Comparison of Story Elements in Sa'edi and Alikhani's Works

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Abstract: Regional literature also called domestic literature is one of the sub-branches of literature. This type of literature resulted as a result of the big class difference dominating the city and the village. One can say that regional literature is the thinkers' and writers' language of protest to the government of the time. Regionalism originated in the 1330s on the Persian calendar (1951-1960) and flourished the best in the 1340 and 1350s on the Persian calendar (1961-1980). After the evolution of regional literature researchers and experts divided into groups of five, seven and eight schools, studying and pointing out their characteristics. Some of these schools are Khorasan, Azarbaijan, Esfahan, North, Center, West and South schools. The general conclusion is that in the works of both writers magical realism, especially in the area of regional literature is represented very well only with the difference that in Gholamhossein Sa'edi's stories the reflection of deprivation as well as material, spiritual and cultural poverty is dominant while in Alikhani's stories usually fear, illusion as well as superstitious and magical beliefs are significant. Regarding the use of story elements it should be said that Alikhani has shown his art in creating settings and atmospheres in his unique way and with his unique language but Sa'edi has shown off in creating favorable characters even in negative roles.

Key words: Story, regional story, magical realism, elements of story, roles

INTRODUCTION

Elements of story and studying them in literary works is one of the current wide research areas and one can boldly say that most of classic and contemporary literary works have been analyzed and studied in terms of elements of story. The works of Yousof Alikhani, one of writers we are concerned with in this study, too has not been neglected by domestic and foreign researchers, among them Dr. Sali Ala'addin Sayyed from Al-Azhar University, Cairo and Dr. Zohreh Arefi and Fateme Sarmashghi. The current study tries to study the works of Alikhani and at the same time compare them with analyzed works of Gholamhossein Sa'edi. The works of the former are studied through a descriptive-analytical method and includes all short stories in magical realism literary genre which have remained today. However, it should be noted that some novels of Gholamhossein Sa'edi, too are studied because they are included in the area of magical realism.

Regional literature is a type of literature after reading the first pages of which the reader easily recognizes its difference with other literary genres because what is reflected in a distinct way in this literary genre are tone, language, atmosphere and mostly illustrated descriptions.

Also, in addition to the presence of different elements of story in this genre, the characteristics of regional literature itself makes us accept it as a complete and independent genre. The most outstanding characteristic of regional literature is a special tang which enables a different creation of story and even elements of story are represented in a way different from those in other genres. For example, the language of regional literature contains local expressions and accents. The atmosphere and the setting of the story are made of things other than apartments, streets, cars or urban luxury. In descriptions often nature plays roles. Customs as well as religious and superstitious beliefs become integral parts of such works and in general the reader is faced with a piece of work which is very different from those created in the city.

What is stated here is easily understandable to the reader and researcher who follow regional literature and definitions provided by experts, too can bear testimony to the correctness of these understandings. For example, defining regional literature, Mirsadeghi (2008) says "It is a novel which stays loyal to local and zonal qualities and specifics and focuses on a specific environment and territory. In these novels much attention is paid to domestic and zonal characteristics and descriptions, like the way people dress and speak and also customs. Such

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characteristics serve as the bases of story". Gray (1958) defining it, says "It is a novel which speaks of geography, customs and special local speech".

From among other characteristics of regional literature which one can say is among its uses too is anthropological information contained in it. One can say that through such works, the reader gains relatively wide and comprehensive information about the region in question; information like customs, dialect and accent, beliefs, clothing and even common colors in clothing. Also, one should accept that almost all of the remaining works of this genre follow the life or personal experiences of their writers and are created as a result of their researches about the people of those regions.

Finally, we will talk concisely about the differences between the genres mentioned because their elaboration is out of the scope of this study. The most outstanding and the major understanding one can arrive at by reading the works of writers of the North School and the South School is that description is more concise, more detailed, more palpable and more vivid in the North School because the green nature of the North is more capable of and more diverse for being described and illustrated.

Some famous writers who have produced works in this genre are Mahmoud Dowlatabadi, Bozorg Alavi, Moniru Ravanipor, Nader Ebrahimi, Shapour Gharib, Samad Behrangi and Ahmad Mahmoud.

MOTIF

The motif of every story is the concept about which the story is written. So, every story should necessarily have a motif which can be poverty, war, fear, loneliness, or love, among others (Mastour, 2000).

The motif of stories in regional literary genre is usually magical and illusory and usually the presence of superhuman beings or superstitious beliefs in them is eye-catching. Stories of Sa'edi and Alikhani reflect motifs like the presence of a frightening being or a superhuman one, belief in which is usually considered superstitious. In addition to the presence of such strange and frightening beings what is eye-catching is the poverty all through the story. For example, the in the first story of the collection Fright and Fear by Gholamhossein Sa'edi there is a strange, frightening and evil being which comes to the village every now and then, asks for food, scares people and finally is driven away by playing tambour or escapes upon seeing the group of villagers. The fourth story of the same collection is about a strange and very active child who does not speak, cry or ask for anything but just stares at villagers with eyes each of which is a different color and is restless, constantly going here and there. The motif of Alikhani's stories is related to the same superhuman beings or the reflection of mainly religious or superstitious beliefs, like the story Margi Nareh which is about an asp in a village which according to people who live there has swallowed one of the villagers, too or the story Kheira... Kheira... is about an illness which takes the lives of villagers. The story One Footed is about a strange being called by this name. Hence, in Alikhani's other works like Milaki Mar, Samaks of the Black Mountain of Milak, The Shrouded, The Trumpet and some other of his stories the writer speaks about beings or events which are mainly believable only to the characters of the stories and surprise the reader.

THEME

Mastour considers theme as the message of the story or in other words, the writer's view to the motif of the story. He says that there are as many themes of the same motif as there are writers. Here, it should be emphasized that all stories do not necessarily have themes. Many stories do not have aims above the story and therefore, lack themes in its technical sense. Amusing detective, humorous or thrilling stories are among them. In any case, story themes are sometimes explicit and clear and sometimes inexplicit and unclear. In Alikhani's stories, too, themes are difficult to recognize and even at first glance one can understand that most of his stories lack motifs while in fact his works contain illusory, magical, superstitious or religious themes. For example, the motif of the story Ghashghabol is completely related to beliefs and religion because according to religious beliefs when the main character of the story by insistence buys from the shepherd a goat which is dedicated to the shrine of an Imam's descendant and is in fact a votive offering, he should leave room for the possibility that he might lose the goat. Or in the story Mr. Cave it seems that the message of the story is that when you firmly believe in something, you will get it. On the contrary, themes of Sa'edi's stories while having the same superstitious and magical themes are more palpable than those of Alikhani's of course indirectly. For example, the second story of the collection Fright and Fear dispraises naive and gullible people who pay the big cost of their malapropos trust. The motifs of Sa'edi and Alikhani's stories as pointed out in the motif section above are such that they directly affect the theme of the story and present it differently.

CHARACTER

Character refers to people in the story who are responsible for almost everything in the story. Actions are accomplished via their presence and time and place are meaningful because of their existence and activity (Abdollahian, 2003). Scott card sees characters as human beings whom the writer creates and the reader expects to seem like real people; complete and living, believable and noteworthy.

What deserves study in relation with characters and characterizations in the stories of the two writers is that these characters can be divided into two groups of human and non-human. Human characters are those which play roles in stories. On the contrary, non-human characters are either strange and superhuman beings or animals, objects or even parts of nature. For example, Sa'edi in one of the stories of the collection Fright and Fear characterizes the sea in this way:

> The sea becomes chaotic and takes on and gives off one thousand colors every hour. Strange melodies are heard, signs of kindness and unkindness, relationship breakdown and reconciliation
>
> Remember. Where you are isn't that bad. A nice and kind sea it has
>
> Mond is wild, depressed and weary, fallen and exhausted

Another noteworthy point is that sometimes characterization of non-human beings in the works of both writers is accompanied by some sort of respect. For example, Sa'edi in the story Bayal Mourners clearly shows the worthiness of Bayal in the story: "Granny narrowed her eyes, prayed and blew Bayal". Sa'edi and Alikhani has implicitly conveyed the worthiness of Milak to the reader more than once, especially either with repeating the name of the village Milak:

> People of Milak were not as much talkative as one expects normal people of sorts to be, since they were either in the dessert or in the orchard (Alikhani, 2011a-c)
>
> People of Milak although, famous for everything, did not say anything. They just said he had gone crazy and they were going to lose hope in him (Alikhani, 2011a-c)

> You had said people of Milak minded their own business and were not talkative (Alikhani, 2011a-c)
>
> Now that Milak is empty you behave yourself? (Alikhani, 2011a-c)
>
> Milak is alive for 1 day or 2. Where there is no man, let an army of spirits, elves, leprechauns, One Footeds and hyenas inhabit it (Alikhani, 2011a-c)

Or through special attention to inhabitants who are far from Milak but love it. For example, in The One Who Waved a Hand Was Not a Woman, a man, after he retired, wanted to go back to Milak or in Old Granny the character Tahmineh especially insists on bearing her child in Milak.

Regarding human characters it should be said that they can be assessed in hero and anti-hero groups. Here an example will suffice to clarify the point.

Human characters: Koukabeh in Alikhani's stories and village chief in Sa'edi's.

Non-human characters
Strange and superhuman: Demon the Lame in in Alikhani's stories and Keshmat in Sa'edi's.

Animals and objects: A dog called Papakh in Sa'edi's stories and Simurgh in Alikhani's.

Human heros: Zakaria in Sa'edi's stories of the collection Fright and Fear and Tahmineh in Alikhani's stories.

Human anti-heros: Mullah in the second story of Sa'edi's collection Fright and Fear. Characterization in the works of Sa'edi is indirect and accomplished through the statement of characters' behavior and conditions and even what they say, like Zakaria in Fright and Fear who, after reading the story, one can come to the understanding that has a more logical and fearless personality and he is the one who in the face of contradictions and tensions can be much of a relief. On the contrary, the character Mohammad Ahmad Ali is very cowardly and scared and according to the description of village chief's states we understand that he does not have a strong hearing. Also, according to description of appearance and conditions by Sa'edi we can understand that the American officer in Dandil is remiss.

Almost all the characters in the works of both writers are static and no significant changes are observed in

them. In general most characters in Sa'edi and Alikhani's stories are simple and static, except in rare cases which will be pointed out. For example, the sixth story of the collection Fright and Fear is about the coming of some ships with strangers to the shore. In this story these strangers are constantly having fun, eating and drinking. This behavior is interesting and exotic to the poor and ignorant villagers. Finally, villagers, too, enjoy their delicious food and this changes the characters of these innocent villagers in a strange way. This story is an outstanding example of change of static characters into dynamic ones. Also, in his story Safe Corner, too, Kaf who is the main character in the story seeks to go back to his own city but suddenly, at the suggestion of Captain Manolof, changes his mind and stays on that island for good and his life gets a new direction.

PLOT

Abdollahian sees plot as the framework or the primary mould of the work which remains after extra material is shortened and removed and forms the basis of the story, so that key points are included and removing one of these makes the story deficient.

Also, Mirsadeghi divides it into two groups: closed plot which is complex and enjoys technical characteristics. In other words, the artificial order of events overpowers the natural order. This plot is usually employed in mysterious stories which definitely have a denouement and conclusion, like most of Edgar Allen Poe's works and open plot in which contrary to closed plot, the natural order of events overpowers the artificial and arbitrary order. In such stories there is usually no denouement or an insignificant one, if any. In other words, in open plot there is no definite conclusion as there is in the other and if there is any conclusion, it is not definite. In these stories the writer tries to be invisible so that the story seems like a life; objective, palpable and impartial. Hence, it does not provide responses to most of issues in question and the reader should find a solution. Anton Chekhov is one of the first writers who paid much attention to writing stories with open plot (Abdollahian, 2003).

Gholamhossein Sa'edi's stories, compared to those of Yousof Alikhani's, usually have closed plots. For example, the story The Shrouded is about a person who has worn a shroud and moves in the village in the form of a ghost. At the end there is no denouement. In the story Sigh there is a constant whisper around the main character of the story, telling him not to go to Ghazvin, neither this year nor any other. Even at the end of the story no clue is given to the reader as to by whom the whisper is uttered.

POINT OF VIEW

Point of view shows the way the writer presents his/her story materials to the reader and in fact shows the writer's relationship with the story (Mastour, 2000). The choice of a suitable point of view is especially important because it has a direct relationship with more correct and better transfer of the atmosphere of the story to the reader. For example, a person who is deep in thought and is walking down the street might come across others while walking and this is seen and transferred by an external (third person) point of view rather than an internal (first person) point of view. Barahani (1983) says when the story writer considers the characters of his/her stories as a third person, s/he has control over everything like an all-knowing god and is in fact omniscient as if s/he is standing on top of a hill and sees inside and outside of story characters. In such a story, the story writer himself/herself does not intervene; rather, s/he looks for a height to have control over all the events of the story. That is s/he looks for a view or an outlook to have hegemony over all the events of the setting. The major point of view in both writers' works is third person and these stories are usually not from a first person point of view. Sometimes narrators are internal omniscients because they have mastery over even the most trivial details and are sometimes aware of the inside of characters. Sometimes the narrator is objective and films different scenes of the story with some imaginary cameras. For example in the story Mourners of Bayal, famine-stricken Hasani and Mashhadi Reihan go to another village for robbery and in another scene women of Bayal are holding mourning ceremonies so that famine and illness depart Bayal.

In general, the outsider's view is used more than other points of view. Sa'edi and Alikhani's stories are narrated generally from an outsider's point of view and in all of them a combination of the narrator's narration and dialogue among characters drives the story forward and in neither of them we face narration alone or dialogue alone. Also, in some stories a combination of third-person and first person views narrates the story. For example in the Story Rana from the collection Ghadam Bekheir Was My Grandmother we see:

Third person: If she is still alive, she inevitably sits on the porch and turns her face to the orchard down the house (Alikhani, 2011a-c).

First person: He was staring at me until he saw my daughter and (Alikhani, 2011a-c).

TONE

Tone shows the states, conditions and the situation of story characters such that the speech of each chapter should fit its situation in the story. Therefore, in a story the tone can be serious, humorous, disparaging, supplicating, etc., depending on the prevailing situation. The most outstanding example that makes the relationship between tone and the situation clear is the story Allah Bedasht The Crazy from the collection Dragon Killing Ceremony by Alikhani. In this story there is a boy who according to villagers has gone "crazy" because of some events. He has taken refuge into a tree. His parents' sympathetic tone as well as the disparaging tone of by standers suit their situations and even when the father, worrying but angry, swears and the mother shows his worry through motherly words, the reader is made more aware of this match.

In this regard, Mastour (2000) says that how the piece of work is "approached" is called tone such that the reader can anticipate it; exactly like the tone of an announcer's voice which might show how s/he treats the subject and his/her addressee. It can be for example, disparaging, solemn, formal or intimate.

Pin (2010) believes "Tone is the main element of story which affects the content and the combination of all other elements of story". He also adds that "It is the tone which more than any other element tempts the reader to read another book by the same writer".

MOOD

This refers to the atmosphere of the story and is due to the harmony between elements of the story, like the point of view, characterization and tone. In other words mood refers to the situation which puts a special psychological load on the reader. Sometimes the writer might create the atmosphere in such a way that the reader easily understands it. At other times this does not happen which is a sign that the writer did not do well in creating the atmosphere. It should be noted that unlike tone, point of view and character, the atmosphere is not easily understandable (Khosravi, 2009). The mood of the story is affected by motif and theme of the story and can completely match the motif through language and tone. Stories in the area of magical realism which have remained till today undoubtedly take on an illusory tang too, like the first story in Sa'edi's collection Fright and Fear or the story Demon the Lame and Koukabeh. But there are works, too which have exciting and even happy atmosphere among illusory stories and please the reader. The most outstanding example is the story Nastaraneh in Alikhani's Dragon Killing Ceremony.

LANGUAGE

The writer's style of talking in the story is language which can be from the narrator or the writer's own point of view. Elements which give identity to language are allegory, simile, symbol, myth, kenning, analogy, circumlocution and brevity as well as functions like description, humour and dialogue. For example, when it is said that the language of the story is descriptive, it means the element of description is dominant on narration (Mastour, 2000). Alikhani's language is completely illustrative and descriptive with his exact and meticulous descriptions the conditions of the character and the atmosphere of the story are depicted to the reader: "Ramazan-Ali pulled his felt hat down to the top of his forehead, pushed it back again and went back to the black stone down the shrine of Imam's descendant" (Alikhani, 2011a-c).

> He had rounded a lip and was blowing slowly lest some ash falls on the milk (Alikhani, 2011a-c)

> The sun was sliding down the Black Mountain to fall in the river behind it. The river brought the smell of mint (Alikhani, 2011a-c)

Another important point which is actually one that distinguishes Sa'edi's works from Alikhani's is that in the former the language is sometimes devoid of ethical and verbal values while the latter's stories are cleaner and mainly with local accent. The accent is stronger in some cases, like in Ghadam Bekheir Was My Grandmother and weaker in his other works.

Also, the language used by these two writers is completely in accordance with their motifs and themes. For example when the writer speaks about a village which was once prosperous but now desolate, he conveys the sense of regret to the reader, too:

> If only there were no haunted ones and one listened to the gurgle of the water which gurgles through the brook and comes down and which is sweetest than any radio shmadios. But alas! They say here is haunted (Alikhani, 2011a-c)

It is no longer daytime to hear a rooster shmooster or a mommy swearing at her children. Or even from here you hear a jackdaw or there comes the sound of a ringdove (Alikhani, 2011a-c)

The unfortunate thing is that they have pulled and brought the cemetery under Milak to, fuck them, let it be outside the village. Then they have not thought that it will be between the village and the orchard? It is nighttime and the people of graves have the time to be awake (Alikhani, 2011a-c)

Or where fear and illusion or one can say mental disturbance permeates the atmosphere of the story, the language is concise and disjointed as if the narrator is gasping and this state is communicated to the reader too. For example the story The One Who Waved a Hand Was Not a Woman from the collection Ghadam Bekheir Was My Grandmother impatience and disturbance of the woman and man in the story is shown through simple sentences:

The man was retired, the woman had not become old. The man wanted to go back to Milak. The woman said "I have not become old but cannot go back". The man said "I don't have a job in the city". The woman said "Well, find one". The man was constantly at home and was becoming older. The woman said "Then go out to stay young" (Alikhani, 2011a-c)

In general, the study of description in the works of the two writers leads one to the understanding that Sa'edi has mostly described story characters or in other words has engaged in indirect characterization and Alikhani has described the atmosphere of the story.

SETTING

Sima Dad in The Dictionary of Literary Terms, defines "setting" as the temporal and spatial situation in which the story action happens. In Alikhani's stories one can see more attention is paid to place than time such that he has described the place very exactly but has communicated time very concisely and the reader after reading the story, understands the time events happened. For example, he describes spatial characteristics in the story The Trumpet from the collection Ghadam Bekheir Was My Grandmother in this way:

The valleys below Milak continued down to the village below. There were then mountains and valleys again which continued until near Shahroud. There one could see a green patch in the size of a triangle. FelarGardan was a constant image with its signs of winding roads and the meandering pass of Felar which continued to the top and turned under the clouds. Cars came from there. A number of villages in the mountains looked green (Alikhani, 2011a-c)

Therefore, we understand that the description of atmosphere is more detailed in Alikhani's works and hence the reader finds himself/herself in the atmosphere described but on the contrary, as pointed out before, Sa'edi mostly narrates the story itself rather than expanding and displaying the elements of the story, specially the setting.

GENRE

Genre is the style of the writer in how s/he uses language and templates for the expression of the dominant idea of the story. Genres are usually the result of the flexible nature of language and templates for the expression of the dominant idea of the story (Mastour, 2000). The genre of the two writers in question in this study is magical realism which Shiri (2008) has defined as the combination of the world of old stories which was full of marvels and realistic worlds of contemporary stories.

As Kenny (2001) sees it, different genres show mental and personal differences of different writers but can create unity together with other elements. Therefore, genre should match other elements of story.

CONCLUSION

The motifs of Alikhani's stories are mostly about superstitious, superhuman and strange beings and issues but in most of Sa'edi's works no special motif is outstanding; rather, it seems that the narrator is narrating the usual lives of people whose most important concern is their poverty, particularly material and cultural property. We can understand that illusion is stronger in Alikhani's stories. Theme is represented in Alikhani's works more than in Sa'edi's, although understanding the former's themes is not very easy. One can say that Sa'edi mostly amuses his reader and makes them experience pure joy of reading his stories but Alikhani makes the reader contemplate.

The use of language differs significantly in Alikhani's and Sa'edi's works. For instance, Alikhani has chosen a local language with a relatively strong accent for narrating his stories but the language of Sa'edi's stories is simple and has benefited from some local expressions in a limited number of cases. For example Sa'edi says:

The village chief put his hand in front of his eye and said "Yes, they are them" Sa'edi (1968)

On the contrary, Alikhani says:

He shaded his eyes with his hand

Another point worth mentioning is that the language of most of Sa'edi's stories is verbally unclean and it is readily clear to the reader that this way of using language by him is affected by the literature of his time. Also, the language of Alikhani's stories is descriptive, meaning that by carefully describing the setting, he depicts the atmosphere before the reader's eyes which is especially important in reader's establishing relationships with his works. In fact, it should be accepted that language, themes and even motifs of Alikhani's stories are such that they attract a reader who is not familiar with his style and works a little later than normal, but these descriptions count as suitable compensation for it and take the reader deep in them:

A jackdaw was sitting in the ninth tree (Alikhani, 2011a-c). The sound of a woodpecker came from the same place (Alikhani, 2011a-c). The jackdaw moved the scissors of its beek (Alikhani, 2011a-c). She rounded her trousers and pulled them over her knees (Alikhani, 2011a-c). 'Aylight had moved even past the mountain pass (Alikhani, 2011a-c). He had rounded a lip and was blowing slowly lest some ash falls on the milk (Alikhani, 2011a-c)

The beginnings of the stories of both writers take readers into the text and engage them with the motifs almost immediately but ends are such that they do not make things clear to readers and make them contemplate. Of course it should be mentioned that this is professional writers' style they do not clearly end their stories and even in some cases finish the story in its climax. As a result, the reader finishes the story in its climax and his mind is made to contemplate by the writer. Therefore, it is understandable that plots in most of the works by the two writers, especially Alikhani are open. The settings of Sa'edi and Alikhani's stories are no more than simple village houses and their furniture but settings in Alikhani's stories are more appealing. This is due to the elements making up the setting, because Alikhani has created his works with a more careful and more different view and language. The tone in general is more serious in Alikhani's works than in those of Sa'edi and finally both writers in question have created their works in the area of magical realism.

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