story can have several types of ending (as it is in real life) and a reader can select optionally and a story must not have necessarily an ending and conclusion, text integrity is meaningless and nothing is definite and therefore, a post-modernistic story is the closest narration to real life" (Shamisa, 2004). Literary schools are originated from historical events and social conditions, which are very effective in emergence of intellectual and cultural schools. "it can be said that post-modernism indicates a feeling of crisis and fruitlessness towards an external powerful discipline, the very feeling which gave rise to modernism (as a literary movement)." (payandeh, 2009). "Post-modernism is not in fact a new method in artistic works, critical speech and scientific experiences and does not lead to a new passage to artistic, philosophical and cultural areas. It is a kind of margin to modernism and is a kind of readout and differentiations between text and socio-individual realities in the very modern art." (Ahmadi, 2007).

#### History of modernism in literature

The phrase "post-modernism" was introduced in 1870s by John watkin Chapman" for description of drawings which were technically more advanced than their contemporary drawings i.e. "Impressionistic"<sup>1</sup> drawings. It is now mainly used for architecture style after Second World War, which was a combination of new and old architecture. In literature, this phrase became common since 1960s and culminated in 1980s. Barry Lewis considers post-modernism as dominated style in literature over 1960s-1990s (Payandeh, 2007).

"Jean FransvaLewtar", who is a post-modernism theorist believes: "I borrowed post-modern phrase from American scholars and tried to specify steps of culture by post-modernism" (lewtar, 2005).

#### Fundamentals of post-modernistic thoughts in novel and literature

"Post-modernists believe, to put it for short, we must not restrict us to utilization of modernism era facilities and instruments but we can use former periods. Post-modernists believe that modernists are disconnected from past and this is harmful. They believe that past facilities can be used as raw material and past can be used as a guide in present." (Shamisa, 2006). David Lodge describes post-modernistic novels-which eliminate the discrepancy between reality and imagination- as follows: "Vicious Cycle occurs in story literature when text and world are both impenetrable such that they cannot be differentiated. When these two states occur, real thing and metaphoric thing are merged." (Lodge et al, 2007).

The pioneer of modernism school in Iran was Sadegh Hedayat, the writer of "put to tomb alive" and "three blood drops". His famous work "The Blind Owl" can be considered as the origin of all Iranian modern stories which

<sup>1</sup>It derives from the French word "Impression" which means feeling and sentiment, it is the name of a literary and artistic school in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its supporters aimed to get released from classicism cumbersome rules and statement of a general and temporary impact of a page or subject without dealing with details

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were written after him. (MirAbedini, 2007: 663). Post-modernism gradually entered Iranian writers' works. Monirou Ravanipour is one of the famous writers who is ranked among modernist writers due to writing stories like the short story "in blues" in "magical Realism" form, and is also considered as a post-modernist writer due to writing books like Fireside Gypsy. "Simin Daneshvar", who is the greatest woman writer in Iran, is one of the first post-modernist writers in Iran and wrote books like: wandering island, Wandering Camel Driver, and Wandering Mountain and ultra-stories like "Roundtable".

### Post-modernism coordinates

David Lodge believes that post-modernistic novels have the following features:

1. Uncertainty, in many post-modernistic novels, for example, characters are ambiguous. When writer uses a name, it is not clear that whether he or she means a particular person or not.
2. Contradiction: one of the important features of post-modernistic novels is the presence of bi-sexual, so to speak, heroes who are both male and female in different contexts or their genders are not obvious at all.
3. Substitution: in such novels, there are different consequences for every event and each one can be used instead of others.
4. Lack of integrity: sometimes, in such novels, there is no relationship and continuity between sentences and events.
5. Absence of rule: lack of integrity automatically leads to abnormality.
6. excess: excess use of metaphor and figurativeness so that scenes are presented ridiculously or overuse of similarity aspects or differences
7. Short-circuit: "Lodge uses this phrase for describing post-modernistic novels which eliminate the discrepancy between reality and imagination." (Shamisa, 2006: 322).

Post-modernistic aspects in Monirou Ravanipour's works

Monirou Ravanipour was born in Jafreh, Boushehr, Iran. After high school and university ended, she went to USA for continuing education and did a master degree in Educational Sciences in Indiana University. She began writing in 1981. Her first book, Kanizou, was published in 1988. After that, she wrote many short stories and several novels. She got familiar with Babak Takhti, the son of Pahlevan Takhti (=a great Iranian Wrestler) in her story-writing classes. They got married and they have a child named Gholam Reza (conversation with Babak Takhti, 2007). She lives in USA since 2006. Her works include: "kanizou", "Ahl-e-Ghargh", "Stones of Satan", "iron heart", story collection "Sirba, Sirya", a novel titled "Fireside Gypsy", story collection titled "Frankfort Airport Woman" and a story collection titled "Persian".

### Summary of "Fireside Gypsy" story

In this section, we review Fireside Gypsy story from post-modernism school viewpoint. "Gypsy (Coli, in Persian) is the name of sporadic tribes which reside in different countries and especially in European countries .... They are famous for singing and dancing across the world and are nomadic and homeless people who used to entertain people by dancing and singing over their migration paths. They are survivors of immigrants who travelled as a result of a series of historical events all over the world. It is believed that they left their lands in northern India about one thousand years ago and were scattered all over the world." (YahyaZaka, 1958: extracted).

The first character of this story is a girl named "Ayeneh". She is a gypsy girl and her nomadic tribe, GhafelchSaffari, took residence near Boushehr Port. She dances at nights in front of tribe members and men who come from city to watch her dancing and collect money from visitors. Her family and tribe have strict rules which do not allow her to go close to strangers. Her father actually sells her dancing to stranger men from afar. One night when she is dancing, a stranger coming from city attracts her attention. They get into a familiarity and relationship in seashore. The stranger who is named "Mans" is a story-writer and promises Ayeneh to write her life's story. Ayeneh falls in love with him and dances and sings for him. Several days later, they get into a romantic relationship. The tribe learns about her visit to the city and her father whips her severely in front of tribe members. She tolerates torture and does not disclose the stranger's name. Her torture lasts 5 days and Mans goes to the tribe every night but does not find her. During these five days, all tribe men, even her former fiancé whip her. The rule of the tribe is: if she survives after 5 days of torture, she is left alone. The sixth day, she is left alone and her tribe migrate. Ayeneh comes to the city with severe wounds but does not find her lover... her story continues with homelessness and bad events. In 1980, she loses her friends in Tehran riots who are killed in demonstrations and clashes. She starts working in a washing powder-producing company as a worker but she still does not have any place to sleep at night, because no hotel receives a lonesome woman. One night, when she is sitting in the darkness of a street, a priest called Johanna helps her and sends her to Honeyball to learn drawing. After a while, she becomes a famous drawer. She goes to Boushehr to visit her tribe once again. Her tribe accepts her-now being a famous drawer-warmly and respects her and tells stories about her memories and shadow in tribe over the years. In the last chapter of the book, the writer says that Ayeneh's story is already over and she should go

to "wise drawer" [whose personality and identity is not clear until the end of the book and readers guess she is the very Ayeneh] but when she goes to find her, she finds that no one has lived there.

Further, when she goes to the church and Johanna, she finds there have never been a church and a priest there. She also goes to bookstores in Revolution Square (in Tehran) and asks about Honeyballand the wise drawer but the sellers do not know them. The writer finds her a toy of story characters and her character becomes the same as Ayeneh's character at the end of the story. She starts dancing like a gypsy around fire flames on top of a roof and hopes for city windows to be opened towards her.

### **Examination of the story**

In this section, we investigate post-modernistic aspects of the story although it has both modernistic and post-modernistic aspects.

#### **1. Short-circuit:interference of real world and story world**

Short-circuit is in fact a phrase which is used in Electronics and refers to unwanted connection between two points on an electrical circuit.

"Lodge used this phrase for describing post-modernistic novels...Berry Lewis... also used this phrase... and says: Vicious circle occurs in post-modernistic story literature when both text and world become impenetrable so that they cannot be distinguished. When these two states happen, real thing and metaphoric thing are merged". "Short-circuit" (entrance of writer into story) and "double link" (presence of real personalities in story) (payandeh, 2009).

This happens many times in the story. For instance, in the beginning of the story and when the main character suffers from hopelessness and wounds and tries to evade the story, the following conversation is made between two writers: "don't escape Ayeneh, don't escape.... She escapes, not to where I[writer] want...

#### **2. lack of writer's authority and insurgency of characters**

Lack of authority in post-modernism is more serious than that of modernism. The followings are indicative of the presences of this feature in Fireside Gypsy story.

In the early pages of the story, the main character-Ayeneh- is fed up with her destiny and tries to escape the story and the writer tries to stop her.

In the next lines, the writer implores her to stop and tries to soothe her. In the next part, Ayeneh objects to the writer about presence of other characters and discusses about her authority with her.

### **3. Existentialistic content**

Bryan McHill considers this item as an important content boundary between modernism and post-modernism. In this story, this existentialistic content forms as a result of techniques like repetitive breakage of real and story world's boundaries and by means of nested frames and asking direct questions.

### **4. Super-story characters: Unity in Plurality**

Different characters in the Fireside Gypsy story seem to have some common aspects with the writer herself. In this story, Amizcharacter has many similarities with the writer and wise drawer. Ayeneh and burnt woman have some features in common. As Mahyar, the former fiancé of Ayeneh-takes part in torturing and punishing Ayeneh (Fireside Gypsy, 37), the burnt woman is also entrapped by a man who loved her and was set on fire (ibid, 91).

5. Multiple endings: if a modernist writer left his or her stories endings ambiguous or incomplete, a post-modernist writer tries to guess all possible endings and provide them for reader.

For example, this can be obviously seen in Fireside Gypsy story. Endings which are guessed for Ayeneh, those which are guessed for the burnt woman and the two endings which are considered for slum dog old woman and ... are examples of this statement.

### **6. Collapse of super-narrations**

The main contents propounded in this novel are indicative of attacks to rotten social traditions and challenging the main social dialogue of decades before and after Iranian Islamic Revolution.

Ravanipour attacks the tradition of suppressing women in Iranian society and challenges super-narrations which are believed by some social groups in Iran by mentioning some events in the recent several decades.

For example, she refers to different groupings which formed after Revolution in Iran and clashes between them.

7. Uncertainty: uncertainty reigns over the whole study. A driver who is no longer a driver asks something and ... in the end of the story, characters and addresses are disappeared or perhaps, the writer gets lost in an ambiguous and foggy space.

By this, the writer emphasizes that readers are not reading about reality and this is another important feature of post-modernism. Paranoia is also another reflection of the post-modernistic art. Therefore, many paranoiac characteristics of modern human are reflected in post-modernistic literature. Post-modernistic

characters always think they are surrounded and followed by others and some conspiracies are designed against them. Ayeneh, the main character of the story, is always suffering from panic. The images of past and future are ambiguous and deadly for her. Some traces of satire can be observed in Ravanipour's works. Different outlook angles, fluid and flexible flow of mind by memory, sleep, reawakening and dream can be observed in this post-modernistic novel.

### Conclusion

Concerns of the writer are fixed although her biography, style and language undergo changes across life. He or she pays attention to super-real world. Most her stories take place in magical spaces and have post-modernistic characteristics.

Considering the above discussion and features of post-modernistic novels, MinirouRavanipour has used post-modernistic features besides modernistic features in *Fireside Gypsy* book. Therefore, it is difficult to differentiate between the world and text in her work and these two (the real world and text) have been merged in her novel.

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