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AN ANALYSIS OF THE CREATIVE WORKS OF THE DISTINGUISHED SYRIAN WRITER GHADA AL-SAMMAN IN THE CONTEXT OF AZERBAIJANI LITERATURE

In this article, we address the direct and indirect connections between the distinguished Syrian writer Ghada Al-Samman and Azerbaijani literature. When referring to direct engagement, foremost attention is placed on the translation and scholarly issues pertaining to the writer's works. Indeed, the translation of each writer's works into another language and its scholarly investigation constitute significant stages in their creative trajectory. The translation and scholarly exploration of Ghada Al-Samman's works into Azerbaijani language hold particular importance from this perspective.

In discussing indirect relations, parallels between Ghada Al-Samman's creative output and Azerbaijani literature will be elucidated. It is important to note that the historical tradition of Arab-Azerbaijani literary relations is substantial. Our geographical proximity following the spread of Islam in our country, notable presence of Turks, especially Azerbaijani Turks, in certain Arab countries like Syria and Iraq, has fostered economic, political, and cultural exchanges between our nations. The interrelation of our literature, exemplified by the presence of the famous Arabic poetic meter 'aruz' in both Arab and Azerbaijani poetry, stands as a testament to this closeness. The fact that the great Azerbaijani poet Imadeddin Nasimi wrote in three languages and that Muhammad Fuzuli created his divan in three languages has laid a robust foundation for the development of Arab-Azerbaijani literary relations.

During the Soviet era, significant efforts were made for the advancement of Oriental Studies in Azerbaijan, particularly in the context of the study of Arabic philology. First and foremost, within this article, Ghada Al-Samman is introduced as a poet and essayist subject to investigation. It must be acknowledged that until recent times, Azerbaijani readers were scarcely familiar with Ghada Al-Samman's works. Up until 2016, her works remained untranslated into our language, leaving the reading audience in a state of uncertainty. Only certain researchers had addressed her creative output and initiated scholarly inquiry into her works.

Key words: *Ghada Al-Samman, Arabic poetry, Arab-Azerbaijani literary relations, Azerbaijani Oriental Studies.*

Introduction to the Problem. Although born in Syria, Ghada Al-Samman, who also represents Lebanese literature, is a renowned and widely read author in the countries of the Middle East and the Near East [14, p. 61].

The works of this well-recognized writer are also familiar in the Western world [13], yet regrettably, until recently, they have not been widely disseminated or explored in Azerbaijan. However, since our country achieved independence, this gap in our Oriental Studies has shifted in relation to Ghada Al-Samman's works [3; 10].

In Turkey as well, her works have not been extensively circulated and have not reached a substantial readership. Only her collection of short stories [5, p. 112] and a few research works touch upon his literary contributions [1, p. 303].

Degree of Problem Elaboration. In Azerbaijani Oriental Studies, comprehensive research regarding Ghada Al-Samman's literary contributions has not been undertaken until recent times, and her works have not been translated into our language. Only the recent efforts of academician Govhar Bakshaliyeva and researcher Fazil Guney have served to address this gap, thus contributing to the filling of this void. The main portion of this article will provide extensive information on this matter.

Objectives and Tasks. The purpose of this scholarly article is to investigate the creative output of the prominent Arab writer Ghada Al-Samman within the context of Azerbaijani literature. In this regard, the article employs comparative analyses to explore the Arab writer's creativity in a new sphere, with the aim of achieving the set objective.

Methods. As the **theoretical and methodological foundation** of the research, a **rationalist approach** has been employed to delineate the **developmental attributes** of the problem. Adhering to principles of **historicism and modernity** and grounding the analysis in specificities, the focus **prominently** centers on the struggles of female protagonists in the modern Arab short story and modern Arab novel (representing Lebanese and Syrian writers), who fight for their rights. This struggle is **juxtaposed** with sources from Azerbaijani literature. In this context, the article's theoretical and methodological framework is constituted by an examination of Ghada Al-Samman's prose, which addresses the issue of women's emancipation and its **comparative analysis** with Azerbaijani literature.

Main Section

Attitude towards the Creative Output of Ghada Al-Samman in Azerbaijan

First and foremost, it should be noted that Azerbaijani readers have obtained comprehensive information about the works of Ghada Al-Samman primarily through the translations of the eminent public figure and scholar, Govhar Bakshaliyeva.

This scholar, who translated two of the author's stories from Arabic and published them in her own book, has also expressed opinions about the life and creativity of the writer. In particular, she has conducted analyses of the stories, assessing their scholarly value as a knowledgeable orientalist [10, p. 268–295].

In her perspective, 'It is not conceivable to envision the contemporary literary process in Syria without the creative output of Ghada Al-Samman' [10, p. 108].

In her work titled 'Contemporary Syrian Story,' G.B. Bakshaliyeva, while considering a number of contemporary Syrian poets, has also focused on the life and creativity of Ghada Al-Samman, particularly basing her analysis on the stories. She has underscored that the author is recognized and read not only in Syria but also in contemporary Arab countries. Furthermore, the scholar has emphasized the portrayal of women's issues in the works of the female writer, asserting that this domain occupies a significant place within her creative oeuvre: "The issue of women holds a prominent position in the creative output of the female writer. Ghada Al-Samman, through the power of her artistic imagination, sharply critiques the present situation of contemporary Arab women within Muslim society, highlighting their oppression, lack of freedom, inability to assert their rights, and ultimately, the prevalence of falsehood and hypocrisy in their surroundings" [10, p. 109].

The distinguished scholar, when discussing the collection of short stories 'Night of Estrangement'

(*'Leylatu-l-Ğurābei'*) by Ghada Al-Samman, notes an interesting peculiarity – that the author captures the emotions and sentiments of Arab youth who receive their education in lands not belonging to them, depicting their feelings, as well as the Arab people's resistance in the occupied territories for liberation, and furthermore, delving into the pain of young individuals who experience the loss of their homeland. The scholar also draws attention to the dedication in the book: "To those who made me feel my estrangement and to those who live through these historical truths..." [10, p. 111–112].

The distinguished orientalist, analyzing Ghada Al-Samman's story 'Last Summer's Fire' ("Kharik Zalika as-Sayfa"), portrays the catastrophe of the Arab nation – the blows inflicted on people by Zionism during the Six-Day War. The story depicts the plight of helpless women dying in Palestinian villages and camps under enemy occupation, burning infants, school children fleeing from disrupted schools, destruction, fires... [10, p. 122].

In dissecting the story, the prominent Azerbaijani writer Jalil Mammadguluzade's work 'The Dead' is brought in parallel, and a comparison is drawn between the 'living dead' of both esteemed writers. The protagonists of the story do not shy away from employing the metaphor of 'cemetery from the sea to the gulf' regarding the Arab world: 'In Ghada Al-Samman's story, as well as in J. Mammadguluzade's play, the "dead" are the living humans who have lost everything that makes them human – the authors liken them to the deceased' [10, p. 123].

Subsequently, the in-depth inquiry into Ghada Al-Samman's literary oeuvre within Azerbaijani Oriental Studies has been conducted by the orientalist scholar Fazil Guney. In his book 'Contemporary Syrian Novel,' the author, along with examining other Syrian novelists, also delves into the prose of Ghada Al-Samman, commending her writing style, her dedication to her creative pursuit, and particularly her focus on women's liberation.

"She began her creative journey with an uniquely engaging style, rich in vitality and convincing descriptions. Her distinct characteristics, the original manner in which she presents chosen themes, as well as her dedication to addressing issues of women, delicate desires, and thoughts of the feminine gender, endow her stories with a more radiant essence" [1, p. 178].

The researcher analyzes the writer's stories and novels in the work "Women's Emancipation in the Works of Syrian Women Writers", assessing her contributions to the field of women's liberation [2, p. 135–174].

The author's insights on this matter are also intriguing. In the introductory section of the book, the author explains how this scholarly investigation began, detailing the manner in which they explored the works of Ghada and other Syrian writers. It becomes evident that while actively working as a journalist in Damascus, Fazil Guney engages in a meeting with academic Hamed Arasli, during which the latter advises him to delve into the study of Arabic literature. Subsequently, Guney commences his work and, upon arriving in Baku, he meets with the distinguished orientalist and scholar Aida Imanquliyeva at the Institute of Oriental Studies. Under the mentorship of this esteemed scholar, Fazil Guney initiates research on Syrian literature, including the creative output of Ghada Al-Samman: "...Therefore, in addition to my journalistic activities, I began to engage in academic pursuits and started researching the creation and development of the Syrian novel, eventually embarking on the writing of a dissertation" [2, p. 6].

Azerbaijani readers acquaint themselves with Ghada Al-Samman's poetic creativity through a poem published in the journal "Yazi" in 2016. The translation of the poem is attributed to the literary figure Güntay Gencalp, who resides in Europe [5, p. 200].

The delineation of feminine beauty in the poems of Ghada Al-Samman Ghada Al-Samman is a skillful poet in her poetry, a masterful prose writer in her prose, and a journalist with a pen as sharp as a stone in her journalistic works. In her poems, the issue of women takes precedence. One of the author's renowned poetic works, "I Am a Human", stands as a prime example of this thematic focus:

'If you were to come to my home,
Bring along a pen.
I want to draw black lines on my face,
I want to draw black lines to conceal my beauty.
For in our country, beauty is considered a crime.'
[5, p. 182–183].

How times have changed. Unlike the classical poets who extolled the virtues of female beauty, Ghada Al-Samman draws black lines on her face to hide her beauty. This is because in her country, feudal-patriarchal customs and traditions still persist. The visibility of a woman's face, the concealment of her beauty, and the containment of her femininity to the point of suffocation unfortunately remain norms in the Muslim Arab society.

In this context, a parallel can be drawn. During the Soviet era, the Stalinist repressions of the 1930s targeted not only ordinary people but also encompassed artists, poets, and writers. The prominent Azerbaijani poet Ahmed Javad was imprisoned, fol-

lowed by the incarceration and exile of his beloved life partner, the exquisite Shukriyye Khanim. In a bid to conceal her beauty and thereby safeguard her honor, Shukriyye Khanim enters the restroom and intentionally tarnishes her face, eyes, and garments to deter any undue attention [14].

While the settings differ, the malicious intent remains similar. Ghada Al-Samman, seemingly aware of the societal disrespect toward women in her lived experience, seeks to shroud her beauty. Indeed, even without her, this society remains unaccustomed to beholding a woman's countenance.

The lady poet conveys not only the prohibition on a woman's external beauty within her society but also the constraints imposed upon her internal world and thoughts, as if writing with anguish, and in her verses, still embodies the muted voice of the unreleased Near Eastern woman:

'I do not wish to be incarcerated by my beauty's semblance.

I shall mark my heart with a cross,
Enacting a ban on all desires within my being,
Never to succumb to such cravings again...

The female protagonist of the poem yearns for a waist. To unearth all of her emotions, to anchor her existence, "to cinch" it. "So that I can comfortably enter paradise, supposedly!" — with a sardonic verse, the poet dismantles this archaic and conservative society that restrains women, and seemingly alludes to the Islamic proverb, "Paradise lies at the feet of mothers."

As if holding a word unspoken on the lips of the protagonist, there seems to be a hidden implication that the reader is to complete: O creatures who confine women in this world, why do you oppose the words of our Prophet?!

Bring a waist when you come,
I want to unearth all of my femininity within me.
I want to cinch my entire being
So that I can comfortably enter paradise, supposedly!

These verses evoke memories of the pre-Islamic '**jahiliyyah**' period. **Hüseyn Cavid, the prominent Azerbaijani poet and playwright**, criticizes Eastern barbarism against women and girls in his play '**Prophet**', highlighting Islam's rejection of such inhumane practices, including those attributed to its Prophet. In the work, the poet employs the voice of the character 'Arab' to state:

Ah, how heartless it was, my God,
My wife never smiled a single day.
I don't know why, why my wife
Didn't die at the birth of a girl.
Well, except for a son,

I don't desire offspring, I don't want.
Is a girl or woman human,
No, I won't call her human...

Indeed, Ghada al-Samman's protagonist in this case seeks to bury her feelings of womanhood in the earth, as this is also impactful.

The subsequent lines of the poem are even more tragic. The protagonist says, "Bring a thorn, I want to pierce my hair from the root," "Don't forget to bring a needle, I want to sew my tongue and lips," as if rebelling against the archaic feudalism that resides within her, yielding to dark thoughts like "drowning their screams within." Such thoughts occasionally shadow the destiny of the Eastern individual. Just as Ghada al-Samman traversed the cities of her homeland Syria in search of truth, the **eminent Azerbaijani poet Imadeddin Nasimi** arrived at a similar conclusion centuries ago. As seen in the verse:

"Do not come to take Nasimi's precious body with pain,

What benefit is there in love for infatuated men?

In fact, these dark thoughts are not the creation of the protagonist or the female author herself, but rather the sin of the feudal-patriarchal society that gave birth to her.

At this point, once again, the notable Azerbaijani writer **Huseyn Javid** comes to mind. Javid, who perceived that humanity could only rise with women, envisioned these verses deserving of the mother of all mankind. These lines by the poet resonate harmoniously with Ghada al-Samman's verses:

"When a woman smiles, the desolate humanity will smile,

Humanity in turmoil will rise with women" [6, p. 48].

Ghada al-Samman's poem "Holding the Question Mark" has been translated into our language by **Firudin Hamidli** from Arabic. It is possible to detect phrases and metaphors from ancient Eastern poetry in the poem, which is a formal trait. However, in reality, the poet emphasizes the motifs of the protagonist's search in the poem:

"Oh stranger, where do the songs go
After we have paid attention to them?
Tell me, where do the words of love go
After we have said them to each other?
Where do our joyful moments go,
Tell me, after they have been lived through?
But where does the flame of the candle go,
After the candle is completely melted and finished?

Indeed, the poetic protagonist articulates his fidelity to his beloved using metaphoric expressions, showcasing the significance of his love for his

counterpart over everything else. This is executed in a poetic manner:

"Where do your touches go,
When your hand withdraws from mine?
Where does the light go, ah, where does it go,
When it recedes into darkness?
And the breezes in the forests, where do they go,
And the flowing stars, where do they go?
Tell me, where do they go,
I shall wait for you there, my dear..." [11].

The translation of Ghada al-Samman's prose works for Azerbaijani readers has also recently commenced as a significant endeavor. In her narratives, the profound impact of the occupation of personal aspirations, civil war, displacement, and destitution is vividly depicted, as are the loves born in the crucible of these circumstances.

"Your face, it flees and runs away from you; the smell of musk remains, the scent of rain lingers during downpours – the heavy melancholy and warmth of vast shores... Your face, the greenness in your eyes, the kiss of passion in the novel's semblance... Your shadow, shall it reach me with that fateful curse?" [14].

Love, akin to a red line, permeates the works of the female author. This love can be directed towards homeland, beloved one, or mother. Regardless of its object, its name is love and it resonates with the call to live, to savor the essence of life. Particularly, if you are a woman, if you are passionate, and certainly if you are an Arab woman. In the aforementioned story, these sentiments are even more potent: "For years, she nurtured hopes and dreams. That smile on her lips was perhaps a promise, like the tear in sincere eyes, like the scent of time's spittle, like a certainty borne from the crevice in dry soil. With all my emotions, I now truly love her, wishing for her to complete my picture..." [14].

In this narrative, the author illustrates the woman's departure from her own arduous past, her reluctance to return to those sorrowful moments, her embracing of a new life, and her journey towards new horizons through a weighty narrative style: "Faces... I direct my droplets of anger toward faces... Faces and their cries... if I could learn from a distance why they cry... Oh flawed lightning, the burning thing that struck my head, the city of those fears... Oh memories poured from the vessel of my weary life, I will lay you to rest... and your continuation as well... I won't chew on you, nor will I remember..." [14].

In the author's novel "Beirut Nightmares," the struggle of the female protagonist, her resistance against wars and injustices, recalls the enduring battle of the Middle Eastern woman over the course of many

years: “My yearning for the horizon and the sky, my true freedom, does not mean being imprisoned within the walls of a vast penitentiary whose borders are named homeland” [12].

The great Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi, in his work “Seven Beauties,” portrays the character of Fitna as a truth-teller, fearless and bold. He narrates the audacity of the king not as skill, but as ordinary effort, denoting:

He said: “The king has made this customary,
Skill is not considered as customary.
If a person truly commits to a task,
Even if it’s challenging, the work will be done.
Do not assume success is due to expertise,
It is not because of strength, it’s due to custom” [7, p. 97].

Conclusions. Ghada al-Samman’s works hold a distinctive position in contemporary Arabic literature, both in terms of historical context and modernity. The author is recognized and read extensively not only in Syria and Lebanon, but also in other Arab countries as well as Western nations. Notably, the significance of her works in providing a voice for Arab women,

advocating for their education, empowerment, and societal participation, deserves appreciation. She underscores the trajectory the Arab people have traversed over centuries, emphasizing the struggle for their freedoms. «It is through this avenue that Arab intellectuals bring the poignant historical events of the past into their own eras, viewing them through the lens of progress and enlightenment that the century demands. This allows a broad readership to glean lessons from the past for shaping the future» [8, p. 147].

The renowned Syrian writer Ghada al-Samman’s literary journey around the world has finally encompassed the geographical realm of Azerbaijan. Today, the Azerbaijani reader, albeit partially, gains the opportunity to acquaint themselves with her creative output. In the future, the translation and publication of her stories, including the novel «Beirut Nightmares,» should be a priority in our Oriental studies. (Note: The provided text contains multiple instances of references and citations. However, these references are not properly numbered or labeled, and the sources they refer to are not provided. Proper academic citation is crucial when including references in academic writing.)

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Мехдієва Т. А. АНАЛІЗ ТВОРЧОСТІ ВИДАТНОГО СІРІЙСЬКОГО ПИСЬМЕННИКА ГАДИ АС-САММАНА В КОНТЕКСТІ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСЬКОЇ ЛІТЕРАТУРИ

У цій статті ми розглядаємо прями та опосередковані зв'язки між видатним сирійським письменником Гадою Аль-Самманом та азербайджанською літературою. Говорячи про безпосереднє залучення, насамперед звертається увага на перекладацьку та наукову проблематику, що стосується творчості письменника. І справді, переклад творів кожного письменника на іншу мову та його наукове дослідження становлять значні етапи їхнього творчого шляху. Переклад і наукове дослідження творів Гади Аль-Саммана азербайджанською мовою мають особливе значення з цієї точки зору.

При обговоренні опосередкованих зв'язків будуть з'ясовані паралелі між творчістю Гади Аль-Саммана та азербайджанською літературою. Важливо відзначити, що історична традиція арабо-азербайджанських літературних відносин є значною. Наша географічна близькість після поширення

ісламу в нашій країні, помітна присутність турків, особливо азербайджанських турків, у деяких арабських країнах, таких як Сирія та Ірак, сприяли економічним, політичним і культурним обмінам між нашими народами. Свідченням цієї близькості є взаємозв'язок нашої літератури, прикладом якого є наявність відомого арабського поетичного слова «аруз» як в арабській, так і в азербайджанській поезії. Той факт, що великий азербайджанський поет Імедедин Насімі писав трьома мовами і що Мухаммед Фізулі створив свій диван трьома мовами, заклав міцну основу для розвитку арабо-азербайджанських літературних відносин.

За радянських часів були докладені значні зусилля для розвитку сходознавства в Азербайджані, особливо в контексті вивчення арабської філології. Перш за все, у цій статті Гада Аль-Самман представлений як поет і есеїст, який підлягає розслідуванню. Треба визнати, що до останнього часу азербайджанський читач був майже не знайомий з творчістю Гади Аль-Саммана. До 2016 року її твори залишалися неперекладеними нашою мовою, залишаючи читацьку аудиторію в стані невизначеності. Лише окремі дослідники зверталися до її творчого доробку та започатковували наукове дослідження її творів.

Ключові слова: Гада Аль-Самман, арабська поезія, арабо-азербайджанські літературні зв'язки, азербайджанське сходознавство.