



Surrealistic Duality and Inner-Voice in *The Blind Owl* by Sadegh Hedayat

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Abstract: Stylistics and discourse analysis have common features in theory and application which intersect in some points; but within the critical theory, analysis proceeds from the level of description of the past to the level of psychological interpretation and sociological explanation. "The Blind Owl" is one of the most critical superficial, surrealistic, and psychological Persian novels. The third-person omniscient narrator of the novel, the Blind Owl, is describing his story and inner pain for his shadow. The shadow plays the most crucial role and acts as the twin of the Blind Owl that interacts with the narrator from the beginning up to the end of the story. All characters play the same role in the story, and eventually, the Blind Owl feels he already becomes a mixture of them. The dual binary conception is wide-range throughout the story, and the whole novel is based on pair duality. The most basic duality is the contrast between life and death, and also goodness and evilness.

Keywords: Sadegh Hedayat, Inner-voice, Surrealism, Duality

INTRODUCTION

The Blind Owl describes the adventures and odd events that occurred to the narrator during his lifetime, including his marriage to the girl, as well as those who have had a relationship with him; such as the painter and the brother of the girl, as well as those who have a relationship with the girl, such as the butcher and the old man. In this chronological story, the narrator of the story, called the Blind Owl, supports his life with a replicate painting and creating designs on the lids of pen-cases. He paints in a winter house in his hometown. Ray is the setting and the city where the story takes place. The first part occurs in the New Town, where *The Blind Owl* is written. While the second part of the story, which is supposed to be a new world, is happening in the older time than in the first part of the story. The incident occurs in the ancient city of Ray, called the bride of the world. With its huts, mosques, and gardens, Ray is shown as the largest city in the world. In a rapture, obsessive, and insane way, the Blind Owl is busy with his slaughtered wife. He severed his wife's head with a knife, annihilated her body, and buried in a heavy suitcase with the help of a creepy old man.

The Blind Owl is consisted of two halves. The main character has repeatedly experienced the fragmentation in himself; so, he shoots the whole world out of the world of objects. Thus, there is only a Blind Owl and no more. The shadow of everyone else lives in himself. He says others are his shadows and he is locked up among others. *The Blind Owl* is reported from two sources: the old world and the new world; in other words, one inner world and the other in the outer world. Subsequently, their internalized shadows are once again extruded, and these are replicating with shadows that have been thrown over. In fact, with the phonological replication, the Blind Owl reconstructs the world of objects and is locked up within, or just between them. Briefly, the story consists

of two parts: a preface, one between speech and one afterword that are written mostly to break the chronological order of events.

The Shadow Self

The shadow is all the people and things that the blind owl is dealing with. They are involved in his mind and personality are parts of repeated relationships. The narrator sees his shadow as a shadow of a curly owl on the wall. He wrote his story which fell to the wall to be read by his shadow. Later, he wants to endure the life like a grape cluster, and blossom out of the fringe or wine, dropping it in his shadowy dry throat, and say this is his life. He wants to recall all the shreds of evidence that come from childhood, love, marriage, and death; but not the truth. The seen and heard contradictions cause him not to believe any trust longer. He is afraid of all and is horrified even by his image in the mirror. Hence, he fences away his thoughts and feelings from his life and isolates himself in the walls of his room.

Recognizing the personality and mental structures of the narrator and the characters of the story, the repetition compulsion plan repeats all events. In this case, everything is happened and has been forgotten in childhood. Now, it is repeatedly forced to restart and rebuild life unconsciously. As return of repressed has been delayed, the internal (mental) order follows a dream. The author insists that the first part is related to the old world, and the second part is related to the new world, while there are elements in both parts that show the exact opposite.

Apart from the study of pictures, themes, paradigms, norms, values, attitudes, traits, behaviors, relationships, sequences, procedures, and mental models, the timeline of storytelling is rough and the events of life are unclear and beyond the scope of time. The narrator focuses on the entire life and destiny of man and is alien to the ups and downs of everyday life. The design of the novel is summarized in two ideal and real worlds which can be indicative of two universal concepts of the universe. Another indication of the introverted nature of the story and its lack of realism is that the characters of the story are described as the object, not as the real human. Another sign of the fluidity of this novel is the narrator's attention to his changes. In the process of turning himself into a man (old man), he realizes that he is both physically and mentally subjected to change. This is a composite soul of many manners that reflects his personality changes. The Blind Owl seems to be isolated "from his roots which signifies the double consciousness, a way of perceiving the world that is divided between two cultures which produces an unstable sense of self, feeling of being caught between cultures and a sense of unhomeliness, therefore he must look for a superior being which can help him to solve his complexes in him." (Mahmoodi, 2011, 84) Besides, in *The Blind Owl*, there is a sense of anger and the narrator feels that the world in which he has been caught is not constructed for a person like him. "For some reason all activity, all happiness on the part of other people made me feel like vomiting. I was aware that my own life was finished and was slowly and painfully guttering out." (Hedayat, 2001, 66) Later, he describes his painful life as "I was slowly decomposing while I yet lived. My heart had always been at odds not only with my body but with my mind, and there was absolutely no compatibility between them. I had always been in a state of decomposition and gradual disintegration." (Hedayat, 2001, 58)

An Absurd Creation of the Past

The narrator's mind engages in the past and the adventures of his past, continually are expressing the bitter emotions and experiences of his life, which is evidence of self-indulgence, such as: painting on the pen-cases, marriage with a prostitute, the way of mental living with one after killing, separation from parents, description of parental marriage by mother, reviewing childhood memories and other memories with the prostitute, passing deadly moments in bed when illness, description of bitter memories, and observing the relationship between the prostitute and other men. The change and the soliloquy of the characters exemplify behaviors and events that make up a large part of *The Blind Owl*.

The surrealistic characteristics of *The Blind Owl* are often repeated, strange, and unusual events of high intensity. The narrator tendencies towards the abstract and supernatural world are more than that, and the atmosphere of the novel is more related to the magnitude of the incredible and terrifying incidents. The

prominent features also indicate the linguistic style of the narrative and seditious. The narrative regularly expresses the events of the past and expresses his thoughts and feelings about the characters and phenomena. Hedayat, takes steps further from interior monologue and as Haqshenas claimed, "Hedayat has created a kind of narrative which postmodernism is not an enough word to contend it. It rather trespasses the boundaries of postmodernist narrative and goes beyond it to a kind of "super-modernism" in which there is postmodernism plus the new ingredients added and in particular the "exterior monologue" which is almost not commonly and conventionally practiced." (Haqshenas, 2013, 62)

Some other features, such as imagination, wonder, the collapse of the dimensions of time and place, fear, panic and horror, strange and surprising events, dreams instead of sightings, humor, madness, delusions, and paranoid feelings are characteristics of *The Blind Owl* that can be found explicitly. Strange events such as the look of the girl's lively eyes to the Blind Owl after death at the moment of the narrator's painting, or when he closes the coffin for the last time, the fragmentation of the hymen and the prostitute, and the strange scene of the look of the prostitute toward the Blind Owl after murdering, eating a piece of prostitute's meat by remembering that the meat eaten was the body of the whore, pitman's ignorance about the girl's murder and his burial cooperation, finding the lids of pen-cases that the narrator painted on in the old man's stall, the similarity of the girl's grave to the image that the narrator sees from the top of the raft when removing the wine and such alike are characteristics of the novel.

Horrific Surrealistic Symbols

The moments and images of fear, pessimism, disbelief, dreams, and astonishment of the narrator are evidence of the surrealist features of the Owl, such as the moment the girl is split, the moment the worms leaks on her body, and the fear of burial in a faraway city, the narrator's fear that the particles of tension fall in the hands of the soldiers after death, losing the lost memories and the fear of being forgotten in a painful bed and smoldering with fear, such as the thirst of burning lean oil and burning the city, fearing that his bed would be tombstone, or he would be afraid that his voice would be heard, and no one will be cried out and such alike.

The eye is the requisite of the Blind Owl. Surrounded by eyes everywhere, he observes the world. Through external, internal, physical, and psychic eyes, he lives in a world of imagination. The reality and the imagination are mixed up in his eyes that cannot be distinguished from one another. With these eyes, a spiritual universe is also experienced. He finds life and death through eyes. The death is sat next to the curtain with its horrific body and looks into his eyes. With this rewrite, the Blind Owl wants to see himself in his shadow. Therefore, it automatically evolves from his internal and external experiences of his life with his objects to the earlier relations. At first, he experiences love in his childhood by the loss of the object (mother) which continued. His whole life is restricted to lose the objects and fear of death. Homa Katouzian says, "[d]eath may be offered as the answer, but it is offered in a plea for unrealized love.... The large and seemingly unbridgeable gap between Appearance and Reality, between the Real and the Reasonable, between what there is and what there ought to be, between man and God, wears out the man and leads him to death as the only honest way out. Yet it is precisely that gap which he wishes to close, and that honesty which leaves him no choice." (Katouzian, 2011, 11) There are also two halves in the head of the story, like two black holes, two eyes, two candlesticks, two months and four days, love and death, bondage and separation and such alike.

The Blind Owl decides to drink poisonous wine before he is arrested. Thus, his anxiety and excitement are to drive out the demons that torture him intrinsically. This mandatory obligation to write is a reminder of the 'Repetition Compulsion' that Freud sees in the contrast between pleasure-unpleased or the instinct of life and the instinct of death. The sequence of events and their temporal and spatial order is based on personal associations and a kind of introverted sequencing. Not that there is no sequence and order, but the inner recurrence does not coincide with the external sequence.

Love, Death, and Duality

The love of the Blind Owl leads him to death because he becomes infected with one-way idolatry, and a trait is betraying his brother's return for his own desirable needs. Even love is the brother the same with his twin

brother. As later, the Blind Owl gets to the eyes of two people in two different times. It seems that one person lived in two different times with two women that are quite similar to one another. The relation between the Blind Owl and these two women is similar to the relationship between the woman and the two men.

The testimony is forbidden to sue the death. The Blind Owl asks himself maybe he is not the result of a series of past events, his ancestors, and their hereditary experiences. Perhaps referring to the transmission of family, love, and death play an important role. So, the image on the pens is repeated over and over again and has a relation to the Blind Owl's life. He also imagined his father, a man who had a ridiculous similarity with the Blind Owl, in his thoughts.

The Blind Owl was not only forbidden from love, but also from bad temper. Like many mythologic breeders with different ethnicities, the Blind Owl ends the evil love of his father. From the very beginning, the scary face he states has remained in his mind. Most importantly, his father's death caused him to be derived from his mother. The wife has not any sign of human superiority, while his mother was a very sympathetic and caring woman. The relationship between the blind owl and his parents is explainable from two aspects: For him, the mother is the first object and the second objects include father and his surrogates that are all two halves. The mother and her "whore" daughter are living in his house. He finds the mother so kind, but her daughter is a whore because she sleeps with everyone, even the ugly and old man who sells junk in front of his house.

Through the transient system of experiencing the phenomena of existence, we create a semantic system in mind, and later, by reflection of our experiences on our concept of reality, we use the signs and propositions of language to express the semantic system. The role-play processes represent our experience of being. Through these variables, one can find the number of different relationships in which a work is concerning about the world. It also shows the type of interaction and attitude and the semantic relationships between figurative forms. The above characteristics can be expressed regarding internal coherence and the automatic writing of the text. The role of thought reflects our different experiences of being. These experiences include events of happening, doing, feeling, meaning, specifying, and expressing. Jahangiri says, Hedayat "achieve this aim by benefiting the embedded capabilities of the content by focusing on the circular nature of time, fluctuation between reality and imagination, inconsolable love, inconsistent identities and multiple personalities, the ever-present existence of death, suffering from eternal sin, and the shadowy belief in mythology and superstition." (Jahangiri, 2012, 9142). Stylistics has evolved in its evolution with different schools and approaches. Structuralism, role-oriented, developmental, expressive or descriptive schools, discourse analysis, and critical theory, each of which takes into account the different characteristics of exact definitions.

The high percentage of the general and mental relationships of the world, the past times, and the linkage arrangements that indicate the continuity of the sentences confirm the abstractness, internal, and authoritativeness of the narrative, shows that the novel has taken place in a surrealist world. Despite, Firoozeh Khazrai says, "the pessimism here is reflected not through psychofiction or by the use of surrealist technique, but starkly in a critical and realistic form." (Katouzian, 2011, 103) The sub-process of expression, which is among the mental and the relativeness process, is a mental process, likewise. Besides, half of the behavioral process belongs to the mental axis, and half of the existential process belongs to the relational axis. An abstract material process can also be considered as a world of abstract relationships.

There are sores which slowly erode the mind in solitude like a kind of cancer. It is impossible to convey a just idea of the agony which this disease can inflict. In general, people are apt to relegate such inconceivable sufferings to the category of the incredible. Any mention of them in conversation or writing is considered in the light of current beliefs, the individual's personal beliefs in particular, and tends to provoke a smile of incredulity and derision. The reason for this incomprehension is that humankind has not yet discovered a cure for this disease. Relief from it is to be found only in the oblivion brought about by wine and in the artificial sleep induced by opium and similar narcotics. Alas, the effects of such medicines are only temporary. After a certain point, instead of alleviating the pain, they only intensify it. (Hedayat, 2001, 6)

Conclusion

Sadegh Hedayat does not interfere in his main character's conversations and mental states. *The Blind Owl's* narrative style in expressing feelings and experiences is somewhat close to internal dialogue or internal one-talk. In the intimate conversation, the episode of the heroic movements is presented, and the inner dialects are related to narratives in which the hero deals with his mental processes. For instance, the main character sees an old man and the butcher outside, who at the end, the Blind Owl feels he already becomes a mixture of them. This paper studies objective stylistic shreds of evidence of the intellectual, intertextual (time and aspect), and textual (linking) elements that reflect the psychological characteristics of *The Blind Owl*. Using these variables, the characteristics of subjectivism, internal co-writing, or automatic writing in this novel are discussed. Inner voice of the Blind Owl in the surrealist atmosphere represents duality concept hidden in the story.

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