

FAKE MEMOIRS AND THEIR PROXIMITY TO LIFE WRITING

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Abstract. The paper deals with the genres of self-writing, fake memoirs, differences and similarities between them. Though the role of memoir genre has been discussed in world and Azerbaijani literature, the touch to the sphere of fake memoirs was slight and had been under the shadow of memoir genre. Besides, the analyse is given on the base of Azerbaijany memoir work “Xatirələrim” (My memories) and American literary work “Memoirs of a Geisha”.

Keywords: Fake memoirs, self-writing, proximity.

SAXTA MEMUARLAR VƏ ONLARIN HƏYATTƏSVİRETİMƏ PROSESİ İLƏ ƏLAQƏSİ

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Xülasə. Məqalədə özünütəsvir janrları, saxta xatirələr və onlar arasındakı fərqlər və oxşarlıqlar təhlil olunur. Xatirə janrının rolu dünya və Azərbaycan ədəbiyyatında müzakirə olunsa da, saxta xatirələr sahəsinə tədqiqatlar kifayət qədər deyil və adətən memuar janrının kölgəsində qalır. Məqalədə “Xatirələrim” Azərbaycanın memuar əsəri və “Qeyşanın xatirələri” Amerika ədəbi əsəri əsasında müqayisəli təhlil verilmişdir.

Açar sözlər: saxta memurlar, özünütəsvir, yaxınlıq.

ПОДДЕЛЬНЫЕ МЕМУАРЫ И ИХ БЛИЗОСТЬ К ЖИЗНЕОПИСАНИЮ

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Резюме. В статье рассматриваются жанры самописания, фальшивые мемуары, различия и сходства между ними. Хотя роль мемуарного жанра обсуждалась в мировой и азербайджанской литературе, прикосновение к сфере фальшивых мемуаров было незначительным и находилось в тени мемуарного жанра. Кроме того, анализ дается на основе азербайджанского мемуарного сочинения «Хатирələrim» (Мои воспоминания) и американского литературного произведения «Мемуары гейши».

Ключевые слова: поддельные мемуары, самописание, близость.

1. Introduction

In the world of literature life writing process deals with the genres like biography, auobiography and memoir. Though each of these genres are alike, all of them represent typical features of self writing. One of the genres which deals with the person's life and written by the self is a memoir. World literature has seen many authors of literary and non-literary sphere where people just revealed their truth, hidden feelings and life. And many people approached to self-writing as a type of confession. Memoirs are notes or memories written by a person or another person. Many works begin with the youth of the author, and then suddenly turn into old age. Some memoirs begin with the author's youth, and then pass through his childhood without warning. The value and significance of the author is determined not by the objective chronology of the stories, but by their position in the inner

world, subjective psychological time. The genres are not based on objective facts and records, and are often based on personal imagination. The author of the memoirs knows that subjective, in a sense, impartial representations are impossible and therefore do not try to be objective. The author describes the things and events not objectively and evaluates them in accordance with their own point of view and position. From this approach, individual interpretation and subjective attitude are positive, not negative, and the reader understands the moral and psychological nature of the story presented in the work. Therefore, sincerity becomes an integral part of memoirs.

A biography is a detailed description of human life. This genre is based not only on facts such as education, work, kinship and death, but also on the personal experience of life events. Unlike autobiography, a biography tells the story of a person's life. In general, this genre is considered the first source of sociological information that allows us to determine the psychological type of personality in history, national and social conditions. Biography connects the history of mankind with social reality, culture and lifestyle.

An autobiography is an expanded definition of a person's life written by the author himself. Unlike memories, autobiography focuses on the history of the individual, not on the environment. Works in this genre are taken account from its recorded time of the author. In addition to biography, autobiography can be attributed to the memory of the writer. Such work is naturally subjective. Some sociologists note that an autobiography allows the author to recreate a story. Memoirs are devoted to the feelings and emotions of human life, whereas autobiography is devoted to the life and time of a poet or writer.

2. Proximity of “Xatirələrım” to “Memoirs of a Geisha”

“Xatirələrım” (My memories) is a work which can be considered to be a memory book dedicated to the author's husband Jalil Mammadguluzade was written by Hamida Javanshir. The memoir tells us the biography of the writer's father Ahmad Javanshir and her memories on her spouse. The events happened in the work are the truth of Hamida Javanshir's life and Azerbaijani society of that period. At the same time “Xatirələrım” may be taken account as a precious source of information that a reader can get about. In her memoirs, based on her own diary notes, Hamida khanum describes not only the events of that time, but also the reader's interest in the usual and unusual aspects of her life. According to Abbas Zamanov, “one of the great things in Hamida Mammadguluzade's memoirs is that she didn't write these memoirs, based solely on her own memoirs, but based on her diaries” [3]. The author creates an atmosphere in a book that demonstrates the human qualities that are manifested in the relationship between her and her husband Mirza Jalil. As already mentioned, in the literature of Azerbaijan, a hero is the author himself, which cannot be said about memoir of H. Mammadguluzade, where the hero is Jalil Mammadguluzade. The work portrays us the author's deep respect and love, as a native person who shares her fate with Jalil

Mammadguluzade. Main part of “Xatirələrım” deals with Jalil Mammadguluzade and his work in the magazine “Molla Nasreddin”. The importance of the magazine to the great thinker is evident from the following section: “Editor Mirza Jalil Mammadguluzade addressed the chairman of the Tbilisi Publishing Committee - V.Kolobov and asked the governor-general of Tbilisi for permission to reprint the magazine “Molla Nasreddin” and undertook to be cautious in political matters in front of His Majesty” [9, p.95]. Jalil Mammadguluzadeh was a key figure in the life of the genius writer, as he is the main center of the memoir. Thus, it is possible to manifest the centralized subject of Hamida khanum (the book) and J. Mammadguluzade (life).

Fake memoirs take its resources from memoirs, biographies and autobiographies; fake memoirs shape a class of literary forgery in which a wholly or partially fabricated autobiography, memoir or journal of an individual is introduced as fact. In some occasions, the implicated author of the work is also a fabrication like Arthur Golden’s “Memoirs of a Geisha” which became a bestseller and its film adaption gained world recognition. The story in the above mentioned book is told from the first person which makes the readers get acquainted with the main heroine’s memories. Though the word “memoir” is used in its title, the book itself is a historical fiction and can be related to the group of fake memoirs. The novel, published in 1997 told in first person perspective, tells the story of a fictional geisha working in Kyoto, Japan, before, during and after World War II and ends with her being relocated to New York City.

Memoirs of a Geisha, like much popular fiction, claimed some factual foundation to give it reliance. After studying about her life as a geisha by interviewing her, the author rejected an early fictional account of a geisha he had written in the third person before, and instead of it he borrowed heavily, but altering in unflattering ways, facts from Iwasaki’s true story. “He never could have created, solely from his imagination or from second-hand information, the story he eventually wrote. Golden did credit Iwasaki as indispensable to his ability to tell the story of geisha. Golden’s fictionalized memoir and the facts of Iwasaki’s life that influenced it were symbiotically related. Just as Golden’s fiction relied on some factual information, the true facts of geisha life (Iwasaki’s life) as surviving cultural truth depended on Golden’s fictionalizing technique. This creates a binary between fiction and fact” [8, p.2].

The importance of the author's relationship with various social institutions (family, religion, gender, etc.) is important in the memoir writing process. This concept mainly explores the concepts of "homeland", "family", "home", "religion" and "gender" from semantic concepts leading to the creativity of the writer. In general, the attitude of writers to such concepts in the genre of memoirs plays a crucial role in creating an important text, and has a key role in understanding the nature and poetic typology of memoir works. This feature can also be considered a typical peculiarity of memoir genre in general, and also plays an important part in the travel diaries of many writers in the Azerbaijani memory works. In the relevant sections of the thesis the symbolic meanings of the concept of “homeland”, "home",

"family", as well as the concept of figurative time, the different stages of the hero's life in writers' works, his / her childhood and adulthood, and the expression of deep personalities appear. The rhythm of the artistic time, which corresponds to the psychological experiences of the characters, the flow of events, and the pace of development, is also explored as factors that create the imaginative world of the text. In each line that Hamida khnaum presented in her book there was a feeling of love and deep respect to Azerbaijan. Though the writer was a quite a modern woman who broaden her world outlook and education abroad, it will not be right to deny the importance of traditions and mentality which were reflected in the work. "She opens there the first female school, a textile workshop, and the irrigation of land on a large area with the excavation at her own expense. It was a vital gift from Mrs. Hamida to her fellow countrymen living in difficult conditions. Watering the untreated lands has made the villagers smile and their labor productivity rose in a larger scale" [4, p.7].

"Memoirs of a Geisha" – written by American writer but told by fictional person – Sayuri, give us a wide look to Japan and old traditions of the eastern country. The same aspects like home, tradition and mentality surrounds in a word "geisha". Golden's option was a fishing village, where he wanted to mention it as the setting for "Sayuri's" childhood and it was an ideal Orientalist adaptation, playing off the idea of "fish" and the "fishy smell" as stereotypical of Japanese. The author described "Sayuri's" family as poor, but they could afford a doctor to make house calls.

Geisha – which foundation was set up in old Japan is a beautiful and peculiar custom of Japanese culture. "Like many other professionals in Japan, geisha teach their skills to the younger generation, who learn from observing rather than from reading textbooks. These behaviors and skills may appear peculiar to Westerners though they are part of geisha's social identity. Geisha feel power, pride, and dignity in their performances, though they may appear terribly submissive to the eyes of the West" [8, p.5].

3. Similarities and differences between memoirs and fake memoirs

The proximity of fake memoirs and memoirs is in their shown remembrance and flashbacks. As it is known, memories are usually written when the author already lived that period and is in his or her senility and does some flashbacks to her youth. The same point is seen in H.Javanshir's life story. She began to record her lifetime, youth with Mirza Jalil, and some historical and political occasions happened during the reign of the USSR in 1930s when she was in her 50s: "I, Hamida khanum Javanshir-Mammadguluzade wrote a biography based on the words of my late father, Ahmed bekh" [9, p.35]. The same kind of remembrance was made by fictional heroine Sayuri in a fake memoir "Memoirs of a Geisha". Sayuri – a girl who was destined to be a geisha, had an interesting life and like other character of literary work she tells her story when she is old enough: "Suppose that you and I were sitting in a quiet room overlooking a garden, chatting and sipping at our cups of green tea while we

talked about something that happened a long while ago, and I said to you, “That afternoon when I met so-and-so was the very best afternoon of my life, and also the very worst afternoon.” I expect you might put down your tea cup and say” [7, p.1]. Amenably, it is noticed from the examples, the indicator of the works being written in their old ages is the concrete words like “**wrote**” in Azerbaijani work and “**a long while ago**” in American work. These two expressions cause to actualize events happened in their youth.

Memoir works give the reader to analyze the period of the story and as the story is based on true facts of the writer, it is impossible to notice chronological stream of time. The mentioned case is observed in “*Xatirələrım*”, the author describe the events in a chaotic way with some years of interval: “When Mirza Jalil arrived in Moscow, he brought a “Health Book” for family treatment. Above the book, there was written: “Gift to Hamida khanum, who has been treating villagers all her life. Moscow. October 22, 1924” [9, p.137]. On the same page events happened in 1910 are given: “In the summer of 1910 we lived in Khankendi, now Stepanakert in the house of Markar Shikhiyev. Mirza Jalil came with his daughter Munavar” [9, p.137]. The statements are pointer that occasions with 14 years of pause are true for memoir genre. The chronological order of Sayuri’s life is accurate and consistent and this fact makes us see that the work is a fake memoir: “During the spring of 1934, after I’d been in training for more than two eleven yeas, Hatsumomo and Mother decided that the time had come for I/Pumpkin to make her debut as an apprentice geisha” [7, p.117]. The next pages describe the girls preparation for debut: “I had no idea where we were going, but I was thrilled at the thought of being seen on the street with Mameha. The maid had put out a pair of lacquered zori for me, in a oft gray.” [7, p.119] The chronological order of events is precise and time aspect is orderly in the work. Since, a real person can not remember own life so sistematically to the least details, seizes it to be a point of memoirs, which is clearly seen in Hamida khanum’s work.

The other relation between two sphere is the point of author’s participation in the works. Though H.Javanshir’s book is dedicated to Mirza Jalil and he is the main hero of the memoir, the presence of Hamida khanum is obviously felt. For deep analysis a part where Mirza Jalil is described can be shown: “According to some sources Mirza Jalil was born approximately in 1865-66. Mirza Jalil’s grandfather moved from Khoy of Persia to Nakchivan in the 40s of last century. As Mirza Jalil’s father Mashadi Mohammed was one of the youngest children he also came from Persia” [9, p.81]. And this is the part where H. Javanshir’s participation is felt: “Mirza Jalil’s friend Mr. Faik was a very vivid and sociable man. By the way, I must mention that in our last meeting Mr. Faik had talked about his attendance in an appointment and his speech on behalf of Muslim commune in Nakhlovka.” [9, p.100]. As it is seen in the unit, the author doesnot describe herself, but the reader easily foresees her presence. If we pay attention to the statements in the book of “*Memoirs of a Geisha*”, Sayuri’s way of introducing herself will be conceived: “ I don’t much like thinking of myself as a cup of tea made in a bucket, but I suppose in a way it must be true. After all, I

did grow up in Yoriado, and no one would suggest it's a glamorous spot. Hardly anyone ever visits it. As for the people who lives there, they never have occasions to leave. You are probably wondering how I came to leave it myself. That's where my story begins" [1, p.2]. Scenes from both books show us the resemblance of the works of different genres.

Books of unlike scopes reveal the another connection which coordinates them: the events in fake memoirs and memoirs happen either on the eve or after the historical or political change in the country, it is possible that occasions can take place during that alteration, too. Therefore, the same matter of fact is in the culmination of passages in both works. "Xatirələrım" (My memories) give detailed inscriptions of changings during the formation of the USSR in Azerbaijan: "On June 14, Tuesday, we moved to our new flat at last. There was nothing besides bed, table, chairs, and stools made of heap plank. We went to People's Commissariat together with Mirza Jalil. They suggested us to prepare a list of necessary things" [9, p.291]. In the part given above the organization of People's Commissariat formed by the USSR is bestowed. The historical event shown in a "Memoirs of a Geisha" is the World War II: "The war ended for us in August of 1946. Most anyone who lived in Japan during this time will tell you that it was the very bleakest moment in a long night of darkness. Our country wasn't simply defeated. It was destroyed and I don't mean by all the bombs, as horrible as those were. When your country has lost the war and an invading army pours in, you feel as though you yourself have been led to the execution ground to kneel, hands bound, and wait for the sword to fall" [1, p.272]. Though the works are the product of one's memory and one's fiction, the fact of truth lay on the base of the books make them seem similar. And the truth that cover them is in the change of the environment that happened in the history.

Conclusion. As a result, it is clear that the genre of memoirs is a subjectively written based on the memory of the writer about his or her feelings or feelings towards the writer. Unlike memoirs, biography take account human life and it is illuminated by more and more facts. Autobiography focuses on writing his or her own life in sequence. Fake memoirs are much close to memoirs, as the second mentioned genre is welded from recollection of a person. Subjective opinion guides memoir and fake memoir works, where the writer can easily improvise.

In general, "Xatirələrım" (My memories) by Hamida Mammadguluzade and "Memoirs of a Geisha" by Arthur Golden are interesting to research as their common denominator is the memory. Both authors tried to reveal the reality of the society of that period. It is not a point of discussion that one of the work is a fake memoir, the main item is, it is not as complicated as the memoir genre itself. Though both works are quite different in origin, religion and mentality of the country, Azerbaijan and Japan are the stars of Asia and some traditional aspects are identical. What about the verity of the events happened in the books, the justice and conventional items related to each country make the reader realize the

works being a product of one's fantasy and life. Social reality like Azerbaijani woman and a behavior towards her in the period of formation of the USSR and a Japanese woman and her fate as a geisha during the World War II were pretty different from the modern woman of contemporary corporation. The writers did not just expose the accuracy of the society, but also paid attention to one of the main issues of the general public.

Consequently, "Fake Memoirs and Their Proximity to Life Writing" is important from the unprecedented epistemological analysis of literature and is based on the essence and significance of the works of Hamida Mammadguluzade and Arthur Golden.

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