

MODERNISM AESTHETICS IN MODERN IRANIAN SHORT STORY

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Summary. This paper is devoted to the impacts of modernistic trends to the contemporary Iranian narrative. The paper in hand analyses some modernistic short stories of one of the most popular and bright representatives of the contemporary Iranian prose, versatile writer Roziya Tujjor. As regards her writing ability and style, it is worth mentioning that she uses a variety of poetic styles in her works. Interestingly, Roziya Tujjor sees and depicts the world in gray colors, full of different challenges, and concludes her works in sad tones. Her modernistic short stories are not full of events, but they outline the inner feelings and experiences of persons.

Keywords: Modernism; Roziya Tujjor; the short story; surrealism; stream of consciousness; inner monologue; a psychological state; magic realism; the image of the woman.

The genre of short story in Iranian literature has passed difficult stages of its development during its centenary history (the first short stories written by Muhammad Ali Jamalzade [5] appeared in 1922). Primarily, being educational and then getting more critical character, Iranian short story has become one of the popular genres of modern literature, being developed rapidly and being embodied in various forms and views. The variety of literary schools in 60–70’s of the XX century has reflected in the profound and formal variety of Iranian short story [1].

At the same time in the 80’s of the last century Iranian short story endured ideological and spiritual changes. The Islamic Revolution of 1978 led to islamization of all spheres of life, including culture and literature. A lot of figures left the country. But the tendency to creating the closed Islamic society in the world of modern technology and mass media and in general at literature didn’t have considerable success. In the 90’s of the XX century writers were in search of new forms and methods of depiction, the tendency to depict the reality from the point of view of human values was being increased; the new themes were getting appeared.

In modern Iranian prose, particularly in short story writing, along with the prevalence of realism, usage of principles of modernistic aesthetics by some writers is being more appreciable.

Putting on the first place the subjectivity, domination of intuitive knowledge over

logical, emphasizing human feelings and inner excitement significantly influenced on choosing creative literary school for a number of modern writers such as Roziya Tudjjar, Vadjihe Samani, Firuz Zanuzi Djalali and others.

One of the outstanding representatives of modern Iranian short story writing Roziya Tudjjar holds particular place among the authors of modernistic short stories. Realistic and surrealistic scenes are coexisted in her short stories. Several collections of her stories have been published by present, among them “زن شیشه ای” (“Glass woman”), “هفت بند” (“Seven knots”), “نرگسها” (“Narcissus”), “سفر به ریشه ها” (“The journey to Motherland”), “سنگ صبور” (“Stone of patience”), “کوچه اقا قیا” (“Acacia street”), “شعله و شب” (“Good night”), “ارام شب بخیر” (“The dawn and the night”); some of them have been translated into different languages, including Russian [2] and Uzbek [3].

R. Tudjjar was born in 1947 in Teheran and right there in one of mahallas (residential districts) of the city she spent her childhood. Having graduated the school, she continued her education at the Psychology Faculty of the University. She began her writing career in 1985.

Roziya Tudjjar’s works, written in typical for her lyrical style, with attraction of philosophical reflection, originality of interpretation of the touched social issues are differ from other authors’ works. First of all, R. Tudjjar is a writer-surrealist, who concentrates on emotional experiences and deep state of mind of her characters.

Especially one of her latest collections “هم سیب هم ستاره” (“Both the apple and the star” 2007 [4]), which contains twenty-two short stories. Speaking about R. Tadjjar’s creative skill and style, it should be noted that she uses various types of poetical methods. Such symbiosis of language, peculiar lyricism of her prose, alternation with realistic and modernistic elements and methods draw readers’ attention.

In her short stories collection “Both the apple and the star” as well as in the majority of her other short stories, female issue is the main one, which the writer comes up from her own point of view and attitude. Despite the presence of the hero men in her short stories, the female images take the central place.

A woman-doctor in a rural locality is the main heroine of her short story “رویش سبز هاریزش زردها” (“Falling of the yellows, growth of the greens”). She is used to treating sick people. When she finds out her terrible disease, she gets depressed. The short story is written in surrealist style. The image of the heroine is shown not through the concrete events happening in her life but through depicting her feelings through stream of consciousness. Her emotional experiences are at some variance with her external composure. As if the heroine has hallucinations and everything around her is in yellow: yellow flowers, yellow leaves, a yellow road and yellow grass since a yellow color embodies illness. In her reflection in the mirror she sees a sick woman whose body has been captured by the disease. She talks to her disease and appeals to it:

خیال می کنی که هستی که این طور آمده ای و در من جا گرفته ای؟ من می توانم همان طور که آن هارا با دادن چند قرص شفا می دهم. خودم را هم.

خیال میکنی که هستی اینطور آمده ای و سر راهم نشسته ای؟ از دستت خلاص خواهم شد. خواهی دید. خلاص. خلاص. [4:13]

“Do you think that you exist? Do you think that you will just come and capture me? I will be able to cure myself as I treat them with a medicine.

“Do you think that you exist? Do you want to say that you have just come and stayed on my way? You will see that I will get rid of you. Get rid of you. Get rid of you...”

As we see, special attention is paid to the psychological state of the heroine. As though she is in sleep, regularly she is in condition either of half dream or half reality. Then she picks yellow flowers and destroys everything yellow. Gradually green grass and fields replace yellow things. She comes in the river, gets into the rain, gets relieved and sparks of hope appear again in her heart. The way the heroine comes into the river out of the window, the way she goes on the mirror-like surface and comes back her study through the same window show her deep mental state. The author vents her imagination, resorts to unusual and fantastic elements. The short story is based on narrating emotional experiences, describing the way she fights with the disease, gloomy thoughts and negative association. “The swelled and reddened eyelids, the swelled and huge stomachs, the crippled and crying bodies” [4; 13] are being pined waiting for the appointment with the rural doctor and they are more than 250; she treats people, fights for their lives and at the same time fights for her own life. There are a lot of unexpected metaphors, idioms and underlying ideas in the short story. “رهایی” (“Rescue”) is the other short story of R. Tadjjar which fully meets the modernism principles. “Rescue” as well as “Falling of the yellows, growth of the greens” is rich with surrealist scenes and images. The manner of narration and the whole structure of the short story impart it originality. The feature model imagined in the author’s consciousness is created instead of objective reality. The author’s self-expression has a significant meaning.

For example: نارنجستان آتش گرفته است. – “Fire in the orange orchard”, actually, the orange orchard withered because of lack of water. Literally, it burnt down from the heat. However, the author depicts this state according to her own imagination. This image is repeated in the short story: تا صبح عکسها کنار آب می ایستند و با مادر حوض شیون می کنند – “Sitting by the dear pool, the pictures cried till the morning”, or the other image “the soul put into the chains”: دوتا دانه های زنجیر را ساعتی پیش به پای درخت نارنج شکوفه های پارچه: – “The feet of her soul were put into two chains an hour before”. A number of examples such as: «ای می دهد – “The orange tree has bloomed

with the cloth flowers”, «صدای تلخ سکونت» – “bitter voice of silence” and others are vivid surrealistic images. As well as in other short stories of R. Tudjjar, the main heroine’s internal mental state is emphasized in her short story “Rescue”.

The short story “That unquenchable voice” is distinguished from realistic short stories by the abundance of signs, dreams, predictions, dreams interpretation, symbols and some mysterious voices. In consequence of them, it gives rise to anxiety and concern. The author emphasizes color range as if she juggles with them:

hundreds of – صد ها ستاره سرخ و زرد و آبی
red, yellow and blue stars

white and ash-grey – کوه سفید و خامستری
mountain

the key of goldish color – کلیدی طلایی
the wings of coppery color – پرهای مسی رمگ

the leaves were red, yellow and orange – برگها سرخ بودند و زرد و نارنجی

the darkened (blackened) sky – آسمان سربی

neither red nor yellow and nor orange garden – باغ نه سرخ و نه زرد و نه نارنجی

Along with this the inner state, feelings and emotional experiences of the woman indigent her husband’s care, suffering from his indifference are expressed through live dialogues and scenes in the short story.

The short story “نگهداری لاله در باد سخت” (“It’s difficult to save the tulip at the wind”) is one of the stories from this collection, where the author experiments with the images. It is narrated about the heroine’s loneliness, misfortune and difficulties which are depicted through her monologue. The writer uses various poetical methods in the short story as well as in many her works:

آن روزها یک خعبه پر از گل‌های بنفشه پیچاپیچ و
Those days are – معطر. امروز سکوت سایه وار.
a box with the fragranced flowers of vio-
lets, but today they are the silence casting
a shadow.

رشته های باریک باران آسمانرا به زمین دوخته
The thin threads of the rain have
sewn the ground and the sky to each other.

You will sink in yourself. – و تو مغزوق خویشی.

تنهایی. خسته از باری که در دل داری با شب همراه
You are a lone person. The incred-
ible burden in your heart makes you fol-
low the night.

Usage of the symbolic meanings ap-
pears in the short story: گل که قد میکشد

– همسایه گردن می کشد.
When a flower reaches for the sky, a flower next to it reaches for the sky as well, i. e. when a girl grows up, a neighboring lad begins to admire her.

There are a lot of surrealistic scenes in the short story:

چراغهای شب سر راهت گل میدهند و بعد

پرپر. آخرین شبگردها در حال پرواز برای خواب اند.

سروی بلند از یورش باد می شکند. باجه تلفن قناره

مرده ای است که هم زرد است و هم سرد. شماره گیر در

گردشی دوار ناله میکند.

The night lights bloom on your way and then you will fly. The last vagrants fly away in order to fall asleep. The blow of wind has broken the high cypress. The telephone booth is yellow and cold like a dead canary. The dial is complaining. Again a yellow color has a negative meaning. Rain is the heroine’s eternal companion which evokes a sad mood:

باران همچنان می آید و تورا و انتظارترا تنهایی و
The rain will wash away and evaporate you, your expectations, your loneliness and your estrangement.

The fragmentary scenes of Nozanin’s life from her childhood till her middle age are presented in her monologue. The emotional experiences and sad notes prevail in the story. There are a lot of symbolisms and allegories.

The other short story of R. Tudjjar “آرام” (“Good night”) is written in the manner of magical realism. This story is about the died-away love and the married couple who became strange to each other, about the husband’s indifference and the desperate wife who expects husband’s care and warmth. The wife is trying to draw her husband’s attention in every way possible, but her husband can’t come off the TV. She draws a woman with an umbrella. At last, being desperate to draw husband’s attention, she takes an umbrella and jumps out of the window. The wind picks her up and takes away. The scene reminds the episode from G. Markes’s short story “A hundred years of loneliness”. The character being tired of torment and adversity of the life sits onto the stockinet and flies to the sky.

The short story “هفت قدم رنج تا باغ نارنج و” (“Seven steps to the orange orchard”) is also rich with metaphors and surrealist elements. The short story tells of the distressing woman’s fate. The woman is linked with the man. She is with him either at sorrow or at joy, but the man is her savior and her oppressor simultaneously. At first sight, the short story may seem ordinary with the primitive plot, but the great moral and philosophical sense telling of the heroine and her husband is hidden in it. In general, seven steps are historical stages of the Iranian woman’s life. At the beginning it is the primitive stage, then the nomadic, later the feudal etc., which she lives. It should be noted that the originality of the story is that the characters created by the author can’t be found in works of other authors. Seven steps done by the heroine are joined in one sentence which appears several times along the story:

جاده بود و درخت بید و مرد که نیلیک می زد و

شکسته های گلدان در جلو پایش. صدای نی بند بند تن زن را از هم جدا می کرد.

“There was a road, a willow and a man playing the flute and there were splinters of a vase under his feet. Sounds of the flute were tearing her (woman’s) body to many pieces”.

The woman goes along the road, listens to the flute’s sounds and hands over to memories. The first step is connected with her life in a cave at the period of the primitive system; the second step is her nomadic life in a yurt, the third one is her life of a captive woman from the besieged town, the fourth one is her fate of the polygamist’s fourth wife, the fifth is the fate of a woman whose husband takes away her child, the sixth is the lot of a woman whose veins on the hands come out because of the hard work, and at last the seventh step reveals the fate, place and role of the modern woman. Anyway all stages of the woman’s life are linked with the man. The woman is weak and needs his protection and care. The surrealist scenes have significant place in the short story:

انبوه کارها و چرخش مارها و صدای لای لای دایه

که دور می شود و دور.

“The imposed affairs, wriggling of snakes and the sound of the nanny’s lullaby is being taken away further and further”.

دریاست که می تابد. ترک میخورد و به هم می آید.

دری گشوده میشود از بلورهای آب. و امواجی سبز اورا میبرد تا دور. زن غوطه می خورد. همه تنهایی است و همه وحشت. همه جا آب است و صدای چرخه که می چرخد و می چرخد. هفت کفش و هفت عصای آهنین. هفت دشت پر از سوزن و هفت دشت پر از نمک. دروازه بسته و دروازه باز... راه... آه... که چقدر دراز! سگی که گاه می خورد و اسبی که استخوان.

“The storming sea. Splits apart and joined again. The water crystal opens one door and the blue waves take it away further and further. The woman sinks. There is nothing but loneliness and horror. Water is everywhere. And the sound of the twirling and twirling wheel. Seven sandals, seven iron crooks, seven plains full of needles and seven steppes full of salt. Other doors are closed and the others are open... The road... How it is long! The dog chewing straw and the horse gnawing a bone.”

All these images appear in the heroine’s imagination. She walks these seven steps. Seven steps as though memory episodes pass in her consciousness one after another. Unnatural elements, composing the basic part of the short story, are peculiarly interwoven with the realistic details as if they make plausibility and more “superior” realism.

Undoubtedly, it’s not enough to read Rozia Tudjjar’s short stories once. You pierce sympathy for the characters at first acquaintance with her works and only after repeated reading you begin to realize the deep sense, secret aspects and underlying ideas of her amazing short stories.

Thus, summing up, it might be noted that the modernistic principles along with the realistic literary school have the significant place and role in modern Iranian short story writing. The writer-surrealist Rozia Tudjjar is distinguished by her peculiar style among the numerous writers of this literary school. Her works are similar to the travelling to the inner world of a woman, to the inmost mysteries of the woman’s world.

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