



Section 5. Philology and linguistic

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF JALIL MAMMADGULUZADEH'S SATIRICAL FEUILLETON "SHIR AND KHURSHID" AND ANTON CHEKHOV'S SHORT STORY "ANNA ON THE NECK"

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Abstract

This article presents a comparative analysis of the short story "Anna on the Neck" by the prominent 19th-century Russian writer Anton Pavlovich Chekhov and the feuilleton "Shir and Khurshid", which was written on the basis of Chekhov's story and published in the satirical magazine *Zanbur* under the pseudonym "Hamshari". One of the major factors influencing the emergence and development of Azerbaijani satirical press and literature in the early 20th century was the Russian satirical press and literary tradition. Similar to other satirical magazines of the period, *Zanbur* also featured works created under the influence of Russian literature. The first noteworthy aspect of the comparison between "Shir and Khurshid" and Chekhov's "Anna on the Neck" is the similarity in their titles. Although both works expose the hypocrisy of tsarist officials, their plotlines and compositional structure differ considerably. This article analyzes the narrative structure and genre features of the two works within a comparative framework.

Keywords: *Shir and Khurshid, satirical press, feuilleton, Chekhov, Anna on the Neck, short story*

Introduction

One of the factors influencing the emergence and development of the Azerbaijani satirical press at the beginning of the 20th century was the Russian satirical press and literature. Similar to other satirical periodicals, the satirical magazine *Zanbur* also featured works written under the influence of

Russian literature. The feuilleton "Shir and Khurshid" published in the magazine's second issue on March 20, 1909, and the third issue on March 27, 1909, was written based on the story "Anna on the Neck" by the prominent 19th-century Russian writer Anton Pavlovich Chekhov. However, at the bottom of the feuilleton's title, it was mistakenly in-

licated that the work was written as a nazira to Chekhov's story.

The Difference Between Nazira and Quotation in Literature

As is known, a nazira is a poetic work created under the influence of another poet's text. Since the feuilleton "Shir and Khurshid" is not a poetic work, it would be more accurate to describe it as a quotation rather than a nazira. Academician Isa Habibbeyli, in his article "Quotation from Nizami Ganjavi," explains the essence of the concept of quotation as follows: "A large number of works have been written in Azerbaijani literature using this method, which is referred to as quotation in literary theory. Quotation is a broad concept, and it involves not only replacing words in a literary text, but also creating a new work based on the theme and plot of another author's work, a motif of oral folk literature, or even a particular point of the plot" (Habibbeyli, 2021, p. 2).

The Importance of Choosing Titles of Literary Works Correctly

When we compare the feuilleton "Shir and Khurshid", published under the pseudonym "Hamshari", and Chekhov's story "Anna on the Neck", the first detail that stands out is the similarity of their titles. It becomes evident that the subject matter of both works is related to various orders and badges. The importance of selecting an appropriate title for a literary work is discussed in the book *Fundamentals of Literary Studies*, co-authored by Mir Jalal Pashayev and Panah Khalilov: "Regardless of the work, the first thing the reader encounters and comes face to face with is the title. Before becoming acquainted with the content of the work, the reader becomes familiar with the title, the name of the work. The name of the work is as meaningful, important and significant as the name of a person. A writer does not choose a name for his work by chance. The title is usually related to the content, idea, and internal relationships of the work. The title is often taken from the theme of the work" (Pashayev & Khalilov, 1988, p. 72).

Comparative Analysis of the Themes and Plots

In Chekhov's story "Anna on the Neck", the narrative unfolds against the background

of the fate of the young and beautiful Anna, who is forced to marry an unattractive and much older tsarist official due to financial difficulties. Anna, who has just turned eighteen, is described as a beautiful girl. Her father, a teacher of drawing and calligraphy at the gymnasium, begins drinking after the death of his wife, and Anna, left in hardship together with her brothers, has no choice but to marry Modest Alexeitch. While Anna's intention is to escape financial distress, Modest Alexeitch has only one aim: to obtain the Anna of the Second Degree. By the end of the story, Modest Alexeitch's pursuit of this goal—even at the expense of his honour and dignity—provides the reader with a clear understanding of his character and spiritual emptiness.

In the feuilleton "Shir and Khurshid", the plot begins with the arrival of an Iranian official named Rahatulhulghum at the one of the city's hotels, which is supervised by a tsarist official, Nikolai Vladimirovich, who is obsessed with insignia and medals. Upon hearing this news, Nikolai Vladimirovich begins to think about obtaining the Order of the Lion and Sun, (Order of the Lion and Sun (Shir-o-Khorshid) is one of the main emblems of Iran (Persia), and was an element in Iran's national flag until the 1979 revolution and is still commonly used by nationalists and opposition groups of the Islamic Republic government) which he had long desired: "The point was that Mr. Nikolai Vladimirovich had a great fondness for various awards and medals, and it had long crossed his mind that it would be great if he could obtain an Iranian award. Nikolai Vladimirovich knew this well: awards from Eastern countries could be obtained for nothing. Not by giving money to hospitals, hospices, or charitable organizations, but only when he had the opportunity, and besides, money was not given in exchange for Iranian awards like other countries, but everyone was given for free" (Hamshari, 1909, p. 4).

In this feuilleton, Russia's attitude toward Iran is also evident. When Nikolai Vladimirovich has lunch with Rahatulhulghum, his words reveal Russia's view of Iran. His statements illustrate Russia's perception of Iran as a source of raw materials at that time: "Drink to the progress of Iran, we love the Iranians! Although our sects are different, the purpose

and inclination of both sides are the same. Your trade means our trade... To slowly take you into our hands... To protect you from the evil eye of others, in this way..." (Hamshari, 1909, p. 3).

During a walk around the city after lunch, Nikolai Vladimirovich gets a promise from the Iranian that he will give him his Lion and Sun order. At the end of the feuilleton, it becomes clear that the badge that Nikolai Vladimirovich worked hard to obtain was not so important in the eyes of others: "A year and four months after this incident, the weather was very cold. It was a winter day, with snow on one side and a strong wind blowing on the other; the frost was piercing the eyes. Nikolai Vladimirovich unbuttoned his coat, stood up straight, and walked around the city, and he was very upset that no one paid attention to his Lion and Sun badge and congratulated him" (Hamshari, 1909, p. 6).

The theme of both works is dedicated to exposing the hypocritical tsarist officials. The story "Anna on the Neck" also reflects various problems of social life: the unfortunate fates of Anya, whose future is ruined due to financial hardship, and her family members, Anya's gradual change and alienation from her family, and other issues.

The compositional structure and plot line of both works differ from each other. Professor Vugar Ahmed, in his book *Literary Studies*, analyses the differences in composition in similar works and writes: "Regardless of genre, all works of art are built on composition. There are many works in world literature that are similar in content, but their compositions are absolutely not similar to each other, because each artist builds the composition in his own unique way, according to his own ideas" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 51).

In Chekhov's "Anna on the Neck", besides the main characters Modest Alexeitch and Anna, several secondary figures also appear, including Pyotr Leontyitch (Anna's father), Petya and Andrusha (her brothers), as well as Artynov. In contrast, in the "Shir and Khurshid" feuilleton, only the names Rahetulhulgum and Nikolai Vladimirovich are mentioned.

Although neither work specifies the name of a particular city, the locations and factual references in "Shir and Khurshid" make it evident that the events take place in Baku.

In the introductory part of the feuilleton, we encounter references to the Caucasus Mountains and the "Europe" hotel: "One day, in of the cities situated on this side of the Caucasus Mountains, a rumour spread that an Iranian dignitary named Rahetulhulgum had arrived from Iran and had settled at the 'Europe' hotel" (Hamshari, 1909, p. 4).

Some information about the mentioned "Europe" hotel is provided in Ilkin Qilman's book *Baku and Its Inhabitants*: "Between the 'New Europe' hotel and the 'Metropol' hotel, at a place called Lalayev Bend, there was also a two-story hotel named 'Europe.' This hotel was formerly known as the 'Caucasus' hotel and was considered the most affordable lodging in the city" (Ilkin, 2006, p. 170).

A comparison of the two works reveals that their main similarity lies in the characters of Modest Alexeitch and Nikolai Vladimirovich, particularly in their senseless obsession with orders. Modest Alekseitch is depicted as hypocritical, miserly, and cowardly. He values people solely based on their official positions and wealth. The author emphasizes his stinginess through several episodes. For instance, his "advice" to Anna's father when lending him money, and his frequent inspections of the jewellery in Anna's commode, exemplify this trait. His true character and intentions are even more clearly revealed in the words he speaks to Anna before the ball: "So that's what my wife can look like...so that's what you can look like! Anyuta!" he went on, dropping into a tone of solemnity, "I have made your fortune, and now I beg you to do something for mine. I beg you to get introduced to the wife of His Excellency! For God's sake, do! Through her I may get the post of senior reporting clerk!" (Chekhov, 1895/2009, p. 252)

Chekhov's perspective on the character of Modest Alexeitch is articulated by Prof. İslam Aghayev, who writes: "Chekhov reveals the inner world of this negative type, conveying to the reader the depth of his moral depravity. To achieve this, he depicts the character's eagerness for disgraceful flattery and his readiness to trample even his own honour in pursuit of such desires" (Aghayev, 1969, p. 74).

The character of Nikolai Vladimirovich, as described in the feuilleton "Shir and Khurshid", resembles Modest Alexeitch in terms of moral traits. His statements during the ini-

tial encounter with Rahetulhulgum further substantiate this resemblance: “On behalf of our town, I sincerely congratulate Your Excellency on your arrival; especially since Your Excellency is an honourable man. May God bless Iran!” (Hamshari, 1909, p. 4).

One striking feature of Nikolai Vladimirovich is his indifferent attitude toward the city he rules and its inhabitants. To please and entertain Rahatulhulgum—his “dear guest”—he spreads false news about a fire in the city. The municipal workers under Nikolay Vladimirovich are shown to be equally irresponsible and indifferent to their duties: “The news was spread, but the firefighters did not come out, saying that they were in the hammam (A hammam, also often called a Turkish bath by Westerners, is a type of steam bath or a place of public bathing associated with the Islamic world). In that regard, the chief was very happy” (Hamshari, 1909, p. 6).

Comparative Analysis of Genre Features

A comparative analyses of Chekhov’s story “Anna on the Neck” and the feuilleton “Shir and Khurshid” requires a detailed examination of the genre characteristics of both works. The feuilleton “Shir and Khurshid”, written in a genre regarded as a literary-publistic form, contains sharply critical and topical socio-political content shaped in accordance with the conventions of its time. As is well known, one of the characteristic features of the feuilleton genre is its satirical nature. Academician Isa Habibbeyli, justifying the idea that satire is a literary type, includes the feuilleton among the satirical genres and writes: “In the science of Azerbaijani literary theory of the last century, satire has been mainly discussed as just artistic laughter. However, since the eighties of the 20th century, satire has been reinterpreted as a literary type, and as research in this field expanded, the conclusion that it is a literary type was once again substantiated. In recent years, the existence of this literary type has again been confirmed by the determination of the genres of the satire literary type” (Habibbeyli, 2022, p. 53).

Chekhov’s short story “Anna on the Neck” attracts attention with its social content. The work has a concise plot that fully corresponds to the requirements of the story genre. Both

works are written in prose. Although they are similar in terms of general genre characteristics, there are certain differences between them that correspond to the specific features of each genre. In Gunel Ahmadova’s article “Genre Identification of the Feuilleton”, which provides a comparative analysis of the feuilleton and story genres, it is noted: “First of all, it should be mentioned that the main characteristics of the feuilleton are irony, humor, and satire. However, it is not necessary for stories to possess these characteristics”. Furthermore, the article emphasizes that, unlike the story, the artistic expression of real facts is a central feature of the feuilleton. Nevertheless, the subject matter of stories may not be based on real events; many stories are the product of the writer’s imagination and may not correspond to reality (Ahmedova, 2021, p. 105).

Determining the Author of the Pseudonym “Hamshari”

The feuilleton “Shir and Khurshid” was published under the pseudonym “Hamshari”. According to the information obtained from Gulam Mammadli’s book *Signatures* (Mammadli, 1977/2015, p. 68), Jalil Mammadguluzadeh appeared in the *Molla Nasreddin* magazine in 1908 under the pseudonym *Hamshari*. The writer’s feuilleton “Vodka” was published under the same pseudonym in the 27th issue of *Molla Nasreddin* dated July 7, 1908, and the feuilleton “Political issue” about the Constitutional Movement in Iran appeared in the 47th issue dated November 24, 1908. However, no information has been found confirming that Jalil Mammadguluzadeh published any work in the *Zanbur* magazine under the pseudonym “Hamshari”. Considering that “Shir and Khurshid” was published in 1909, the historical context provides a reasonable basis to assume that its author was Jalil Mammadguluzadeh. Moreover, the feuilleton addresses the political relations between Iran and Russia, which further strengthens its connection to Jalil Mammadguluzadeh’s oeuvre. To support this argument, it should be emphasized that his both feuilletons published under the signature “Hamshari”, also deal with issues concerning the South (South Azerbaijan and Iran). Gulbeniz Babayeva, in her book *Molla*

Nasreddin Magazine and National Literary Values, examines Jalil Mammadguluzade's feuilletons written on the theme of the South, noting that this topic occupies a significant place in his oeuvre. "It is not coincidental that eight issues of the magazine were published in Tabriz in 1921. The themes of the writer's feuilletons—"Hamshari", "The Patch", "The Smoke", "Where Does the Money of the Iranian Workers Go?", "To the Iranians", "How Can a Stone Not Cry Today?" and others—are crucial for depicting the social and political realities of the Iranian environment. Mammadguluzade's feuilletons illustrate both the tragedies experienced by the Iranian people and the struggles of the mujahideen

who joined the fight for freedom" (Babayeva, 2020, p. 75).

Conclusion

Thus, the feuilleton "Shir and Khurshid", written on the basis of Chekhov's story "Anna on the Neck", once again confirms that the satirical magazine *Zanbur*, similar to other satirical periodicals of the early twentieth century, adapted significant artistic works of Russian literature when necessary. By transforming Chekhov's narrative within a local socio-political context, *Zanbur* contributed to the formation of a national satirical tradition while preserving the critical spirit characteristics of Russian literature.

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