

Bulgakov's Novel the Heart of a Dog and Yaghoobi's play: a Comparative Study on the Structural Adaptation Process

Mahdi Nasiri PhD

Student in Dramatic Literature
National Academy of Science of Armenia
No 5. Yazdanshenas Ave
Jamalzadehshomali St
Tehran
Iran

Abstract

*There have almost always been theories and strategies developed to explain and regulate the adaptation process as well as the methods of changing a literary text from fiction to drama. However, most of these theories are relevant to and have provided accounts for film adaptations of fictions and novels; in fact, few theories have focused on dramatic adaptation of fictions. Therefore, the present study, which directly analyses a dramatic adaptation of a novel, can be numbered among the few researches that have hitherto been done on the same subject. Indeed, the present research is a study of *The Heart of the Dog*, a novel by Mikhail Bulgakov (1891-1940), and the dramatic adaptation of the novel, by Mohammad Yaghoobi, a contemporary Persian dramatist. Actually, regardless of their conceptual similarities and differences, and without concern for the various socio-political milieu in which the two texts have been produced, the present research offers an analysis of the texts' forms and structures. Moreover, in this study, attempts have been made to answer questions which seem to be fundamental in the adaptation process: Which elements or features have this potential to change into dramatic elements or features? And which patterns can be regarded as touchstones for dramatic adaptations of fictions? Hence, this research provides the readers with a structuralist analysis of *The Heart of a Dog*, and the dramatic adaptation of the novel. The present study also evaluates both the pattern and the process of adaptation.*

Keywords: fiction, drama, narrative, character, event, plot

Introduction

It seems that a structural comparison between dramatic literature and fiction would provide the best strategy through which one can work out a standard formula for the dramatic adaptation of fictions. In fact, in their articles and researches on theoretical adaptations, many writers have already concentrated on the structural features of literary texts. For instance, in *The Art of Dramatic Writing: Its Basis in the Creative Interpretation of Human Motives* (1942), Lajos N. Egri (1888-1967), analyses the structure of dramatic literature. As a matter of fact, since most of the discussions about theoretical adaptations are limited in their applications and lead to generalities, the prior attempt in the present study is to select a novel and the dramatic adaptation of that novel as examples, and to assess and evaluate some aspects of the adaptation methods.

Provided that narrative is regarded as the most significant element both in theatre and novel, the greatest challenge in the dramatic adaptation of the novel will be the diversity of narrative voices. However, in the present study, through a structural analysis of the selected texts, the adaptation process is paid attention to. Indeed, the chosen texts are a novel and a drama—the former being titled *The Heart of a Dog*, authored by Bulgakov, and the latter, assuming the same title, adapted by Yaghoobi.

Mikhail Bulgakov and the Heart of a Dog

Mikhail Bulgakov was born on May 3, 1891, in Kiev. Being graduated from the Gymnasuim, Bolgakov entered the medical faculty of Kiev University and graduated in medicine in 1916. He is best known as a playwright and a novelist.

Indeed, Bulgakov's first play, *The Days of the Turbi* (1926), was an adaptation of one of his novels titled *White Guard*, which he had written based on his personal experience during the civil war. This play, first performed in a theatre in Moscow, brought its author fame, success and credibility. Therefore, it can be concluded that Bulgakov himself was the first person to adapt his novels for the stage.

Yet, his novel *The Heart of a Dog*, written between January and March 1925, is a surreal novel with an unusual nature. It sheds lights on the role of evil supernatural forces in the creation of the chaotic situation in which modern man is trapped. In fact, Bulgakov took the same lead in his novel *The Master and Margarita*. In such texts, strange and startling ideas are manifested in the form of a naturalistic narrative which is unadorned and devoid of feeling. As a matter of fact, such a form seems to fit a sarcastic content. In other words, the novel's simple and comic narrative can be considered as a bitter mockery or satire of Russian Revolution.

The Heart of a Dog tells a story of a dog called Sharik. In this novel, a surgeon name Filip Filipovich Prebrazhensky does a surgery on Sharik's skull In fact, to make a name for himself, as a surgeon who has created a new creature with modern standards, doctor Filipovichtrepans Sharik's skull and gives the poor dog a human pituitary gland. Sharik's torso is also opened and he is given human testicles instead.

This novel can be interpreted as an allegory of the suffering of Russian people. Here, the dog can be taken as the symbol of Russian people, who have long been subjected to violence and have been treated like animals. Furthermore, the surgeon can be deemed as the symbol of the communist party or Lenin; and, the gland transplant can represent a revolution, here, the Russian Revolution.

In effect, the leader (the surgeon in the story) makes a revolution (creates a creature), but this newly born creature, horrifies and troubles its creator by its ever changing habits and manners. This creature goes against the creator's wish and takes his own path, which is in an opposite direction. As a result, there remain two trajectories: this creature should either be killed or go through a metamorphosis to become a dog again.

The *Heart of a Dog* sarcastically brings into light and bitterly criticizes the Russian intellectual community—this being the community beginning the revolution. Actually, Bulgakov considers revolution as a vain attempt to change human nature. He contends that human beings are savage by nature; and, therefore, delegating power to such creatures will bring about catastrophic results. The point lies in the fact that just after the revolution, human like creatures step in a direction which finally results in the destruction of the so called revolutionalized roads.

Usually, when a play is performed on the stage, the audience is struck by the immediacy of the action. As Ebrahim Makki (b. 1932) puts it forward in *Drama: Knowing the Elements* (2006): "at the beginning of most of the plays, expressive and dramatic actions take the place of speech" (25). However, a successful play has the capability of attracting the audience into its world from the very first moment. As a matter of fact, in the dramatic adaptation of *The Heart of a Dog*, Yaghoobi has applied the same method. He has, in fact, started the play with dramatic acts rather than speech. Unlike the novel which starts with the inner talks of the stray dog, the beginning of the dramatic adaptation is similar to the last parts of the novel, when Sharik approaches Zeina with sinister intentions:

[Zeina screaming, the servant in the darkness of the stage, the sound of her hasty footsteps, Zeina knocks at the door of the professor's room]

Zeina: Doctor! Professor!

[The door opens and doctor Bormenthal enters the stage]

Doctor Bormenthal: what has happened?

[Professors enters the stage too]

Zeina: That piece of garbage has come to my room. I mean Sharik. He had ill intentions.(9)

Yaghoobi has written the *Heart of a Dog* in twelve acts; and violating the novels chronological order, he opens the play with the climactic act. Since such a beginning draws the attention of the audience towards an event rather than a speech or an explanation, it can arouse the audience curiosity to know what will happen next.

After teasing the audience expectations in the first act, the past is revealed to the audience through flashbacks. Differently note, the play relates the audience to the time when doctor Filippovich brought the stray dog to his apartment. Very much like the first act, this act is also devoid of long descriptions and explanations.

From the beginning of the third act onwards, the play represents the novel's chronological progressive order: keeping the dog in the apartment, introducing the apartment residence, introducing Ashovander, doing surgery on the dog and the influence of the pituitary gland on him, report writing of doctor Poormental... Therefore, the play does not devise a narrative order; rather, it remains faithful to the order in which the incidents take place in the novel. However, this sequence is altered once again in the eleventh act, when the dramatic action goes backwards to the first act. It is after such a flashback, that the narrative structure resumes a dramatic form.

Therefore, it can be concluded that in *The Heart of a Dog* by Yaghoobi the basic order of the novel's plot remains the same, though some of the sequences are reversed. However, it should be noted that the play departs from the novel's narrative techniques to employ a different narrative method.

Now, it seems necessary to review the different forms of the adaptations. As Geoffrey Wagner argues in *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975):

There are three types of adaptations: transposition – a dramatic adaptation that follows a novel almost to the core; commentary – a type of adaptation through which the original text is deliberately altered in some respects; and analogy – a form of adaptation through which so many changes are done to the original text; and, therefore, little of the original text is left. (394)

According to these definitions, it can be concluded that Yaghoobi's *The Heart of a Dog* is both a transposition and a commentary. In fact, much of *The Heart of a Dog* by Yaghoobi is a transposition because it follows the original source—in the novel; however, there are some moments that the original text is altered in some aspects. Actually, in this adaptation, the narrative order and the techniques of the original text are altered. Besides, some of the seemingly unimportant characters have been eliminated. Furthermore, it seems that the play is indigenous to the socio-cultural context in which Yaghoobi lives—this being Iran's socio-cultural milieu.

The Heart of a Dog: A Dramatic Adaptation of Bulgakove's Novel

As mentioned earlier, Although Yaghoobi's *The Heart of a Dog* maintains its fidelity to the original text, in this play, the chronological order as well as the narrative structure of Bulgakov's novel have somewhat been changed. As a matter of fact, this apparent disjunction between the dramatic adaptation and the original source is for the fact that in the play the dramatic acts have swallowed up the novel's long descriptions. Differently put, from the very first act of the dramatic adaptation, these are the actions and precise explanations that are given prior attention to and not the long descriptions of the novel.

As it happens, it is a dramatic technique in most plays to present events and incidents to the audience through dramatic acts and not mere explanation or description. Furthermore, a play can also begin with the most climactic act. In his book *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, Lajos Egri analyses the mysteries of play construction and notes that "it is possible for a play to start with a conflict or struggle that will lead to a crisis point" (299). Yaghoobi had probably this in mind when he adapted Bulgakov's play for the stage. Indeed, the first act in Yaghoobi's dramatic adaptation is the climactic act that happens in the middle of the novel. This act begins with an event which simultaneously incorporate almost all the elements of the original text—notably the characters, the main issue, etc.

Hence, *The Heart of a Dog* by Yaghoobi is a transposition, which follows the original text; yet, in such a transposition the narrative progressive order of the novel has gone through such a change that the climactic act of the novel, which occurs in the middle of the novel, receives the utmost attention in the dramatic adaptation; and, becomes the first and the most important act. Now it seems worthy to review some of the approaches which often yield useful guides in the process of adaptation

Logocentrism

In "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences", a lecture presented in John Hopkins University in 1967, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), a French philosopher, argued that, in western philosophy, the concept of structure has a history as old as the history of 'episteme' (364). As he pointed it out, structure has deeply permeated in languages, constructed and governed them; and, therefore, for many years, the concept of structure has been the subject of discussion. However, in this lecture, Derrida claimed that almost all the discourses on this concept have failed to treat structures as free-floating or 'playing' sets of relationships. In fact, he remained defied to accept 'structuralist discourses of holding on to a "centre"'.

He introduces "center" as the most alien element in a structure, which comes from somewhere outside, "anchors the structure and does not play". Actually, he suggested a newer and a freer mode of structure--a mode in which all terms are truly subject to the openness and mutability (ibid). Therefore, it seems that this privileging of "centre" and this structurality of structure have limited the 'structural free-play' desired by Derrida.

In Bugakove's novel the centre seems to be at the end of the third or beginning of the fourth part—the time when the dog gets a surgery. This centre is preceded by the description of the stray dog, and prepares the ground for the following reports of the professor and his apartment. There is also an end to the story in which the dog which has hitherto been metamorphosed into a human becomes a dog again.

Nevertheless, in Yaghoobi's play, the decentralization of the novel's centre has created a newer and rather freer structure. In such a new structure the stray dog meets the professor and the apartment residents, and the following incidents related to this meeting take only two acts of the play—whereas in the novel the events that follow this meeting take about ninety acts. It is also during this meeting that characters are introduced and their parts revealed:

- Sharik: You're my papa, right?
- Professor: Yep!
- Sharik: So, you're my what?
- Professor: your papa
- Sharik: What is pituitary?
- Professor: A gland in the brain
- Sharik: in the brain
- Professor: Yep! (8)

Not only do these dialogues give information to the audience, and push the events forwards, but they also create such a dramatic act that arouses the audience curiosity to know what will happen next. In fact, this seems to be the decentralization of centre that has created an opportunity for Yaghoobi to have a free-play of dramatic acts and therefore the events.

Indeed, when the novel's centre is de-centered in the play, one of the most important changes that happens for the structure is an alteration in the chronological order, which is deemed by many as an important part of any structure. Actually, in the dramatic adaptation, the chronological order becomes something suitable for the stage. In the dramatic structure, for instance, the chronological order is in a way that the play ends where the novel begins.

Thus, it can be concluded that new readings and novel analyses of a text as well as innovative approaches to a text are possible when a centre is de-centered in the very text. In other words, this de-centralization of centers can be one of the ways leading to the rebirth of new ideas and reproduction or recreation of new texts out of the old ones.

In *Recent Theories of Narrative* (1986), Martin Wallace declares that the philosophical search for truth makes the link between literary fiction and narrative clearer. He goes on further to say that as the story is contrary to reality and truth, narrative is also against the chronological order, and depicts reality, whether in the past or future. He is also of the opinion that every explanation that raises our temporal surprise during its progress, and leads to our consciousness, only through thinking and rethinking of the past, is a story (142).

When a stray dog, with a scar in its side, walks in the streets and looks for a piece of food as well as a comfortable place to rest, and then this dog sees a man approaching him, with a sausage in his hand, intentional order of incidents in the development of a narrative becomes meaningful. In such a system, the stray dog, the professor and the characters that later enter the narrative, are chosen by the writer and nothing happens unintentionally or accidentally. Among all the other dogs, Sharik is picked for the professor. The second characteristic of this preconceived sequence is that such a sequence brings about the logical progress of the narrative. Sharik has been a stray dog for years; he has looked for food at the shops and restaurants; he is now injured and needs a little food and a shelter. On the other hand, there is a famous and experienced professor who has longed worked on pituitary surgery and body rejuvenation. He has prepared himself to do an important research. Indeed, he has decided to transplant the pituitary gland of a person to the brain of a dog. Now, this question may come to mind that how such a preconceived sequence of the intentional events is taken into account in the dramatic adaptation of the novel.

Yaghoobi's play begins with an act: Sharik is holding a gun, threatening the professor, dr. Bormenthal and Zeina; he then escapes after stealing some money. The second act narrates the time when the stray dog enters the professor's apartment. In fact, the second act is in accordance with the beginning of the novel, though the roaming of the stray dog has been eliminated.

So, it can be concluded that Yaghoobi's dramatic adaptation has two salient aspects. Firstly, even if the second act is assumed to be the beginning of the play, no traces of the descriptive language of the novel can be observed; in fact, this act begins with and draws upon the dramatic events of the first part of the novel. In other words, the second act features the time when the entrance of the stray dog to the professor's apartment partially disrupts the existing order. Secondly, the first act also starts with an event and not a description.

Regarding the chronological order of the novel, the incidents featured in the first act of the play should happen in the penultimate act. Yet, relying on the capacities of dramatic performance, Yaghoobi intentionally disrupts the time sequence of the novel and reveals a part of the future events to the audience to awaken their curiosity.

In the "Introduction to the Structural Study of Narratives" (1975), Barthes claims that levels of description in the narrative work are: "functions (bottom level), actions (middle level), and narrative (top level)"(242). In Barthes's view, it is the gradual integration of these levels that makes up the final text. In fact, he believes that functions or the elementary pieces of a work, such as a single descriptive word can acquire meaning only when they are in combination with other units, and are used to identify a character. The action or the character can also obtain meaning only when it makes up the narrative, which has its own codes.

The Relationship between Narrative Elements

Who is the writer or the donor of the narrative? In this regard, three rules have been developed. The first principle surmises that a person (in a purely psychological sense) gives birth to the narrative. This person is known to be the author, who is in endless dealing with art and creation of stories. Hence, a narrative, especially a novel, is simply created by an outsider.

But if we accept Barthes's view, and assume that a story has three levels of 'function', 'action' and 'narrative', and that 'functions' are the most important elements which develop a story, then we should accept that narratives can also be serviceable for plays. In fact, there is almost always a narrative beneath the actions of a play. Moreover, we can also conclude that the receivers or the audiences are themselves narrators, who produce their narratives. In fact, through their interaction with the actions, the receivers construct meanings for themselves, and later they make up their own narratives based on their understanding of the functions, actions and narrative. At this point, we are not dealing with the expressions of an 'outsider', who stands in a detached position and gives ideas about a text of any sort. Rather, the narrator him/herself becomes a part of the text and integrates with other levels—function, action, and narrative—to create the story. In fact, the vacated seat of the previous narrator is now occupied by a new narrator called the receiver. It seems a brief look at the narrative tie between Bulgakove's novel and Yaghoobi's play will illuminate this point.

In Bulgakove's novel, the narrative features a stray dog roaming in the streets: "Bow-wow, bow-wow, bow... wow..., look at me, I'm dying. This blizzard is mourning for me and I'm yawping with it"(1). In fact, the dog is the first person narrator that begins the novel. This narrator offers detailed and descriptive accounts of the streets, city, shops, people, and atmosphere. At the beginning of his narration, he even talks about the National Economic Council. However, it is only in a few scenes that the dog remains to be the first person narrator; it is actually in the fourth scene, after the introduction of the little girl, that the narrator is changed: "Come on dog, come on boy! Come on Sharik.... Why are you whining? Poor little thing! Has anyone bothered you?" After these dialogues, once more, there occurs a change in the point of view; this time story is told by the writer, who is the omniscient narrator of the story: "A raging blizzard was howling across the threshold and slapping the girl in the face. It raised the girl's skirt to her knee and revealed her fawn stocking and her dirty narrow strip underwear". After these scenes, the stray dog becomes the narrator again. In fact, in the novel, even the reports of dr. Bormenthal has been in the guise of a narrative: "December, 23. 8:30 in the morning. Professor PreoBrajenski did the first unprecedented surgery throughout Europe" (ibid). Thus, in the novel, a continuous change in the points of view or the perspectives, from which the events are focalized, is noticeable. The important point is that, even in such a narrative, the omniscient presence of the author is quite obvious. In fact, this can be inferred that the narrative in the novel is a story told by an outsider.

In the play, however, the narrative is developed right on the stage. In fact, relying on language, movements and stage frames, characters themselves become the narrators, not an outsider. Of course, some contradictory examples can be found in which the narrator of the drama is an outsider who is in a direct connection with the audiences. But in the play that we have chosen for our research, characters are the narrators. This is how the story begins:

—the first scene: pituitary!

[The screams of the maid, Zeina, in the dark; the sound of her rapid footsteps, rapid knocks at professor's door]

Zeina: Dr.! Professor!

[The door opens and dr. Bormenthal emerges]

Dr. Bormenthal: What's happened Zeina?

[Professor enters the stage too]

Zeina: that piece of garbage crept into my room, he had ill intentions. He ...

Professor: Is he still there?(9)

Therefore, it can be seen that the narrative is hidden beneath the dramatic acts and relationships among actors. In such a play, no one is in the centre to develop and control events. To coin it differently, not a special person outside the narrative, but all the participating character-narrators have the responsibility of moving the story forward.

Today, many authors seek to present a remarkable reversal of style in their writings. As a matter of fact, a number of authors try to abandon the descriptive narratives, which has hitherto been popular, for a narrative full of actions. With some exceptions, in Bulgakov's novel the approach is somewhat the same and these are virtually the interactions among characters as well as the characters' speech which develop the narrative. The interesting point is that in the dramatic adaptation, the parts of the novel which display more action and less description are paid more attention to; and, as a result, have been used and emphasized more. The dialogues between professor and Viazmakaya in the third act of the dramatic adaptation can be taken as apt instances.

The important point is that even if such an intertextuality among artistic or literary texts does not result in the creation of an artistic adaptation like *The Heart of a Dog*, it can at least prepare the ground for the literary or artistic effects that various texts can conceivably have on one another. It is probably not wrong to claim that novels and fictions have absorbed dramatic features or they have made appropriate use of dramatic devices and apparatuses. Perhaps, the new vogue for the utilization of dramatic actions in novels and fictions can be taken as an instance of the influence of intertextuality.

Narrative and Plot

It can be claimed that a play's succinctness and briefness are very much resulted from the scaled structure of the plot in the play. In other words, whenever a story is based on a dramatic narrative, briefness and accuracy become outstanding features. As a matter of fact, those narrative texts which deviate from the linear order of narration, present a more accurate scaling of plot than dramatic narratives. This is quite obvious in the dramatic adaptations of novels. In general, it can be said that in the dramatic adaptation of *The Heart of a Dog*, plot is as important as the characters. Yet, there are still some parts of the play in which characters, their behavior, actions and interactions look to sketch out some of the most important elements of drama and they take over the plot of the play. In fact, the importance of the characters in dramas and novels depends upon the significance of their roles.

The difference in the plot of a novel and the plot of a play lies in the fact that the readers of a novel know more about the past and the present of the characters. On the accounts of the descriptions and explanations of the novel, more precise information is given to the readers, and readers become more acquainted with the characters. On the other side of the coin, it may be assumed that, in a play, any distinctions between narrative and plot have been obliterated, and the plot is actually the incidents that carry the narrative forward. However, accentuating that in the dramatic world everything is presented in a nonlinear, non-homogeneous, non-continuous, and an incomplete form, Keir Elammade a distinction between the narrative and the plot of a play. To prove his assertion, Elam displayed how the order of a play storyline can be traced through the application of various methods. For example, "it is possible for a part of a narrative to be first displayed as a part of a real world and later narrated after an incident" (56). In Yaghoobi's *The Heart of a Dog*, for example, Sharik is first introduced as an stray dog. It is after some incidents that Sharik, as a participating character, introduces himself and relates his story.

Kralam also argues that in a play, the elements of plot are not narrated or explained in the story; rather, they are presented as a part of a real world (58). Yaghoobi's play is abundant with such elements. For example, the surgery of the dog is neither displayed nor narrated; readers only get hold of this news through the dialogues of Zeina and professor.

But, in *Theatre as Sign System: A Semiotic of Text and Performance* (1991), Elaine Aston and George Savona maintain that, in Bulgakov's novel, the process of the surgery is explained and narrated, with all its minutiae. In their opinion, although there seems to be a new vogue among writers and readers to write and read eventful novels, there are still some writers and readers who prefer traditional ways of narration in novels, which stick to descriptions and explanations. (27-30). Therefore, while in most novels, details are presented to the readers, plays rely more heavily on actions; and, as a result, succinctness.

Dramatic Literature and Succinctness

Certainly, Yaghoobi's play is a concise version of Bulgakov's novel. In fact, when a novel like *The Heart of a Dog*, which is about a hundred and eighteen pages, is intended to be adapted for the stage, many descriptions and definitions of the story are deleted. Indeed, this is only the synthesis of the eventful parts of the novel that will finally make up the dramatic narrative, which is only seventy five pages long. when a story is a dramatic narrative it becomes succinctness and concision become its outstanding features. Veltreski goes on further to say that the narrative texts which deviate from the storyline, display a less strong ordering of events than dramatic plays. As a matter of fact, this looseness in the ordering of incidents is quite apparent in the dramatic adaptation of novels.

It seems that in Bulgakov's novel characters are more important than plot. For instance, in the first part of the novel, before the dog is metamorphosed into a human, readers are given detailed psychological accounts of the stray dog; however, in the dramatic adaptation, a reversal occurs in the importance of characters and plot. Actually, in the dramatic adaptation, this is the plot which happens to be more significant than the characters. In the dramatic adaptation, characters are important in so far as their actions lubricate the plot. Differently put, what characters do really counts in the play not who they are. Therefore, in the dramatic adaptation of *The Heart of a Dog*, the detailed descriptions of the dog has been given attention to and the play starts from the time the dog is transformed into a human. In fact, in the adaptation process, there seems to be a constant effort to eliminate the details, present the events succinctly, provide more information in a shorter time, and to create the most action in every moment of the dramatic narrative. In such a process, various methods and techniques, which are commonly used in the creation of dramatic pieces, are employed. For instance, in the dramatic adaptation, whenever there is a need for the manifestation of the past, the dead past exercises a grip in the present dialogues of the characters. An example of such a representation of the past can be found in the part of the play that Sharik talks to professor about the incidents that have happened before the start of the play: "Sharik: Oh! Why don't you leave me alone? Don't spit, don't smoke, don't go there, don't do this, don't do that. It's like traffic regulations in the street. Why should I not call you papa? I didn't want you to do a surgery on me! ..."(12). In fact, through these dialogues it is revealed that a surgery has been done on the dog by the professor; that he has been transformed into a human; and that he has put the professor to a lot of trouble—as a human, he demands his rights.

However, it should be noted that not all the past events—which are explained in full details in the novel—can elbow their way into the dialogues of the characters of the play. For instance, a part of the novel gives a long detailed account of the feud that the cat and Sharik had in professor's office; this part of the novel also presents a thorough report of the argument between the professor and the people who came to see Sharik. In fact, all these incidents are totally eliminated in the play. As a matter of fact, such detailed descriptions can contribute to the development of the novel's narrative, but in a play, which needs to be concise; these details seem to be of no value.

Socio-Cultural Approach

The date on the manuscript of *The Heart of a Dog* shows that this novel was written between January and March in 1925. At that time, Bulgakov was known as a journalist and a writer of satirical fictions and essays. The dramatic adaptation of this novel was written by Yaghoobi in 2000 in Iran. Now, this question might be asked that 'what made this Iranian playwright to adopt this novel for stage?' What socio-cultural and political unities made this Russian novel suitable for Iranian society?

In fact, I do not want to give a socio-cultural and political analysis of the two texts. Rather, I just want to emphasize the fact that the socio-political and cultural milieu in which Bulgakov's novel was produced, was, to a great extent, identical with the socio-cultural and political context in which Yaghoobi's dramatic adaptation was created. Indeed, both texts were produced at a time when both countries were experiencing a paradigm shift in their sociopolitical as well as cultural system. Actually, these are such similarities that make the adaptation seem sound and reasonable.

In his study of sign system, Barthes argues that signifiers do not solely relate to a specific signified; rather, they relate to other signifiers and invite the readers to 'decode' meanings. In fact, in the novel and play not only do signifiers refer to the actual word or idea, but they also suggest ideas other than their main meanings. For instance, in the transitory contexts which both the novel and play have been produced, an ideal citizen can be regarded as a signifier with its own denotations and connotations. As a matter of fact, in both texts, Sharik is the character who talks about such a signifier.

In *The Deconstructive Value of Tolstoy Mentality* (2007), Ahmad Pakatchi maintains: "this is the context that rules over a text. A text cannot be free from its context; therefore, the interpretation of a text is possible only when the text is situated in its context. It is on account of such a relation that no final all-embracing interpretation of a text can ever be possible" (121). In fact, in Bulgakov's novel and Yaghoobi's play, characters can be conceived as social products. In these contexts, such characters who were created to be ideal citizens, turned out to be creatures whose spirit and morality have been put to shame: "Professor: ... I wanted to be in God's shoes. I wanted to say: look! I can also create humanity. Now I understand it was nothing but an illusion". It should be noted that the characteristics Sharik displays in *The Heart of a Dog* as a novel is to some extent different from the characteristics Sharik puts on view in *The Heart of a Dog* as a play. Even such a difference is owing to the difference that exists between the two socio-political and cultural contexts in which the texts were produced. The so called ideal person created by the professor in the outbreak of Russian Revolution is more like a destructor. Sharik in Yaghoobi's play, however, acts like most of the other audience living in the same milieu. Sharik, like most of the audience, is a defeated hero who had to submit to determinism. Now, He wants to take revenge; he desires to disparage those who have belittled him. He wants to make their creators transform him into a dog again:

Sharik: now bark

Dr. Bormenthal: I don't know how to bark. Bark or you will die. One, two, three [Bark Bormenthal]. Now, crawl at my heels and bark. Bark.(49)

As mentioned earlier, in a play, plot is more important than characters. In other words, although in the dramatic adaptation Sharik has been shown as a character that is partially different from Sharik in the novel, the narrative remains similar. In fact, these characters acquire meaning in their contexts. Since the contexts of the play and the novel are more or less the same, the incidents or the plot remains unchanged and thus we witness analogous narratives.

Conclusion

The de-centralization of the novel's centre—which regarded to be the organizer of the novel's narrative—resulted in the creation of the play with a new structure. It is in such a new structure that the novel's linear sequence of events is distorted.

In the dramatic adaptation, the passage of time is shown in a different way. In fact, unlike the novel that reveals the passage of time in a chronological order and through the pages, the dramatic adaptation takes advantage of the tools on the stage and shows the transition of time via fading in and out the light. While the novel is based on description, the dramatic adaptation relies more on actions, and, as a result, employs a different language. In fact, the parts of the novel incorporating the most acts are selected for the dramatic adaptation. Since, in the dramatic adaptation, narrative is mostly hidden beneath and revealed through the interaction between characters, there is no need for extra explanations or descriptions. Actually, in the dramatic adaptation, these are the participating character-narrators who have taken the place of the author and have diminished his/her presence. The play's succinctness is in part due to the absence of an author, an outsider who is said to have omniscient power on narrative and the events happening in it.

A novel or fiction can be told by the variety of narratives and through different points of view. By way of contrast, in the dramatic adaptation, these are the characters and their interactions that carry the narrative forward; and, therefore, there is no change in the point of view.

The readers of a novel read the words and descriptions the writer has used, and form a mental image of the characters, atmosphere and events. In this respect, the imagination of the audiences of the play less involved since they almost do not need to envisage the characters and events.

One of the ordinary features of a novel is that it creates the opportunity for the writer to enter into the minds of characters and reveal the hidden layers of their thought. This is, in fact, not the case in a dramatic adaptation. In a novel, clear details about characters' behavior and ideas allow characters to be perceived as important as the plot or even more important than that.

The associative content of the novel and dramatic adaptation can be a guide for the exploration of the similar socio-political and cultural milieus in which both texts were created. It was perhaps such a resemblance that stimulated the playwright to create a dramatic adaptation of the novel.

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