

A Lonely Bird: Alienation in Keats' "Ode to the Nightingale and Pope's Ode on Solitude

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الطائر الوحيد : مفهوم الأعتاب في "قصيدة العندليب" لـ كيتس

و"قصيدة العزلة" لبوب

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Abstract:-

The present study discussed the meanings of the concept of alienation in Keats' Ode to the Nightingale and Pope's Ode on Solitude. Melvin Seeman's (1959) theory of alienation was used as a framework in the current article. The study aims to prove that alienation is one central element in the two poems that were discussed. Accordingly, this study found that Keats and Pope express alienation with multiple specific meanings in their poetry. For Keats' "Ode to the Nightingale," alienation occurred within the meanings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, and isolation. On the other hand, Pope's Ode on Solitude expressed only its poet's powerlessness. Thus, the current study provided insight into how alienation is functional concept not only in modernism but also in neoclassicism and romanticism.

Keywords: Alienation, Powerlessness, Meaninglessness, Isolation, Alexander Pope, John Keats.

المخلص:

ناقشت الدراسة الحالية معاني مفهوم الاغتراب في قصيدة كيتس "قصيدة العنديل" و"قصيدة العزلة" لبوب. تم استخدام نظرية الاغتراب للمفن سيمان (١٩٥٩) كإطار عمل في المقالة الحالية. تهدف الدراسة إلى إثبات أن الاغتراب هو أحد العناصر الأساسية في القصيدتين اللتين تمت مناقشتهم. وبناءً على ذلك، وجدت هذه الدراسة أن كيتس وبوب يعبران عن الاغتراب بمعانٍ محددة متعددة في شعرهما. بالنسبة إلى "قصيدة العنديل" لكيتس، حدث الاغتراب ضمن معاني الضعف واللامعنى والعزلة. من ناحية أخرى، عبر بوب في "قصيدة العزلة" عن عجز الشاعر فقط. وهكذا قدمت الدراسة الحالية ونظرة ثاقبة لكيفية أن الاغتراب هو مفهوم وظيفي ليس فقط في عصر الحداثة، ولكن أيضاً في عصور الكلاسيكية الجديدة والرومانسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاغتراب، العجز، اللامعنى، العزلة، اليكساندر بوب، جون كيتس.

Introduction:-

Alienation is considered a pervasive and common theme in the classics of sociology. This concept is highly appreciated with high regard in most modern works. Yet, this study is not having modern literature as a field for analysis. It rather concerned itself with the 19th-century romantic poetry and the 18th-century neoclassical poetry. As it sounds a broad, the concept of alienation is not going to have the whole 18th and the 19th century, but the focus is going to be limited on to poems. The first one is Ode to the Nightingale by Keats and the other one is Ode on Solitude by Pope. The reason that these two poems have been chosen due their metaphorical implementation of the concept of alienation.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was a prominent Augustan poet. One reason that hinders alienation in Pope's life was his inability to renounce his religion. Because of his Catholicism, he was not granted the right to vote nor to be a professor. In addition to rejections, Pope's suffers from physical resection which was a childhood effect. His interest in the human mind was shown in his writing. He was mainly keen in the inner and the outer life. Thus, the poetry of Pope reflected various meanings of alienation.

Not far away from Pope's condition, John Keats (1795-1821) suffered from tuberculosis. He had a short writing career that mostly was an act of meaning his death. Death seemed hunting Keats when it took his father when he was at the age of fourteen. Then shortly it was followed by his mother's death. It was the lack of the existence of the family and the anxiety of death led Keats's poetry to be colored with alienation.

The present study aims to show the how alienation was reflected in the two poems. In addition, the discussion of alienation is going to specify the meaning of alienation that each of the two poets reflected in his poem. Also, this study will show how neoclassical poetry treated alienation in comparison to the romanticism.

Statement of the Problem

It is worth noting that previous studies have tackled the poetry of Keats and Pope, yet there was no notable concern regarding the concept of alienation. Fogle, R. H. (1953) has given a

reinterpretation for Keats' Ode to Nightingale. In his appreciation of the poem, he considered the romantic principles as a base for analysis. The study assumed to be middle ground of analysis that neither arguing against nor support the pervious studies. His study has been assumed to be an attunement to bear an implication of recent criticism.

Kappel (1978) has considered the immortality of the nature regarding Keats' Ode. The study has explained the resistance of the poem against the tendencies of criticism regarding the immortality of nature and the personification of the bird. He assumes that immortality is not only symbolized by the existence of the bird, but also with the power of the nature.

Lau, B. (1983) tackled the link of the theory of Associationism with the Romantic poetry. He assumes that even though there has been no explicit reference that Keats was familiar with the theory of Associationism , his poems reflect some effects of the concept. At least the Associationism is found in Keats' early poems.

Tagore (2000) reflects the historical during the age of consumption on the works of Keats, taking his Ode to Nightingale as a sample for the analysis. Tagore assumes that the poetry of Keats' charts the consumption behavior of the rising middle-class at the romantic period. The study mads an assumption that Keats Odes are reflect the way in which human bodies became a subject and object of consumption.

Stephen Szilagyi (1997) demonstrates, in his article the "primacy of Pope's Ode on Solitude", a historical ideal of selfhood. It demonstrates the impossibility of such a transcendental ideal and this impassibility is clear in the conflict between Pope's self-defining commitment to poetry and the anti-discursive sentiments associated with the ideal.

Joshua k. Scodel (1988) in his analysis looks back to the Greeks poets who used epitaphs upon themselves to express in a brief form the ultimate meaning of their life and work. Scodel discusses that Pope's, the poet in focus, interest in the genre is extensive. In his poems and highest poetic life, he used epitaphic self-portraits and he imagined epitaphs that could be written about him. Scodel demonstrates that Pope's epitaphs stem from his feeling of the loss

of identity and his desire for his "own" with an epitaph that can define hem as he wishes to.

The pervious studies have neglected the importance of alienation as a key fact in the writing of Keats and Pope. For this short coming, the current study is gong to fill the gap by taking in consideration the concept of alienation as a base of analysis.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The concept of alienation in contemporary sociology has its roots in theology, philosophy, and law. In particular, the Gnostic tradition of early Christianity, the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus, and the commentaries on Roman Law of Seneca and Cicero all influenced the development of the modern concept of alienation. The term can be traced through the writings of Augustine, Aquinas, and Meister Eckhart, as well as the Pauline tradition, to Luther and the theology of Protestant Germany. Thus, even before it has been reintroduced to modern philosophy by Hegel, the term has been used in a wide variety of contexts, including the relationship of our mortal world to some higher plane, the relationship of mind and body, and legal property rights.

according to Seeman (1959) and (1975), Alienation is defined by five specific meanings; namely: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. Seeman (1959) originated powerlessness meaning of alienation back to Marx's view of the alienation of the workers in the capitalist society. This meaning of alienation is defined by Seeman (1959) as "the expectancy or probability held by the individual that his own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes, or reinforcements, he seeks" (p.784). Meaninglessness is second meaning of alienation. It refers to the sense of the understanding or beliefs of the events. Seeman (1959) defined it as "the individual's sense of understanding the events in which he is engaged". Seeman also explained that "We may speak of high alienation, in the meaninglessness usage, when the individual is unclear as to what he ought to believe-when the individual's minimal standards for clarity in decision-making are not met". Also stated "low expectancy that satisfactory predictions about future outcomes of behavior can be made" (p.786). Normlessness is originated from Durkheim "anomie". Seeman (1959) has used the

classical notion that define alienation as "a situation in which the social norms regulating individual conduct have broken down or are no longer effective as rules for behavior". Seeman also has defined it as "high expectancy that socially unapproved behaviors are required to achieve given goals" (p.787). In Isolation, Seeman refers to this meaning as "lack of adjustment - the warmth, security, or intensity of an individual's social contacts" (Seeman, 1959, p.788). According to Seeman (1975) this meaning refers to "the individual rejection of commonly held values in the society versus the commitment to the going group standers (p.93). Self-estrangement is explained according to Seeman (1975) in a sense of "the individual's engagement in activities that are not intrinsically rewarding versus involvement in a task or activity for the sake of its own" (p.94). Seeman (1959) defines it as "the degree of dependence of the given behavior upon anticipated future rewards". "self-estrangement refers essentially to the inability of the individual to find self-rewarding-activities that engage him (p.790).

Discussion

It is worth noting that alienation in the poetry of Keats is metaphorical. In another words, alienation is implied in his implementation of the personification of fantasy. According to Seeman's theory, it is the variation between the expectancy and the reward that drive or hinders the alienation (Seeman, 1959, p.785). That is to say, it is the low reward or the lack of reward that make alienation an active element. According to Seeman's views, "Keats Ode to the nightingale implied a metaphorical sense of alienation. What is interesting is that various meanings for the concept of alienation can be traced when the poem is read through the lens of Seeman's views. Alienation in sense of multiple meaning can be read through the use of the question of mortality and immortality in which Ode to the Nightingale directly adopted. Mentioned earlier, Keats died at the age of twenty-five and liver the years from his twenty to his death in anxiety. It is the anxiety of death hinders the questions of mortality and immortality in the poem. Accordingly, mortality is considered as low reward or lack of control. In addition, the immortality is considered the high live of reward for Keats. However, one problem that made alienation present is that the inability to be certain that immortality is going to be the fate of keas (whether his

name or his works). Due to lack of certainty, the poem raised many quotations regarding the meanings of alienation.

Keats opens his Ode to the Nightingale with a direct reference to pain. The first line in the poem refers to the pain of the heart. This pain is a product of a severe case of alienation. According to the contemporary view of the effects of the symptoms of alienation, it was found that alienation can cause a physical disorder which in its place lead to physical pain (Barclay, R. 2018). This pain is the starter of a variety of the meanings of the concept of alienation. Beside pain, Keats mentioned "hemlock" and the "lethe". Through the first three lines, Alienation in sense of Powerlessness meaning can be related.

The first stanza indicates the meaning of Powerlessness in the sense of the metaphorical lack of control. It can be noticed that the first stanza is based on contrast between the question of mortality and immortality. Seeman notes that powerlessness occurs when the future outcome of the actions is not identified. In addition, that the actions have no effects and the individual loses control over his life. In the case of Keats, it is death that gives him the feeling of no control. Mortality makes Keats submit to ultimate force of nature. When he feels that there is no escape, the anxiety of death initiates a sense of powerlessness or the lack of control. The idea of lack of control is best seen with the reference to the "Hemlock": "My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk". The hemlock was the poison that Socrates was forced to drink in his execution. The allusion of the hemlock indicates the feeling he is forced to except external forces just like Socrates. According to Seeman, the individual are likely to be alienated when their desires are affected by external force such as the government, fate, and luck (Seeman, 1971, p. 83). Thus, Keats expresses alienation in sense of powerlessness to show his uncertainty of immortality. As a reaction, Keats sees the nightingale as a form of freedom. For Keats, his physical form is the prison that makes him powerless. He wants the immortality in other forms like the spirit of the forest and the nightingale. However, as soon as the imagination fade away, he was engulfed in the "lethe" again.

Beside powerlessness, Alienation in sense of meaninglessness appeared in the form of the absurdity and the bitterness of the reality in comparison of the idyllic world of fantasy. The last two lines of the second stanza are running to the third stanza. Keats repeats the

"fade away.." in beginning of the third stanza. In the third stanza, the suffering and the mortality are highly intensified with many signifiers. It can be noticed that the signifiers of illness and mortality are related to a personal significance. That is to say, Keats is alienated because it is meaningless to life in illness and anxious of mortality. According to Seeman, meaninglessness is occurring when there are low predictions and comprehensibility of the outcomes of the future (Seeman, 1959, p.6). Thus, Keats repeats the "fade away.." for he is unable to find meaning in the absurd existence. What makes meaninglessness be the center of the third stanza is the inability to find meaning in the constant suffering. Keats mentions the "fever", "weariness", and "the fret" as signifiers of illness. They all can be signified back to the poet himself. As mentioned earlier, illness had made Keats physically weak. So, he sees his youth as a dying in "sorrow" and "despair"; "Where youth grow pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;". Alienation within the meaning of Meaninglessness thus prevails as Keats' inability to find a clear meaning to his suffering and illness. Thus "fading" signified the disappearance from incomprehensible real world to comprehensible (to the poet) world of imagination.

The sixth and the eighth stanzas are highly epitomized Alienation with meaning of Isolations. Just like powerlessness, the meaning of Isolation is metaphorically reflected. That is to say, it is the lack of integration which drives the sense of isolation. Keats metaphorically refers to two worlds in the poem. The first is the real world and the second is the world of imagination where the nightingale dwells. Keats' feeling of disintegration from the real world enacts the feeling of isolation. With the feeling of disenchantment, came up the question of mortality and immortality. As Seeman notes that it is the feeling of exclusion that drives isolation. In the sixth stanza, it is Keats that bleeds death to take him from this world. It is Keats that wants his quit air to be taken from the real world. This bleeding of death is a significance to excessive feeling of disintegration that the poet feels with his surround. "Now more than ever seems it rich to die, / To cease upon the midnight with no pain;". Thus, the meaning of isolation occurs when painful (such illness in the case of Keats) phenomenon initiates the feeling of disintegration.

The first two lines of the eight stanzas also give meaning of isolation. "Forlorn! the very word is like a bell / To toll me back from

thee to my sole self!". Those two lines are the Keats chooses to highlighted the process of his returning into reality. According to Seeman, isolation is not only mean liveness in the sense of disintegration, but also means that the individual is fully aware of his situation (p. 4). Accordingly, Keats says "forlorn", which signifies the separation from the company of the nightingale (world of imagination) and returning into the reality (morality).

In kind of similar way to Keats, Pope also has expressed meanings of his alienation in his poem "Ode on Solitude". The difference between "Ode on Solitude" and "Ode to the Nightingale" is that Pope does not rely on metaphor in his expression of alienation. Instead, he focusses on the significance of the lack. "Ode on Solitude" speaks of the "Blest" happiness of solitude. Yet, Pope's alienation is mainly occurred due the inability to obtain the free well. Through his life, Pope suffers from his Catholicism and his physical deformity. His believe acquired him many enemies, especially those in the position of power. Pope and his family have been bothering excessively for their Catholicism. The persecution is central in the poem. Pope tries to elaborate his life status during the time of protestant oppression.

"Ode on Solitude" opens with the stamen of what the ideal happens may be in the eyes of the poet. Pope says that happiness is a small land and the ability to have freedom. Yet, the meaning of the poem does not work on this level. Alienation can be traced when poem is interpreted with reference to the poet himself. As catholic, Pope has not obtained neither freedom not positions that he wants. Since, childhood, Pope's family stripped way from their land. In addition, when Pope turned to adult, he was also forced to live nine miles away from the city. In a letter, he writes that "I am so suddenly Proclaimed out of Town that I have but just Time to pack up and be gone" (Hill, 2000, p. 17). Thus, pope opens his poem in this way is a significance to the lack of control. According to Seeman, it is the lack of control over the life outcome that initiate alienation in sense of powerlessness (Seeman, 1971, p. 83). Accordingly, although not long poem, Pope has expressed his alienation within the meaning of powerlessness.

In form of a list of what the ideal condition of a man, pope states his powerlessness form of alienation. He speaks of a man who has

the control over the future outcomes and saying it is happiness. Through this opening, Pope is refereeing to what he is not. Pope is implying sadness as a result of the lack of control. As mentioned earlier, he was raped out of his own choice of where to live when he was an adult. Thus, when he refers to the joy of breathing the native air, Pope is implying his inability to obtain freedom in his motherland.

In addition to the freedom of well, Pope highlights the lack of the peace of the mind as a reason of alienation. He refers again to the ideal state (in his own perspective) the individual. Pope says that it is a "Blest" when there is no interference with one's affairs. According to Pope, "Blest" with the swiftness the days and hours. There are all complete by the healthiness the body. In fact, Popes is not all of what is mentioned. He is not blessed with, and finally he does not have the privacy over his life's affairs. He says "In health of body, peace of mind,". Pope sees alienation as solution to be acquire the peace within the mind. However, this alienation is not compulsory, it is related also to the lack. Here pope is implying to what he lacks.

Beside the lack of mind peace, freedom and control, pleading of the last stanza expresses deep feeling of alienation. In the final stanza, Pope is ready to abandon the world to for the sake of the ideal of man that he mentioned in first stanza. He pleads the higher power (in his case the government) to let him be. It is not like Pope has any control over his situation. He only gets to pleads the odes for a wish of change. Acceptance of alienation, although not by choice, come to be something more bearable that the torture of the protestant government. He expresses his powerlessness by symbolizing the government as a thief that strip him out of his life; "Steal from the world, and not a stone/Tell where I lie". Thus, Pope's alienation came up to be an expression of the powerlessness with the existence of the potential power of change

Conclusion

The concept of alienation has been experienced differently from neoclassical poetry to romantic poetry. The present study examined the concept alienation which was highlighted in Seeman's ideas about the meanings of alienation. In addition, the study concluded that alienation is a basic motivator of writing. Accordingly, Keats' "Ode to the Nightingale" and Pope's "Ode on Solitude" were

examined. Beside the difference orientation regarding the concept in neoclassicism and romanticism, both poets used different ways to express alienation in their poem. To start, Keats expressed alienation in a rather metaphorical way. He drives the meanings of the concept from various lacks in his life to express them within the realm of imagination. On the other hand, Pope was more on the satirical impulses. He expresses alienation with more factual way. Pope expenses is related to the lack of what is the ideal state of being. According to Seeman, both Keats and Pope have expressed different meaning for the concept of alienation. For Keats, it is powerlessness, meaninglessness, and isolation that derive the poet's alienation. As for Pope, it was only powerlessness which alienated him from ideal state. Thus, alienation is one of the basic motives to write such piece of poetry.

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