

Picaresque Novel and its Status in Contemporary Iranian Science Fiction

Hassan Delbari¹, Esmail Foroozankia²

¹Assistant Professor of Persian language and literature, Hakim Sabzevari University

²M.A. in Persian Language and Literature, Hakim Sabzevari University

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ABSTRACT

The study aims at introducing Picaresque novel as a satire-oriented literary genre. It probes the advent of the genre in European literature, and investigates the traces of which in contemporary Iranian literature. To this end the core of the present article is to exemplify the universal components of Picaresque novel and define the extent to which these components are activated in contemporary Iranian literature. Consequently the main body of the article deals with the historical backgrounds of this kind of novel, it introduces Chandler's scientific model of defining Picaresque novel, and the backgrounds of its introduction into science fiction of contemporary Iranian literature. Furthermore, a brief survey on the genre and its present status and impact on contemporary Persian novels along with its specific characteristics imposed on today's works of novelists in Iran are carried out as well. The conclusion of the article results that as Picaresque concepts were introduced in the literature throughout the world, this special kind of satire was adapted by Iranian novelists consequently. It seems that the impact of the genre is significant and its typical parameters are suited considerably on the basis of our culture.

KEYWORDS: Picaresque novel, Science fiction, Story elements, Satire

INTRODUCTION

Picaresque novel or biography-usually self writing- of criminals is defined as a literary genre which is best known for its two main characteristics: First it deals with the life of low classes of society routine, as criminals or picarons and their living, a group of people as the passengers along the ways or settled in cafés who fight with others and the challenges of whom establish the main body of the story (Priestly,2005:51). The Second feature of the genre is that it is introduced first in Spain, the cradle of literature.

In a broad sense Picaresque novel is defined as a description or depiction of the middle class and bourgeois that live only by trick and mocking (Mirsadeghi 2005 Alif: 94). The term is defined in Oxford Dictionary as "The description of life of a tricky but lovely man".(Hornby,2004: 950).Picaresque can be attributed by extension to other typical cases.

The stream of changing of the meaning of the genre from "a flunkey" (Siber, 2010:9) into the meaning of "Picaroon" has a long history behind it that cannot be dealt with in the very limited space of the article.(ibid:9).Admittedly it seems that the meaning of the term has been changed dramatically later. It is said that it meant "a prostitute rubber with uncertain ancestor (poor prostitutes "who just endeavors to be alive any way, he has left his dwelling" rather than the second meaning as a "narrator of adventurous happenings" and unlike its first meaning this time he has an honorable and dignified parents instead. Here his duty is to reveal the ongoing crimes and corruption in society. (ibid: 85 "; moreover, the term has been translated by Persian translators as "An individual who is condemned to compulsory work", "A rower in a state ship " and ... (Cervantes,1970:203/1). However, in a paradigm of metamorphosed definitions this literary genre is supposed to be adapted from a few Spanish works and developed through translations and adaptations during the two recent decades of Persian literature in compatible with Iranian culture.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although a lot of research on picaresque novel have been done in English and Spanish territories- because of its origin in those countries- and Henry Siber in his work titled as "Picaresque, the story of Picarons" has criticized it in many ways, but none of Siber's works in this genre has been translated into Persian yet. Consequently one cannot find a systemic and comprehensive definition for a Picaroon character in Picaresque novels written in Iran.

Few if not many Iranian literary critics such as "Sepanloo", "Mirsadeghi ", " Modaresse Sadeghi" "Dastgheib ", "Mehrin", " Sajedi " and etc, have exemplified few inadequate of typical cases of this genre- without presenting a good definition of the genre and its advent, development and simultaneity in literature of other countries. Works of Jamalzadeh and Masoud bear a few but not many features of the genre.

Ideational, intellectual, behavioral and linguistic characteristics of this kind of novel, are not studied, only few studies are carried out by " Javade Es haghian" they are brief surveys on some cases which are not systemic and comprehensive enough on the view of article compilers in that they have no logical structure.(consult Es haghian,1999).The novelists in two recent decades and specifically" Mohammad Masoud " in their works have only written on daily life of these classes of society(picarons), while critical and comparative analysis of this schema requires a logical and systemic structure that has not been proposed yet, for this very reason the present research is unprecedented in itself and exclusive in this field.

Foundations of Picaresque novel:

The roots of this kind of novel has been disputed among scholars.” Chirstian j White Born” relates it to Spain of fourteenth century(Siber, 2010: 6).Also “ Ihab Habib Hasan” has gone beyond this and rejects the Spanish foundations of the genre and believes it is more “An English Phenomenon “ (ibbid) which Henry Siber rejects it consequently.(ibid).

Concerning the foundations of this genre it should be added that it traces back to so called golden age(sixteen, seventeen centuries) and the peninsula of “ Ibery “ where it is known today as Spain and Portugal .(centuries in which literature, visual arts, music, architecture and ...were flourished).”Hejazi, 2011:123”.In those days, Spain was a unique country. Supreme kings dominated the country while the public were in poverty. Beliefs and religious trends of people were different “ from spiritual mysticism to the ugliest and disgusting life of low classes of society”, “people were not in equal situations “ (Priestly, 2005:52); even it is believed that changes and incompatibility between language and life of people in Spain was also evident as it is said that “There is a lack of unity in Spanish language and a great inconsistency in dialects as well, they include Castile, Catalan, Galician and Basque, each of which considers its own the best dialects among others.(consult: Hejazi, 2011:125).Varieties of Spanish novels are many and different but they could be classified into “ two main categories that include heroic and pastor(the description of shepherds’ living” (Priestly,2005:54). However a survey in Spanish literature shows well how the stream of Picaresque novel was and related works in this field. In 1499 B.C. a drama titled “Selestina” written by “Fernando Rocha’s “was published .Many scholars have regarded it as the first Picaresque novel ;(ibid: 63.) Two other works on the situation of low classes of society were written, the first was “La Zarilo de Tormes “which is more an autobiography in the form of letters (Siber 2010:18) which a group of scholars consider it as the first Picaresque novel.(Priestly, 2005:54) .Another important book titled “ A thesis on the rights of an honest beggar men “ which was published by “ Mattehew Aleman “(1947-1610)in 1099 B.C. It is believed that Mattew was as a missioner to research on the misbehaviors towards the slaves in mercury mines Mattew’s face to face interview with prisoners in jail recalls the reader of Picaresque novels .(ibid), Aleman in this work regards Picaresque life as the resultant of poverty and chaos in society (ibid:34) It deserves to mention that in spite of many similarities between these two works on the basis of structure, there are strong differences between them (consult Siber, 2006:32).

Pivotal status of Don Quixote in a Historical paradigm of Picaresque novel:

In the midst of this time a novel writer named “ Don Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra”(1547-1616) influenced by two aforementioned works wrote his book titled “Don Quixote “,the novel bears with it some Picaresque features .One important point is that Picaresque novel traces back to Andalusia literature. After Gibraltar was captured by Muslims, Iranian and Arab culture developed throughout the territory. These Moslems established such a “magnificent civilization” that it “ flourished for seven centuries” (Neval,1995:453 adapted).One of most influential works was a book named “ Maghamate Badiiee “dialogues and colloquialisms” written in Arabic by Badiozzaman Ahmadebne Hussein Hamadani .(358-398 Hijra), the book was translated into Hebrew later. There are many content similarities between picaresque novels and these dialogues “ Maghamat” spoken among Arab tribes .A comparative analysis of these two, signifies the impact of Picaresque novel .(consult Sajedi, 2007:19).

Generally Cervantes influenced by all these works which are not compatible to one another and are not symmetrical as well, and by his talent wrote his novel called “Don Quixote” which is analyzed in every era of literature and is interpreted in different manners .It is said that the plot of this very interesting novel was built when Cervantes was in prison.”Priestly, 2005:61”.However, this seemingly satirical story whether it is plotted in jail or in open space of society, is a comprehensive reflection of the then Spain, though many scholars effortlessly have tried to interpret it as “ An allegory of superior moralities” (ibid:55).The appearance or writing of Cervantes paved the way for literary movement in Europe to the extent that the only rival for the writer in Europe was Shakespeare.(ibid).The book tells the story of two main characters who are pivotal in it, they are” Don “ and his follower(Sancho Panza “ who is indifferent toward heroic life. He confines himself only on eating and sleeping (= Picaresque activities).However it should be considered that this very novel bears with it some disadvantages regarding to form and content.(consult Priestly: 55).After the work was published, this very genre developed throughout Europe for more than one hundred years (Traveik &Barker,1994:566). Its impact was significant and influential throughout Europe. Cervante’s style of writing was transparent, simple, realistic and common-friendly; it gained much attention that has being continued to the present time. Different translation of this work has been done since then, and a French translation of which is regarded as the greatest literary success of France.(Laiz & Simon, 2005:14).This new literary genre caused a lot of adaptations in Germany, England, France and Italy.(Siber,1999:56).Interestingly, in England the works written by” Charles Dickens”(1812-1870) are attributably regarded as Picaresque novels in that they depict realistically the society of England of that time; Victorian novel actually.(ibid: 87).In these novels-as it will be discussed later- the character endeavors to be alive in that atmosphere, he shows his picaresque behavior, he fights against such unwelcome conditions.

Components of Picaresque novel:

It could be said that the novel tells satirically about low classes of society and mocks the rules governing people in an atmosphere of malediction; this is the core theme of Picaresque novel s on which one or two models are presented that are not so significant.

A Model Presented by Chandler:

As it mentioned Chandler in his PhD thesis, includes the following features for Picaresque novel:

- Picaresque is born in a poor indigenous family –traditional or common bastard: an analysis of the works written by Masoud and Jamalzadeh shows that these very features can be justified only on the basis poverty factors but not ignoble ones.
- The growing up of Picaresque is taken for granted in any way: this is more or less evident in Persian picaresque works-especially in the works written by Masoud.
- Picaresque learns - through experience-usually hard and boring- how to cope with the problems of life: this feature is prevalent in Masoud's works specially in his masterpiece "Endeavoring for life)
- To succeed, a picaresque should be untruthful to every one: this characteristic is also notable as it was said before.
- In his narration, a Picaresque mocks the others satirically. The function of satire and mockery in picaresque works as a linguistic feature would be revised and evaluated completely in the remainder of the article.
- After surpassing the difficulties and sever cruelties of life, the instability of man (in its general meaning) and his properties in this world is revealed for Picaresque: this feature is not compatible with the nature of picaresque novels of Persian, consequently adequate cases are not found in this regard .Thus it should be admitted that" the protagonist of Persian picaresque novels usually are not changed, they are static"(Parse Nejad,1993:207), Chandler presents another feature for Picaresque novel which is not compatible to Iranian culture, so it deserve not to mention any more here.(consult, Saber, 2010:6)

The Underlying foundations for Picaresque Advent in Iranian science Fiction:

The connection of this literary genre in Persian literature is related to French Picaresque novels specifically a book in four volumes titled "Gil Blas" written by "Alain-Rene Lesage" (1668-1747).in this novel the reader confronts with love stories .The protagonist travels with women and follows susceptible activities with them "(Siber: 1999:72) Another novel is" The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isphahan) written by James Morier, an adaptation of Gil Blas actually. In any way, the natural translations made by Mirza Habib Khorasani have put their unique impacts on modern Persian prose. Although there are many scholars who misinterpret that in this work Morier has mocked satirically the moralities of Iranians, but apparently this misunderstanding is because of their ignorance to this very reality and undeniable fact that (This work is a Picaresque novel " and " The character of Haji Baba of Isphahan is a nearly similar Iranian Picaresque" (Modarres Sadeghi, 2000:7). The specific style of Hajji Baba on the basis of its deep structure is regarded as "An Expression of a Complex and a Monograph of Prostitution". (Baraheni, 1983:519).

The novelists indebted to the style of Haji Baba also confess admittedly to this fact. Jamalzadeh, truthfully confesses that "For a foreigner who wants to know the Iranians,nothing is better than the book of Hajji Baba Esphahani"(Jamalzadeh,2000:8) .Mohammad Masoud either confesses that reading this novel has its own merits and,its deep impact on the mind and style of the writer is undeniable. (Masoud, 2006: 100).

Inevitably it should be accepted that Jamalzadeh is himself a pioneer in writing Picaresque novels – In Modern Persian Prose Literature– in Persian literature .Description of Iranian Picaresque characters –which we will discuss later in the article-in Jamalzadeh's works cover a broad sense " bloody-minded corps, a shammer clergy (mullah), a governmental fraud officer, an artless westernized character and..."(Areean poor,1987:2 81).It should be added that the significance of Jamalzadeh's works is revealed when we accept that he tried to apply European structures of Picaresque novel in Persian language and literature" (Balayee,1992:248) . Jamalzadeh is undoubtedly the greatest pioneer of novel writing in contemporary Iranian literature (Mahmodi, 2004:143).

The works of Jamalzadeh and specifically his famous novel, YEKI BUD YEKI NABUD "Once Upon a Time" bears Picaresque features significantly .It deserves to mention that Jamalzadeh himself has appreciated the novel where he says "If I didn't write this, another writer would write that"!! .He describes it a "of Holy and supreme character". (Mehrin, 1963:177).

"Although Iranian realistic novel writers and specifically Jamalzade and Masoud have dealt with Picaresque components differently " (Dastgheib,2010:49) but the analysis of their works on the basis of form and content, shows that more or less the basic structures of Picaresque components are put forward in Masoud's works, at least it could be concluded that the fundamental concepts of Picaresque novel are more significant in Masoud's works. Masoud himself is regarded as other pioneers of contemporary modern writers."(Commar, 2001:109).The composers of the present article argue that Masoud's works reflect best the episodic framework of the wirer's life. The frequency of this feature is not consistent in all of his works; in "Night Pastimes" the reader encounters the features not so significant than what he observes in (Endeavoring for Life", though many scholars believe that it (Night Pastimes "is not a novel at all.(ibid:113) .But this episodic narration is adapted by other writers as " Jahagire Jalili". "Khanlari" believes that his works "Surprisingly" is compatible to Masoud's works. (Dastgheib, 2010:51).

Manifestations of Picaresque Novel Components in Science Fiction in Persian Contemporary Literature:

The impact of picaresque novel and the significance of which bears its high frequency in Masoud's and Jamalzadeh's works .After them are a host of writers such as Hejazi, Khalili, Dashty,Moshfegh Kashani and etc .Apart from evident contrast among these works and the fact that some of which are not compatible and consistent with Chandler's Model, but the most prominent Picaresque novel features could be as follows:

Excessive Use of Criminals' Jargons:

Before we deal with this subject, it is necessary to mention that Picaresque works are in debt to this very feature traditionally and it is the consequence of Chandler's Model (Ignoble Parents and their Picaroon character). Encountering executed prisoners, Don Quixote asks for them to translate the jargons uttered by the robbers (Cervantes, 1970:210/1). This kind of discourse can "Help to enhance the elements of realism greatly"(Canon,2008:91).

In Persian literature deconstruction of the polite manners and barely depiction of obscenities in society had not been fashionable (was not common) the boundary of which was broken with the advent of this kind of novel. This very genre surpassed the boundaries of tradition completely". It should be noted that writing about the bastards, depicting live and concrete cases by these writers and specially Masoud who was very potentate novelist, in fact he brought with him an "Innovative Expression". (Arean por, 2000:263/2). These lexemes sometimes got the nature of curse and bad language "because of similarity to the present realities". They are considered nice descriptions.(Sepanlo,1983:101).The use of bad language sometimes goes beyond curse in Msoud's works clearly .Examples are: " You Coquette, son of bitch, where were you last night ? or " she's not a bit of skirt".(Masoud,2005 T:25), or (If you cannot dance, shut the door and get out of here immediately!(Masoud 2005 P,14) or, Hassan, the black, a patch of drop!!!),(Masoud, 2005 Alif:38).

First person Narrator:

This is the most traditional (fundamental) feature of Picaresque novel that is emphasized by Chandler. Meanwhile it is relatively compatible with contemporary Persian literature. The narration of the story is by first person in which the narrator and the protagonist are the same. Traditionally the first Picaresque novels were narrated in this way, as it is in "Memories of a Rubber" written by Jean Genet (siber,2010:96). It could be said that this kind of narration is justifiable on the basis of realistic aspects of the work because " These works bear with them the concept of realism" (Gomeri,1990:364).On one hand, this self heroic imagination may provide enough space for the writer to criticize barely the present situation. On the other hand he can impose his attitudes on society. Contemporary novels and specially the works written by Jamalzadeh such as "politicians ", (Communes of Molla Ghorbanali", Bile Dig, Bille Choghondar; Tit for Tat) and a book titled" the Flowers which grow in Hell) are of this kind. This very mentioned book is more an autobiography which is composed of letters sent and received among M (Jamalzadeh), Zh (Zhinet) and M (Masoud), it encompasses eight exchanged letters. Throughout the second chapter of the book, letter writing is mingled into criticism. Surely it could be said that the two books titled" the Flowers which grow in Hell" and " The spring of Life" are autobiographies that are written to inform zhinet of her father's life.

The lack of Significant Coherence in Plot:

Of utmost disadvantage of Picaresque novels in Iran is its weak plot. As it is usual, plot is an key element in any novel specifically and science fictions generally but this story line is weak in Persian picaresque novels.(Mirsadeghi,1997 Alif:423).Here it seems that the book of "Night Pastimes" or "Night Entertainments " is different from others to some extent .Though this novel lacks logical structure of storytelling where it deviates from the norms as well as for its frequent critics on it, it was surprisingly appreciated by a host of great writers of that time "Acclamation of the then writers" (Esmaily,2005:23) and even a prize of twenty thousand rials was awarded for the judgment of Malekol Shoareye Bahar (Masoud,2006 P: 190) -having a single narrator as the character who communicates with the reader-is more influential than others. In Msoud's other works (because of having unity of time and exposition "(Younesi, 2007:40) the story line forwards actually.

This lack of plot is evident in other Picaresque works as well. In " Dreadful Tehran ",the professional reader encounters with completely static and simple characters .Moreover, the novel presents more or less ambiguous characters because of the weak plot of the story. Textual coherence is elementary and conveys no significant artistic talent of the writer as well.

"Hard Times" written by Abbas Khalily is simply an adaptation of the "Dreadful Tehran" novel in that the events are not completely developed. Ali Dashty in his triplets "Revolt", " Magic),and " Hindu "has written the weakest works in this very genre, he himself has confessed to such weakness.(Arean por,347:327/3).His works lacks drastically the logical structure with repetitive challenges for the characters .His narrative style cannot hide this evident weakness .He begins his triplets directly, a way that that is not common in modern story writing .His characters are monolithic and static, whether good or ugly, they are hopelessly perplexed and wandering in this multiplicity.

In a book titled "The Beauty "written by Mohammad HeJazi that is a report on Reza Khan ascending (1933) the main theme is "Bureaucracy and transmission of tribal-rural government to a central regime" (Maskoob,1994: 60) . The book has many drawbacks in plot, the most significant of which is unreasonable and destructive interferences of the writer throughout the text as well as his spiritual look.

Violent Malediction of Society:

Another feature of all Picaresque works written by Persian novelists is violent malediction of social system that cannot support the needs of the poor. This very theme is plotted nearly in all written works of the era .The novel of "Dreadful Tehran" written by Morteza Moshfegh Kazmi is "the first Persian novel that specifically that criticized the systems of the society"(Bizhani,2007:114). Later influenced by such factors as (Popularity) (Dastgheib,2010:58) and "Dejection and an Atmosphere of Repetition" (Sepanlo,1983:61)brought with it more challenges. Other works such as " Dark Times ",((Days of Prison ", " Felonies of Mankind " " I cried either ",and ... show more or less this feature to the extent that in analyzing these works the most emphasis is on this aspect" (Commar,2005:112).In this atmosphere of

malediction the emphasis was more on two classes of society (Officers and Harlots).(Bijani,1997:112) .This in turn is the result of " Economic-societal contemporary conditions of Iran),and also conformity of the government and the growth of bureaucracy in Reza Khan era" (Maskoob,1983:160), also " the influence of Romantic writers of France" (MirAbedini,1998:54/1) was evident that later appeared in works of writers such as " Rasoul Parvizi "(Rezaee,Rostami,2011:32) . As an example In "Dreadful Tehran" the protagonist of the story is obliged to sleep beside Hazrate Ashraf (Intercourse with her) and this part of the story bears with it many criticism. In "Dark Times" "lewdness of people is depicted that caused severe criticisms consequently".(Areean pur,2000:267/2).

Furthermore, it can be said that Masoud's works are the tragedies of youth that the society cannot provide enough facilities for them anymore and they live in bad conditions.

Malediction of Religion:

This feature is in the midst of Picaresque novel. Generally, mocking of religion formed the main body of the first Picaresque novels. As an example "La Zario De Tormese" mocked the clergy men. (Siber, 2010:16).The simultaneous publication of this book with the so called inquisition of people in Europe and the dominance of church on its society, the reader's amazement is stimulated.

It should be noted that malediction of religion by Iranian novelists depends mostly on their attitude towards ideology to the extent that writers such as Sadegh Hedayat - that cannot be included in this genre -showed barely his hostility .Even his respect for Zoroastrian is because of his nationalistic views. (Farzaneh,1997:37).Obviously Hedayat's malediction is rude and harsh whereas Jamalzadeh's is more conservative and his criticism is focused more on religious manners rather than religion itself.(ibid).This view to religion specifically in "Communes of Molla Ghorban Ali " to unfold the meanness of a licentious clergyman caused fracas in Tehran of those days.(ibid:36).Masoud - suffered from these conditions and eager to make a change- sometimes criticizes them implicitly. Indeed he mocks the belief of the public conservatively (Masoud, 2006 Alif: 14). Even Masoud calls Jesus Christ implicitly a helpless and injudicious creature. (ibid: 15), he has lost his consciousness to the extent that denies the absolute and permanent existence of God. (Masoud, 2006 Th: 10) (Masoud, 2006 Th:10).In his view, worshiping God is a misery and disaster.(Masoud, 2006 B:6).

Conclusion:

Of what is presented in this article, it can be concluded that as literature of the world experienced Picaresque novel, Iranian writers also followed the stream and the genre was adapted by novelists and they focused on it significantly. In this article, the appearance, development and the entrance of Picaresque novel to Persian literature, its intellectual, functional and linguistic components were analyzed .Meanwhile, typical cases written by Masoud, Jamalzadeh, Moshfegh Kazemi, Khalili and others " Writers of Secret Side " (Two recent decades) whom are forgotten because of new Iranian novelists as(Sdegh Hedayat and...) were presented . These examples include the typical paradigm of Picaresque fundamentals which are compatible to the culture and Persian language.

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