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Original Research Article

A Sociological Analysis of the Play, “The Story of Bichareh Zadeh” using the Destruction Approach to the New Middle Class and the Constitutional Revolution in Iran

Hamed Shakouri*

Ph.D. in Art Research, Shahed University, Tehran, Iran.

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Abstract

According to Goldman’s theory of genetic constructivism, works of art are meaningful responses to their time and the result of the emergence of a class and the attainment of coherent totality and the maximum possible consciousness by its members. The play “The Story of Bichareh Zadeh” was written at the end of the constitutional period, in which the structures that the intellectual class sought to create were being destroyed. Mashrouteh has lost its meaning and rejected its real fighters and others with a history of tyranny disguised and calling themselves constitutionalists. Hence, this play is written differently from the early plays of the constitutional era, with a new structure and tone. This research is descriptive-analytical and the library resources were used to provide a sociological reading of the play in the social structures of its time. Examining the play in two layers of comprehension and explication shows that this play narrates a declining structure. Therefore, in the opening scene, like in the previous plays, it has a style of comedy and social criticism, but as it goes on, it finds a bitter and sad tone, and, in the end, the hero reaches a tragic fall. In the new structure of this play, the intellectual class and the intellectual idea itself are seriously criticized. Because the real constitutionalists have disappeared or changed their course, all the just structures and popular institutions in Iran have failed. Hence, at the end of this play, both the constitution and the intellectual class will be destroyed.

Keywords: *Sociological critic, Mirzadeh Eshghi, the Story of Bichareh Zadeh, Mashrouteh Theater, Lucian Goldman.*

Introduction

With the advent of the constitution, Iranians became hopeful about ending the oppression and discrimination that the rulers had been doing to them for hundreds of years. Intellectuals had an important role in this movement and formed their consciousness structures in the form of a social class. From the beginning of the Iranian constitutional movement, the new European-style theater, which

was nascent in Iran, also flourished, because the theater stage and the text of the plays were a good ground for the subjective structures to become objective. Soon, in less than two decades -from 1906 to 1925—the constitution declined and lost its meaning. In this way, “The Story of Bichareh Zadeh” narrates a declining structure, a narrative in which even the creators of the constitution are absent, or if they are, they are not called constitutionalists.

* sayeh66@gmail.com,09136422740

Because the idea of the constitution has been stolen by others who bear no resemblance to the group that initiated it. This study, conducted with the help of Lucien Goldman, the initiator of the Social Critique of Art and Literature project, seeks to review this new structure, declining structure, or even unstructured in this play. In this way, he explores the characters of the play and their narratives in connection with the new society in which the constitution is being destroyed and compares the play with things outside the text in the general structure of society. This shows a declining social structure and a new class that will soon disappear.

Research background

One of the first books to study the history of playwriting in Iran is the three-volume book of dramatic literature in Iran, written by Malekpour (2006). In this book, "Teatrkrasi dar Asr-e Mashrouteh" some plays of the constitutional time are edited and presented for the first time. Sepehran (2009) in his book "Theaterkrasy dar Asr-e Mashrouteh" for the first time examines the study of the theater of the Constitutional Period in a specific theoretical framework. Still, his method does not analyze the structure of these works in detail. In recent years, many of Goldman's works and many articles and books about his works by other authors have been translated and published in Persian, such as "Sociology of Literature" and "Society, Art, and Literature" translated by Pooyandeh, "Genetic Criticism" translated by Ghiasi And "Sociological Critique and Lucien Goldman" by Kahnamoopour, etc ... Each work introduces a part of Goldman's theories and in the section on the theoretical foundations of this research, an attempt has been made to present a plot and an abstract of Goldman's theory in art criticism using all these works. According to the author's studies, although research has been done on the plays of the constitutional period, no coherent research has been done on the works based on Goldman's sociological theoretical framework. Except for another article by

the author himself in collaboration with Pourrezaian (Shakoori & Pourrezaian, 2020) in which another play of the constitutional period, "The New Rulers" written by Moayed al-Malak Fekri Ershad has been analyzed using Goldman's theories.

Theoretical foundations

According to Goldman's theories, outstanding and essential literary works result from the consciousness of a class that has reached a coherent totality and worldview. According to him, the maximum possible consciousness occurs when the social demands of a class become structured and these structures go beyond the minds and affect society. In late Qajar Iran, a new class appeared beside the old classes in Iran, including the upper class (Qajar dynasty and their relatives), the middle class (merchants and artisans), and the lower class (urban workers and rural peasants), called the new middle class (modern). (see Cohen, 1993; Abrahamian, 2009; & Ashraf & Banu-Azizi, 2009). This new class was created because of the Iranians studying in European universities, as well as the establishment of administrative systems and offices in which this new group worked. The constitutional movements and socio-political role of the new middle class (or intellectuals) and their struggle against oppression, tyranny, and discrimination are important structures that appear in the efforts of the intellectual class and their works of art and literature. According to Goldman, the structures that are generated in literary and artistic works appear during social evolution and the emergence of a real class, and that's why he calls his approach genetic constructivism. To explore and analyze these structures, Goldman proposes a study model in two layers of comprehension and explication. In the layer of comprehension, the components of the work themselves are measured in a totality system, and in the explication layer, the whole work is measured with other works or other social structures that are simultaneous with that work, to clarify the general structure or coherent totality that all members of a

class have achieved and crystallized at a particular time (see Adorno et al., 1998; Goldman, 1997; 2003a; 2003b; Marx et al., 2004).

Mirzadeh Eshghi and “The story of Bichareh Zadeh”

Mirzadeh Eshghi was born in 1894 in Hamedan. At the beginning of the First World War, he went to Istanbul with a group of immigrants. Eshghi wrote the opera, “Rastakhiz-e Shahriyaran” in Istanbul. He composed this poem under the influence of visiting the ruins of Tagh-e Kasra in Mada’en while passing through Baghdad and Mosul to Istanbul. In 1915, he published the newspaper Eshghi in Hamedan and then returned to Iran from Istanbul. He spent the last few years of his life in Tehran, occasionally publishing poems and articles in newspapers and magazines that were mostly patriotic and social in nature. For a while, he personally published the twentieth-century newspaper in four large pages, but he did not publish more than 17 issues. Mirzadeh, during the Republication controversy, which began in 1923, banded with Bahar and Modares against Reza Khan and the Republication. Eshghi had a fiery and sharp tongue. At the beginning of the Republication Whisper, Eshghi published the twentieth-century newspaper with a small cut in eight pages, though no more issues were published than one because it was banned due to opposition. The poet himself was shot by two people on the morning of the twelfth of July, 1923, in his residential house, and at the age of 31, he passed away (Mir-Ansari, 2009). Earlier, an abstract of “The Story of Bicharezadeh” was released under the name: “Jamshid-e Nakam”. However, in 2007, Ali Ansari published its full text for the first time based on a sample of a newly obtained manuscript.

Comprehension of the name, how the scene, and the summary of the play

The name of “Bichareh Zadeh” (Son of the poor

man) reflects the sad fate of the real intellectual class in Iran as if they were born poor from the beginning and also finally experience a painful and dark ending. “Bichareh Zadeh”, on the other hand, represents the second generation of revolutionaries and constitutionalists of the homeland. Because Jamshid Bichareh Zadeh is the son of Haji Bichareh, a fighter, and activist for the constitutional path. And like his father, who, after all his efforts, achieved a bitter fate, he will be overthrown by the dictators. This play has humorous language in some parts, but in the final scene, it finds a very serious and sad language. This language can be seen as an innovation in comparison to other political plays from the constitutional era (all of which were amusing and joyful). The time of the text is after the Constitutional Revolution and maybe a long time after that because we see that the Constitution has been emptied of its meaning and the former dictators and the newcomers now pretend to be constitutionalists and gradually destroy it. The play begins in Paris, where Jamshid (from the intellectual class) and Mirza and his friends (from the ruling class) are all students. And after that, they all come to Iran, and the story is continued in the Governorate of one of the provinces. Apart from Jamshid and the two, the characters of many different groups of constitutionalists, dictators, mullahs, and foreign advisers are portrayed in this play. The play has four scenes and narrates the sad story of Jamshid Khan, who studied in Europe and then returned to Iran. At the beginning of it, we see Haji Veraj, the servant of Safak al-Dowleh, one of the rulers of the time of tyranny who is still rich. Haji Varaj foolishly thought that everything was cheap in Paris and came there with very little money and got a room in a hotel. Jamshid Khan comes to him to get back the money that his father, Haji Bichareh, lent to Haji Veraj. But instead of money, he finds the funny story of Haji in Paris. The hotel owner and others, knowing the story of Haji’s lack of money, informed the police, who arrested and took Haji away. Jamshid is upset

by this incident and goes to Meghraz Mirza, the son of Majesty (Safak al-Dowleh) (who is also a student in Paris) to get help for the release of Haji Veraj, his compatriot. Meghraz Mirza and his assistant Velangarkhan, in response, refuse any help and instead tell him the story of their pleasures and revelry in Paris. In response, Jamshid Khan, in harsh and reckless language, denounces all those indecent acts that have tarnished the reputation of Iranians in Europe. As the two take a hard grudge against Jamshid Khan and secretly become accomplices, they severely punish Jamshid Khan after they return to Iran so that he regrets his life. But in appearance, they pretend that they regret their actions, and Meghraz Mirza avoids his father's bad behaviors. At this time, a letter arrives from Meghraz Mirza's father, in which he recounts with great selfishness all the crimes he has committed against the people to provide money for his son and asks him to sign some articles (which he has ordered others to write) and send them to the various magazines to be published in his name to gain provincial government and other great positions through them after his return to Iran. At the same time, a letter arrives from the doctor that Meghraz Mirza must return to Iran for his illness, otherwise he will die in Paris. Meghraz Mirza's asks Jamshid Khan to return to Iran with him. In Iran, Meghraz Mirza, with his father's guidance, holds four meetings with the elders of various groups: the tyrants, constitutionalists, clerics, and foreign advisers. And hypocritically in each one, he changes himself and behaves in a way that the audience is satisfied. In this way, he soon gains the rule of one of the provinces of Iran and takes Jamshid Khan with him. Meghraz Mirza's initially promises Jamshid Khan his deputy but breaks his promise and not only does it not give him a job, but he forces all the merchants and craftsmen of the province not to give him a job to kill him of starvation. Jamshid Khan hardly finds an apprenticeship job in a drapery. Meghraz Mirza's does not tolerate even this and,

with a cruel trick, forces a business to buy all of the draper's assets from the shop worker and give him a receipt instead. After two days, the merchant comes to Meghraz Mirza court and denies everything and he considers all of the story Jamshid Khan's lies. Jamshid Khan quarrels in response to the accusations of the merchant and Meghraz Mirza. And Meghraz Mirza orders him to be beaten. His staff beat Jamshid so much that he loses consciousness and finally, through the mediation of the merchant and the draper, Meghraz Mirza orders them to leave him. Jamshid Khan goes to his room after regaining consciousness and writes a will for his father and in it, he tells the sad story of his life after returning to Iran. And then immediately drinks a glass of nitric acid and commits suicide. Shortly afterward, his father arrives and sees the son's body in the room, he cries and slaps himself in the head and face. the father then takes the son's body to his small room. When his mother and all his little brothers and sisters are waiting to see their brother, they suddenly come across his body. They all throw themselves on the corpse and cry, and the mother dies there from the grief of the child's bitter life. The father drinks a glass of oil after seeing the death of his wife and then dies on the body of his wife and son. And the curtain closes on the cries of small orphaned children.

Comprehension of the characters of the play, "the story of Bichareh Zadeh"

The protagonist, Jamshid Khan, the eldest son of Haji Bichareh, is one of the activists of the Constitutional Revolution, also known as Hodhod Khan. He is from the intellectual class and a law scholar in France, and he is so poor that he lived in Paris like this:

I, Jamshid, came to Paris at the age of fifteen from Iran to study modern sciences, especially law and administrative sciences, and, in other words, political science, and I have now been studying in France for about four and a half years. Maybe, God willing, I will return to my fatherland, and if I can serve there.

If you ask me, I eat the peels of potatoes day and night and earn my tuition school money by washing pigs. God knows that I do not eat bread week after week but month after month, and I pay for school books through labor in coal mines and mortar factories on holidays (Mir-Ansari, 2009, 63). The other character is Meghraz Mirza, the son of Safak al-Dowleh, from the ruling class, who now inevitably turns into a constitutionalist and a libertarian, but inside he is what he used to be. Safak-al-dowleh is the person whom Jamshidkhan says about:

Safak al-Dowle does not give anything to anyone. And he even wants to rob the shoes of the pilgrims to the holy shrines, and every day he plunders the wages of the poor rural widows (ibid.). One who was with the dictators in the beginning and committed all kinds of oppression and crime, but when the constitution came, he changed his appearance and pretended to be a constitutionalist. Haji Veraj, a servant of Safak al-Dowleh, who went to Europe with his son Meghraz Mirza, tells his story as follows:

I saw that every night the devoted came, and I think some of them secretly took something from the majesty. Pocket money. Finally, the majesty went to some associations. He said he was ready to be killed for the constitution. I was a servant of the king in those days, and now you are a servant. The associations all deceived and appointed him to the governorate of a state. He took me with him. And he said, "You do not know how much better things will be." While you do not give anything to the king, you will also receive two thousand tomans a month from the government. I went with the majesty everywhere, but I could not make money because I was not a dandy. Whatever the majesty insisted that you fool change your hair cut and let me appoint a job to an office to you, I was not satisfied. I said, "I'm scared." I have done and will do everything in this world, but I will never be content to do a haircut like the Babis, Baha'is, Dahris, and naturalists " (ibid., 66-67).

Meghraz Mirza's is also a worthy child of the

same father and in Paris, he revels and commits adultery. His servant Velengarkhan, who is with him everywhere, says about him:

"The Majesty has fallen in love with a beautiful girl and has wasted one hundred thousand tomans so far." And now she has taken sixty thousand tomans of cash from him and is now in a relationship with a very dignified Portuguese boy ... " (ibid., 75) Meghraz Mirza envies Jamshidkhan and has a grudge against him because of his being the true representative of the intellectual group and having many merits:

Meghraz Mirza (says to himself): I must take this unfathered to Iran and retaliate against him there. How much information does the bastard have! he is a scholar using the words of scholars when speaking. Yes, with such unfathered in the future in Iran, how can I deceive people and pretend to be a scholar? "I need this bastard for a few days in Iran, then I destroy him." (ibid., 77).

Comprehension of the basic actions of "The story of Bichareh Zadeh"

Action 1: Jamshid Khan's action in Paris, in which he controversies with Meghraz Mirza, rebukes him for his crimes and for not helping Haji Veraj.

Action 2: Meghraz Mirza's action in holding a large number of meetings under his father's guidance, with various groups, remnants of tyranny from the ruling class, constitutionalist intellectuals and libertarians, traditional religious clerics, and foreign European politicians, and finally gaining governorate of one of the provinces.

Act 3: Meghraz Mirza's action in cheating on Jamshid Khan when they come to Iran together in a way that forces all the merchants and craftsmen of the province to not give a job to him.

Act 4: Jamshid Khan's action to write the bitterness inflicted on him by Meghraz Mirza and others for his father and eventually to kill himself.

Explication of the play "The story of Bichareh Zadeh" The first curtain of "The story of Bicherh Zadeh" is

the funniest part of it, because Jamshid talks to Haji Veraj, someone utterly different from him. Jamshid is wise, knowledgeable, and polite while Haji Veraj is stupid, ignorant, and ungrateful. In this section, we see that the two talk to each other and come to know themselves in another mirror. Because in Bakhtin's conversational attitude, if we do not know the connections between ourselves and the other, we will not be able to know ourselves:

Haji: Jamshid!

Jamshid Bichareh Zadeh (from behind the door):

Yes, Haj Agha.

Haji: are you at the door now?

Jamshid (from behind the door): Yes, Haji Agha.

How many times do you ask me? I have stated in my letter that I am at the door and also then you, yourself saw me at the door. How many times do you ask questions? I, Jamshid Bichareh Zadeh, am now at the door and if you allow me, I will come to you.

Haji (to the audience): Now if the potato skin eater person will come in, who can't find anything to eat weeks after week, will see baklava and these delicious dishes, he would want to eat them with me. What does he do then? "(*ibid.*, 62).

As we see in this part of the article, there is such a sharp difference between the two interlocutors that they do not even tolerate each other's existence and Haji Veraj asks Jamshid's name several times to let him enter his room. And the same thing happens to Jamshid later:

Jamshid Khan: ... everyone in the region of state and government has been looted ten times and twelve times by Safak al-Dowleh himself or his cavalry. I consider people like this to be an infidel. Haji Veraj: Who is infidel? Is looting one of the defects? No idiot, looting is a man's art. Besides, do you think that giving money to the poor is from masculinity? No, it is from ineptitude.

Jamshid Khan: What should I say to someone who has these ideas and principles? Very well, Haji Agha, you are right. "(*ibid.*, 63)

As we can see in these conversations, the ideas of both sides of the conversation are so different that Jamshid Khan is surprised. But it is from such conversations that Jamshid Khan and the intellectual class identify themselves from the point of view of others, and in the degree to which they differ from them. And this another enlightenment for me is such that even Haji Veraj predicts Jamshid's entire future and his painful fate. But since Jamshid believes in an ideal structure in his class consciousness, he does not pay attention to Haji Veraj's words:

Haji: Well boy, aren't you crazy to come here and hurt yourself? Because there are many more scientists than you in Iran and they are so poor that don't find anything to eat. by God, if you even become a professor, you should be a salesman worker in drapery in Iran. Because as long as there are aristocrats, they will never give you a position.

Jamshid Khan: No, I am working for my homeland and I have to go to Iran and do so many great things to build up this country, that my name will be recorded in the history of Iran ...

Haji: ... You will become a beggar or commit suicide with these fantasies. "(*ibid.*, 64-65)

Only the first scene of this play is a comedy and is influenced by the structures of socio-political plays before it, such as "the story of a journalist", old governors, new governors" etc., all of which criticize the socio-class system of Iran. And they use a critical but humorous language, but inwardly they are optimistic this new awareness of one's position and that of others that have risen in the sphere of Iranian thought can be the beginning of a bright era for them. But this play, after two decades of those hopes, has been written and witnessed developments that first weakened the constitution and then led it to destruction. In the next scenes, the tone of the comedy is put away and finds a very depressing and sad language, and as the play progresses, this tragic tone becomes more prominent. In this text, constitutionalists and intellectuals themselves are

criticized for the first time by a writer who is himself a classmate, and such a structure is found to be paradoxical because it is the thoughts and mental structures of this group that have given rise to such a play in Iran. Constitutionalists and libertarians empty libertarianism of meaning by coming to the meeting of Meghraz Mirza and praising him (he is a vicious remnant of the tyrannical period). And this is the maximum possible of consciousness that sees the collapse of the constitution and the collapse of the class whose symbol was the constitution and distances itself from them. At the cost of not-existing after going out from a class, and this non-existence in the bitter days when the constitution has come to an end is not far from reality. Because in the text we see how predators and Anti-homelands pretend to be constitutionalists and intellectuals, and others accept them stupidly. And this kind of modernist thought, which is the theme of the consciousness of the intellectual class, turns into something ridiculous and goes to the Extermination fundamentally:

Meghraz Mirza: Yes, gentlemen, there is a surprise. Because my father is an unscrupulous and selfish person ... I wish I was a peasant and did not have this father. I'm so miserable. I have had the worst misfortunes today. Death is better than this life.

Meghyas Beig: You are extremely liberal. Now, do not boil so much and do not say bad things to Mr. Safak al-Dowleh. Yet he is your father.

Meghraz Mirza: I seriously and fundamentally hate anyone who has bothered this land. Whether he is my father or not.

Ribas Khan Ghimeh: Mr. Maghyas Beig! he is very passionate. We do not have such passion in the members of our party. "(ibid., 96)

"Bichareh Zadeh" play predicts the end of all efforts and the destruction of the intellectual class, and from the beginning determines the fate of the hero by his name. This text highlights the disintegration, isolation, and expulsion of loyal constitutional fighters from the Iranian political and social scene.

At this time, the constitutionalists themselves have gone astray and are like the ruling class in oppressing the lower people, and they are nothing less than them. Bichareh Zadeh tries to create an ideal world in which both constitutionalism and insistence on the truth and honesty are combined; But when constitutionalism is tainted, it is an unattainable dream to be and to live and maintain the foundations and reform constitutionalism.

Conclusion

According to Goldman's theory, works of art are meaningful responses of the artists—who are the instance of their class- to their social status and general conditions that determine the structure of society. When creating a novel work of art, the class producing the work reaches a coherent totality or the maximum possible consciousness. The play "The Story of Bichareh Zadeh" is written at the end of the constitutional period when all hopes of the new middle class and other classes opposed to the ruling class for the elimination of oppression and a just share of power have been dashed. The constitution has lost its meaning and has even rejected its loyal allies and those who fought for it. Others have claimed it in the name of constitutionalism. In this play, the intellectuals are gradually expelled from society and are defeated in political relations after the victory of the revolution, and are forced to stay at home without any achievement. Because the members of the enemy group cheat and pretend to be constitutionalists, they then gain all the social and political positions that the intellectuals deserve. But the author, in his ideal thought, while being aware of the decline of the structure in the speech of the character Jamshidkhan, still praises and insists on the constitutional principles. Hence, a structure emerges in the play that collapses and is destroyed at the same time as a social reality. The opening comedy of the play, which was influenced by the early plays of the constitutional era, turns to bitterness and sadness, and

it ends with a painful tragedy. In terms of explication, this play considers itself to be a product of the constitutionalist class, but paradoxically it rejects and criticizes them, and in the end, it leads to the hero's suicide and the destruction of the structure. As in social reality, Mirzadeh Eshghi, the playwright, is killed by Reza Khan's agents for disagreeing with the dominant system of society.

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