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Postcolonial Criticism of the Novel "The Secrets of My Land" by Reza Baraheni

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Abstract

Each literary work is a sign of its writer' ideology and thoughts, and is based on the social and political context of the community. Reza Baraheni, the author of the Novel "Mysteries of My Land", as a social reformer, influenced by the atmosphere of the ruling community in Iran, especially Tabriz during the years from 1959 to 1979, expressed his social-political ideas with the aim of reforming society. Thus analyzing the writer's thoughts is important from the point of view of post-colonial literature. The present study is done via the content analysis method to investigate the intellectual themes of the novel, such as tradition and modernity, social disadvantages, status of women in society, Self and the Other, apolitism, lack of self-esteem, and subaltern and hegemony, and anti-colonialism .The research results depict that this novel, drawing on the components of post-colonial literature, illustrates themes such as the confrontation between tradition and modernity, the male dominance of the traditional society, western subaltern and hegemony, moral issues, lack of self-esteem, and identity fragmentation. But, on the contrary, relying on mythological beliefs and ideas to achieve the former identity, the novel also promotes the struggle against the belief in the supremacy of Western race as well as anti-colonialism.

Keywords: literary criticism, postcolonial literature, ideology, Reza Baraheni, Mysteries of My Land

The novel "Mysteries of My Land" can be a true reflection of the society, traditions, customs and reactions of the people of Tabriz during the above-mentioned twenty years, i.e. from 1959 to 1979. In fact, the influence of the westerns in Iran began almost two hundred years ago along with Russian wars with Iran, but its peak and intensity started in 1941, when and also thereafter, the British and Russians forces were present in the west and north of Iran. Some writers such as Al-e Ahmad, Barahani, Sa'edi, Daneshvar and Ravanipour responded to the influence of foreigners in Iran during this period, and produced works with the themes among which the postcolonial themes are the most striking aspects of storytelling. Accordingly, the questions raised in this study are as follows: What are the components of postcolonial literature in Reza Baraheni's novel? What are the social and political fields affecting this novel? How did the Iranian society, especially in Tabriz, treated colonialism and colonialists?

Postcolonial literature, expressing liberation and freedom from colonialism and gaining the political and cultural independence of peoples under the colonial rule, extends to its own themes and different styles. Consequently, postcolonial theory is one of the most important literary theories coexisting with the postmodern era, especially since structuralism shaded on the field of Western culture and the "white myth", and introduced the West as the source of science, knowledge, and philosophy, and the birthplace of theories and methods. This type of literature, aiming to illegitimate the power of colonialism by force and nation-building, has completely historical implications, notifying the post-independence period. Therefore, the intellectual themes of the novel of "Mysteries of My Land" by Reza Baraheni can be considered as components of post-colonial criticism such as tradition and modernity, social disadvantages, status of women in society, Self and the Other, apolitism, lack of self-esteem, subaltern and hegemony, and anti-colonialism.

This novel is a realist one that sometimes comes near magical realism. Baraheni considers events as an evolutionary process, not as a series of distinct phenomena that are related to each other and the historical conditions, in a way that the contradiction and solidarity of social life are introduced. Although this work can be considered

magical realism in terms of mythical components, which is one of the roots of indigenous culture, its realism is more highlighted based on the memories and narratives of the characters.

Reza Baraheni pursued another goal in the face of seemingly political events and with the abundance of words in texts. In addition to his pencils, he induces his thoughts to the reader, and, with the political and social goals, expresses these positions depending on the narration of each character. Positions reflecting the writer's ideology are political from several perspectives:

- a. In the opening part of the novel, which is narrated with the third-person narrative mode, it reflects Baraheni's opposition with the Americans and his convergence with the Soviet Union, as it is clearly visible in the dialogue between the interpreter and Davis, the American. In the novel, Baraheni is constantly talking about the disagreements of the Americans with Iran, but there is no place in the novel about the dispute between Iran and the Soviet Union, and in reality, Gorg (Wolf) the Alien Killer, is a "socialist nationalist" who killed a Russian Cossack, not a soldier from the Soviet Union.
- b. In addition to the idea of the struggle against colonialism which came through championship of Gorg the Alien Killer, Baraheni's political thoughts deal with the struggle against the ruling regime; that is, Baraheni discussed intellectual disagreements with the regime of Pahlavi and their government officials. The novel, from the section of the American Captain and Iranian Colonel, gradually criticizes the ruling government in the context of the social and economic problems.
- c. Another case that can introduce us to another approach to Baraheni's political thoughts in this novel is the characters' efforts to achieve revolution. He gives a glimpse of a revolution in the great part of the novel, either by bringing in dreams and dreams, or by events and letters, which must be tolerated in order to achieve that demonstration. Baraheni predicts revolution in the dream of Hossein Mirza as the symbol of the rhythm of miserable life of the masses. Thus, he portrays the revolution that he sees in Hossein Mirza's dream about after the

demonstrations and events, attaches it to the first issue, i.e. the colonialists' struggle with the national spirit, and knows Gorg the Alien Killer as its protector.

In addition, in a specific style derived from Baraheni's own ideology towards the ruling government and the Westerners, there is a picture of his socialist thought, the nationality of the people, distancing from the colonialism of the West and the achievement of freedom. This is because his ideology sought to signify the social and economic disadvantages, subaltern and hegemony, and the issue of supremacy of the superior race and position of women in the society, which ultimately endowed with the spirit of anti-colonialism and identity recognition, wisdom and the mercenary of Gorg the AlienKiller, i.e. the embodiment of the Iranians' eternal anger and hatred of the invading aliens and the defeat of colonialism. The research results depict that this novel, drawing on the components of post-colonial literature, illustrates themes such as the confrontation between tradition and modernity, the male dominance of the traditional society, western subaltern and hegemony, moral issues, lack of self-esteem, and identity fragmentation. But, on the contrary, relying on mythological beliefs and ideas to achieve the former identity, the novel also promotes the struggle against belief in the supremacy of Western race as well as anti-colonialism.

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