Naderpoor's "Bot Tarash:" Depriving the Subject of Its Agency (Analysis of "Bot Tarash" from the Point of View of Existential Philosophy)

J. Fasaei

Graduate PH.D Persian Language and Literature, University of Hormozgan, Hormozgan, Iran

N. Dorri

Associate Professor of Persian Language and Literature Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran

Introduction

In studies in the field of literary criticism, it is possible to dislodge an understanding of art and literature as the logic of representation and superstructure and instead view poetry as a social force and consequently its activism. Althusser and Gramsci are among the thinkers who promoted the latter approach to art and literature. In this reading, literary texts play a role in power relations by coming out of a state of passivity and isolation. Therefore, the present article seeks to show how and according to what rubrics a poem can be considered as an effective tool in the context of power relations. The selected poem is called "Bot Tarash". The poet, Nader Naderpour, based his poem almost entirely on the Greek myth of Pygmalion, with some minor changes. Regardless of Naderpour's intention or motivation in composing this

poem, what is of prime importance is the reproduction of this poem in contemporary Iranian society. To reach this semantic layer, the article first tries to clarify the logic of Nader Naderpour's main source, namely the myth of Pygmalion, and from this perspective to explain the relationship between "Bot Tarash" and the concept of freedom and agency of the subject.

Methodology and historical research

The research method in this article is in the framework of qualitative content analysis and using library resources. This article is related to the philosophy of existentialism; Isa Amankhani in two articles entitled "Reflection of existential views on the poems and opinions of Ahmad Shamloo" (Amankhani: 1391) and "Existentialism and Shafi'i Kadkani" (Amankhani: 1392a), has shown the impact of existentialism on the poems and opinions of Shamloo and Shafi'i. In addition, in the field of contemporary poetry, articles such as "Existential Thoughts in the Poems of Shafi'i Kadkani and Adonis" (Shamian Saroklai and Samin Vahdani: 1394) and "Study and Analysis of the Foundations of the Philosophy of Existentialism in the Poetry of Sohrab Sepehri" (Azizifar et al.: 1397) have shown the tendency of contemporary Persian poetry towards existentialist ideas. Regarding the myth of Pygmalion, Shafi'i-Kadkani has given useful and important explanations about the reflection of this myth in Persian literature; To my knowledge, however, no dedicated study has focused on the analysis of "Bot Tarash," its relation to freedom in existentialist thought, and its depiction of human agency. The main purpose of this article therefore is twofold: to show how Naderpour's poetry is related to modern man

and his fundamental questions; and to investigate what issues have been represented in the poem and with what motives.

Results and Discussion

The intimate and mutual relation between philosophy and literature is not a new phenomenon. Many existentialist philosophers, for instance, have chosen to convey their concepts and philosophies in literary forms. Concepts such as "committed literature," first introduced in Sartre's literary manifesto in What Is Literature?, techniques such as absurdist expression, and psychological states such as anxiety and abandonment are instances of this mutual relation (see Amnokhani, 2013). These literary works convey concepts that have a decisive presence in the field of existentialism. As briefly mentioned in the literature review above, many studies have traced the presence and interconnection of philosophical concepts in literary works. In addition to these very important points, existentialist philosophy provides us with a criterion by which we can clarify some of the less explored aspects of literary texts. Among these, the concept of "agency" and "freedom" are two of the key concepts of existential philosophy that from this perspective can be effective tools in literary criticism and theorizing. As one of the most well-known existentialist philosophers, Jean-Paul Sartre believed that human beings are free beings, citing the the primacy of existence over essence. In existentialist philosophy, freedom is the motivating element of human life and is in fact the enabling factor in the emergence and realization of human potential. According to Jaspers, "existence can replace freedom" (Jaspers, 1390: 233). For this reason, Jean-Paul Sartre considers man "condemned to freedom" (Sartre, 1391: 40). If we look

at Naderpour's "Bot Tarash" from this perspective, we will reach less explored semantic layers. In this poem, like the myth of Pygmalion, there is a kind of supernatural power that creates another being. This created being is at a lower level than its creator in terms of rank, status and existential hierarchy. In the poem, after the process of creating a sculpture, the mason falls in love with the sculpted figure and expects her to become the other willing side of this romantic relationship. However, faced with her rebellion in protest, the mason tries to suppress and break the sculpture. Here, with a glance at the question of freedom in the philosophy of existentialism, it becomes clear that the freedom and agency of the subject has been taken away. In effect, the subject's will to recreate herself and her essence is interpreted as rebellion and mutiny and is thus faced with the wrath and rage of the superior creator. Thus, the myth of Pygmalion and subsequently Naderpour's poem have found an ideological function which has been reproduced in the form of a kind of conservative thought.

Conclusion

According to what has been said, Nader Naderpour's poem was evaluated from the perspective of some of the concepts contained in existential philosophies. In light of existential thought, he is a free being who can shape his nature and determine his own destiny. The myth of Pygmalion, which is the main source of "Bot Tarash," has found another function from this perspective. Pygmalion expects obedience from Galata after making Galata in the best, most beautiful and perfect form possible. But Galata refuses to comply and in response to this disobedience, he is turned into the original lifeless piece of rock. In

analyzing this motif, the keywords freedom and choice as defined in the philosophy of existentialism have been used. Any individual, group, or thought that has shaped such a structure has not paid attention to human freedom and agency. If we consider Galata as a metaphor for humankind, mythological thought has not recognized his agency at all and has considered his move towards self-recreation as a threat. Now, if we re-appropriate the above concept within the context of the modern world, we will reach the modern reproductions of this myth in Naderpour's poetry. From this perspective, "Bot Tarash," in line with the same classical deterministic discourses, has led to the reproduction of a kind of determinism in the modern era.

Keywords:

Bot tarash, Pygmalion, Essentialism, Agent, Nader Naderpour, Existentialism

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