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The Changes of Poetic Forms in the Contemporary Era

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Abstract

This study examines the form of poems after Mashrouteh (constitutional revolution of Iran) and explains the literary-semantic function after having a brief look at the poetry in 40s and 50s. This essay aims to answer whether poetry gone through a lot of innovations and changes during years or the change and transition in its form and semantic has taken place gradually. The study looks possible answers whether there has been many innovations and transitions or a gradual change rarely in spite of the general tendency that poets seek innovation in different ways during the history of Persian poetry.

Key words: Tradition, literary forms, innovation, poetry poetic forms.

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Introduction

It is difficult to define tradition due to its many meanings and connotations and it is difficult to choose one definition over another one. But even more difficult is giving a new definition of tradition that can include its various aspects. Up to now numerous definitions have been suggested from Dehkhoda dictionary to the Quran, from Jorjani's *Altaerif* to Persian language. On the other hand, Innovation like tradition is a word with many meanings that is in contrast with the word tradition.

After this brief introduction on the words "tradition" and "innovation", it must be said that the history of Persian literature has gone through many changes and transitions along with cultural and political changes. The history of these changes is thoroughly collected in books related to this subject and infinite forms of poetry have appeared along with social transitions. Studying the metamorphosis of Persian poetry's form from the beginning up to now, can we conclude that all these changes and ups and downs are leading to a specific aim? And moreover have the changes taken place gradually? Have there been many changes?

The Purpose of the Research

This paper tries to show how new poetic forms function in comparison with the old ones: Are poetic forms developing along each other or are they developing in opposition to one another? Is it possible to consider some aspects of artistic works and study their process of coming into being?

Research Background

There are many works in contemporary literature especially the poetry worthy of studying in regards with their authors' point of view. Although contemporary authors like Mohammad Reza Shafiei Kadkani in *Music of Poetry*, Kavous Hassanli in *Types of Innovation in Contemporary Persian Literature* and Gheisar Aminpour in *Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Persian Literature*, have written on this subject matter, there is no study specifically dedicated to it.

Definition of Poetic Form

By poetic form we mean the exterior and outer form of a poem which includes the style of juxtaposition of half lines and lines, the place of rhymes and meter. Those aspects which make different forms like sonnet, ode, quatrain, refrain and etc. distinct from one another.

Social Factors of Coming into Existence of Forms

Transition of forms is of course the product of various psychological, sociological and aesthetic factors and it can't be considered solely the effect of individual talent or the result of a global spirit and maybe by considering it separately in different eras, one reaches different conclusions; in a way that if we change our point of view our judgment of its course of development may change completely.

It is obvious that artists, when creating an artistic work, do not pay attention to the historical movement of artistic works or to the world literary movements. And they do not plan their destination and their place in thousands of years. It is also certain that the forms and styles are not sensible and independent creatures that have a special aim upon being born. It is not until its final word that we can firmly judge where a form or style will end up. Even after a complete demise of a style or form, it may be reborn out of the ashes of being forgetfulness. Without all these prejudgments, it may be possible to talk about the dominant current in these transitions in Persian poetry. Apparently, the current to be talked about is not a constant, never changing current and it naturally has its ups and downs and breaks on the way to development.

Also, in these sorts of researches one or more aspects of an artistic work (for example realism, symbolism and etc.) is abstracted and came into being and development is studied. Another way, although it isn't going to be applied here, is to talk about a general poetic or artistic current in the context of the whole history of literature and for instance acknowledge that generally the movement of Persian poetry has been from simplicity toward complicity, from realism to perfectionism, from naturalism to industrialism, from continuity to dissociation, from tradition to innovation, from objectivism to subjectivism, from centralism to getting away from center, from stagnation to dynamism, or vice versa. What is aimed here is only a short survey of the changes and transitions of forms and rules in Persian poetry.

The Circumstance of Change in Literary Forms

Aside from social factors such as slow pace of social reforms and the conditions specific to traditional societies which put an obstacle in the way of basic and fast innovations, what can be said regarding the subject of this paper is that poetic forms generally do not tend to change with political and social changes. Through studying what remains of past poets' poetry, it becomes clear that it took a long time for the transition of a letter to another letter or a word to another word to take place. And for example, a poet like ZahirFaryabi has apologized for such a change.

It may be that at the beginning, literary forms had meanings other than those they have today and their meaning has changed later. A historian says that, "Humans can't change their vocabulary whenever they change their customs."

Persian language poetic forms are formed during centuries and contemporary poets, in spite of the innovations which have taken place in Persian poetry, have to use the old forms to communicate with and affect the reader. They aren't able to start from square one and make a new form and structure every time they want to create something.

Another reason as to the slow and gradual change in poetic forms is the high range of variety of forms in Persian poetry. There are up to 300 or as some say potentially infinite number of meter in Persian poetry. A variety of subjects, semantic techniques, exquisite expression and unlimited domain offer vast and infinite options to the poets to choose from. By choosing one or some of these they can innovate in the context of tradition and they don't feel the need to break from them. Some make musical changes; some change the form, some make changes in subject matters and meaning, and some in imagery.

Innovation and variety

Therefore, the variety in form and structure in Persian poetry is a sign of innovation and a limit to it at the same time. And changes in form and structure in Persian poetry takes place along each other and not in opposition to one another; meaning that new forms and new rules do not negate or criticize old forms but they complete them. And poets in order to put a way a form and create a new form try to actualize the potentials and abilities of the previous forms by pondering about them deeply, which in itself is a kind of innovation.

Conclusion

About innovation, it must be said that being innovative doesn't necessarily mean negating the old rules and orders. Because even if by innovation we mean breaking from habit or de-familiarization, new rules are still needed. Therefore, Russian Formalism considers breaking from rules and habits, and opposes to rules. Accordingly, the essence of art is only acceptable as a poetic hyperbole and exaggerated expression or by aiming at negating addictive rules and replacing them with new rules. It can be said that art and aesthetics do not have fix rules but it can't be said that they don't follow any rules at all, though this is also a kind of rule in itself.

Since ancient times, humans have been looking fixed rules for art and aesthetics. From the first days of Greek philosophy, they were trying to find a geometric rule in art. If art is harmony and harmony is made up of proportions, it seems logical to consider these proportions fixed. Geometric proportion, known as golden proportion, has been considered the key to the mysteries of art for centuries and it is applicable not only to art but also to nature, as such that it has a religious aura.

Also there are other general rules about art such as all arts want to reach the level of music or art is the effect of will on form or the expression of freedom. Although this study examines Persian poetry from one point, it does not disvalue possible other points of view. For the future studies, it would be studied that whether Persian poetry follows any of these general rules or not.

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