

The Non-hero of Postmodern Drama (i.e. absurd)

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Abstract: The non-hero is the main person in new novel or drama and his/her personality is very different from the characteristics we used to attribute to main character or traditional hero in a classical literature. In addition, we shouldn't make mistake between the opponent character, who was stand against the hero in classical dramas, and the non- hero. Non- hero appears only in postmodern and absurdist dramas. Instead of having qualities such as magnanimity, power, dignity, and heroic characteristics, he is an incompetent, abject, disgraceful and dishonest person. This non-hero perhaps is similar much to Nietzsche's Superman or a man who is thrown to a corner of universe introduced by Heidegger.

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The non-hero is the main person in new novel or drama and his/her personality is very different from the characteristics we used to attribute to main character or traditional hero in a classical literature work. In addition, we shouldn't make mistake between the opponent character, who was stand against the hero in classical dramas, and the non- hero. Non- hero appears only in postmodern and absurd dramas.

Instead of having qualities such as magnanimity, power, dignity, and heroic characteristics, he is an incompetent, abject, disgraceful and dishonest person.

The history of presence of such person in narrative works goes back to the Pikarsk's novel in 16th century. In addition, the heroine of Moll Flanders novel written by Defoe (1998) was a thief and prostitute. However, the term anti-hero is usually used to refer to the works written in *depression era* caused by World War II: works that are begin with *Hurry On Down*, written by John Winn, 1953, and *The Lucky Jim*, written by Kings Lee Amiss, 1954 (Abraham, 1981). Other outstanding samples of anti-heroes are *Usarine*, in *Catch-22*, by Joseph Heller (2004); *Hamberty Lambert*, in *Lolita*, by Vladimir Nabokov(2010); and *Tiron Eslethrep*, in *Gravity's Rainbow*, by, Thomas Pynchon (1995).

Anti-hero can be seen especially in tragic dramas in which the main character used to enjoy the high rank, honor and bravery. Exaggerated samples of anti-heroes are the characters of Samuel Beckett's books (1997) who are related to a world evacuated of any trust, values, and even meaning – Vladimir and Estragon, the clowns in *Waiting for Godot* in 1925, or Hamm, a blind and maim elderly who is the main character at the end of the play (Beckett, 1997).

Beranzhe in *The Rhinoceros* of Ionesco perhaps is the best sample of anti-hero. Beranzhe is always

drunkard; not dressing tidily; has not his face shaved; and isn't punctual in his job, so all (i.e. the sovereignty of community) reprehend him. He doesn't give up facing the sovereignty of community and its 'slavery morality', and this is the sign of his super manly manner. He doesn't fit the frame, this is what makes him different. All including John, who once maintained his guidance, become beasts but he doesn't. Branzhe and John are friends to each other, however, John is among those who become animal in the beginning but Branzhe remains a human being till the very end. He doesn't give up in confrontation with anything and anybody (Ionesco, 2008).

What causes people to be the stuff that ruling cast wants, under the ideological pressure, is the social force. Every one who is affected by this force is alienated from his humanity. Superman is an anti-hero (Beranzhe) who refuses to give up facing the sovereignty of community. He is sentenced to solitude in one way and has to be a human being in another. In the community in which all have become stuff and are alienated with their humanity Beranzhe remains a human being.

In *The Rhinoceros*, Beranzhe is not the winner of *staying a human game* but, is the loser of *becoming an animal race*. This is the point that makes the main difference between the hero in the theater and the non-hero or anti-hero in postmodern drama. Beranzhe is not a follower of the path of virtue, and what makes him a non-hero is his tendency to not being among people of virtue. Our hero here is not seeking the virtue because he is not after any truth. He doesn't believe in any particular ideology or limited system and doesn't take step in the path of any ideal.

Among the mass of humankind, who are not his type any more, Beranzhe's problem is that he is not able to be in harmony with current order. He doesn't

have any lofty thought. He can't be in line with what others call it lofty thoughts. His difference is that the powerful bureaucracy that defines the office worker-citizen has failed to bring him in the social cadre, even though Beranzhe makes no effort against it. This issue impedes him from being the same as others despite of the similar-making community. Beranzhe is the most solitary.

In each period of history of human civilization a wide spread and totalitarian ideology rules on the human community and there is one or more at the top of such hierarchy. The ruling ideology imposes the perception to Beranzhe that makes him consider himself as an unfavorable citizen and a sociopathic, just because he can't fit the deterministic clichés. In the other hand, those who sacrifice their personality and individuality are considered as merited ones. This difficulty extends to the point that Beranzhe is uneasy with its failure to become a rhinoceros. The decline of values reaches to the point where the humanity of humankind goes under question and what define the morality, values, principles, and origins are material conditions. Humans are considered as cattle and they're judged upon based on their obedience: the more obedience sheep is the more valuable one. In this condition, a superman appears and refuses to obey.

Nietzsche's superman is not a holy entity. The holy person believes in holy principles while Nietzsche's superman celebrates the death of God, and is not commitment to any holy existence. In his book, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes "But now God is dead. ... This is MY morning, MY day begins: ARISE NOW, ARISE, YOU GREAT NOONTIDES! ... God is dead!" (Nietzsche, 1961).

Nietzsche wants the superman for confrontation with the religious morality, which he calls it slavery morality. Considering that, now how we can attribute the holy qualifications to the Nietzsche's superman? The superman moves toward earth to fight the holiness of the heaven: "I conjure you, my brethren, REMAIN TRUE TO THE EARTH, and believe not those who speak to you of superearthly hops!" (Nietzsche, 1961). moreover, he believes that all human sufferings are for human beings have turned their faces from their natural habitat and have turned to the heaven, referring all values to the heaven and all devils to the earth. This disappearing of values can be seen best in the *The Homecoming* written by Pinter (Pinter, 1994).

The Homecoming is the story of a family who has converted the normal family relationships to the sexual ones. The family members enjoy freedom of having group sexual relationships and they go beyond all taboos. There's an obvious sexual relationship between the daughter-in-law and her brother in law, father in law, the uncle of her husband and other

family members, and this freedom becomes more obvious and less shameful from a generation to the next till contemporary to the time of the story it is not shameful at all. As one can see, there's no behavior in part of the daughter in law and her husband which can be considered as their dissatisfaction. These two even offer a solution wherever there's a problem.

This drama could be analysis regarding the Nietzsche's opinions; female here is stuff of enjoyment and group lechery; religion is the definite absent in this harlotry market; and morality is vanished in favor of earthy pleasures. People have a place of departure and a destination both as worthy as their beds of lechery. The late members, who are normally glorified and who bring honor to their offspring, here are remembered together with their incestuous unions. There's nothing remains from people's believes: there's just their sex and its satisfaction.

The silence of husband itself also shows that he too is not commitment to any religious and morality values. It must come to consideration that in such situation, where all values are collapsed and relativity, pluralism and nihilism are destroying all existence believes, even if a hero could be appear he would have his face toward nowhere and would find no safe place to go: just like the non-heroes of *The Homecoming* to whom all social, moral, religious and family values have lost their color and they are just thinking about their sexual satisfaction. Their demands are not the spiritual but totally the earthy ones. They aren't after the meta-earthly happiness and are just seeking the earthy pleasure. It seems like the characters playing role in *The Homecoming* are evacuated of any ethics and, without considering family relationship, they see the female as an earthy gift and the avoidance of having sex with her as ingratitude.

Theater emerges in a society which has chosen the philosophy as its epistemology and the democracy as its ruling system, and has taken the human as the means to know the cosmos (refers to ancient Greece and Athens democracy, which is the birthplace of theater). In modern era, with Kant and Descartes' opinions, human being becomes the "subject" (i.e. the subject of the knowledge) and takes the position of God: both the modern and the classic human are the measure of everything. The modern man has managed to take over the nature and the world practically, and he is able to bring the theoretical superiority of classic man into the practice. The classic and the modern theater is the story of this "superiority" and "superior".

However, in terms of modern man cognizance, as Freud says, is to some extent depends on sexual games and implications, and in the other hand, his judgments are also subordinated to that factor. Therefore, his achievements, in their best state, could

eventually be the result of elevating the sexual desire. Therefore, philosophy and democracy give up their abstract and unachievable states and become subordinate to sexual desire. The humanity of such human also becomes subordinate to sexual desire. So ultimately, all three forming feet of theater (i.e. main person, philosophy, and democracy) become subordinate to sexual or immoral desire.

Theater wouldn't come to exist at the absence of the wise, aware, and lofty man, who affects the world relations. Theater is the story of a truth-seeking human being (Oedipus); a revenger one (Medea); a protector of purity and goodness (Hamlet); or is at least the narration of an ambitious Human being (Macbeth); or a tyrant one (Othello). In modern conditions, human beings are unaware, alienated from themselves as well as others, and have lost their identities.

The truth-seeking man, who used to know that truth as the real one, no longer is in existence, neither in the community nor in drama. So, the theater, which is the place for introducing and offering the hero as a superior man or as a symbol of the human superiority, in the absence of the superman, who is the base and the essential reason for theater, becomes absurd and goes toward anti-theater. Moreover, the hero who has lost his previous ideals and values and has no backup becomes a non-hero.

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