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ABSTRACT

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**THE GENRE OF BIOGRAPHY IN THE TWENTIETH-
CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE**

Speciality: 5718.01 – World Literature (English Literature)

Field of science: Philology

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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Actuality of the topic and the degree of research. In the history of literature, after “Hymn” by Caedmon, one of the prominent poets of the English people, as the successor of literary traditions of the centuries, the XX century English literature was contributed to the world literature the works of such writers, poets, playwrights as George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), Herbert Wells (1866-1946), John Galsworthy (1867-1933), James Joyce (1882-1941), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965), William Golding (1911-1993), Iris Murdoch (1919-1999), Dorris Lessing (1919-2013), John Fowles (1926-2005), Harold Pinter (1930-2008). This literature contains the national identification problem in the national process of contemporary globalization around the numerous trends and tendencies that have been written in the memory of history in humanistic artistic thinking in the last decades of the century. To this day, modern British postmodernist literature has been distinguished by both historical and biographical novel genres with certain accomplishments in its quest for national identity, including the concept of “Englishness” and “Britishness”.

Literary scholar, prof. Gorkhmaz Guliyev, referring to the vast opportunities that postmodern literature has opened up to writers: “... *postmodernism has always denied the claim of digesting and possessing achievements of mankind got throughout the whole history. Postmodernism has always relied on classical values and tried to revive them on a new ground*”¹.

Since the second half of the XX century, when postmodernism established its place in literature, the genre of biographical novels began to gain popularity in literary circulation. Biographical writers such as Richard Ellmann (1918-1987), Claire Tomalin, (1933), Michael Holroyd (1935), Richard Holmes (1945), Jenny Uglow, (1947), Hermione Lee (1948), Roy Foster (1949) and others shared the unity of the dramatic, psychological union with the 20th century biographical genre among the readers of the literary and scientific

¹ Guliyev, G. Postmodernism./Azerbaijan Magazine, – 2005. № 9, – p.174

range in the form of “life and creativity”.

The first biographical work in English is considered a history book “History of Richard the Third” written by Thomas More in about 1513. But, this work was first published in 1543. In 1998, the well-known English writer Peter Ackroyd (1949) published his book “Sir Thomas More” in the genre of biography. Thus, the works written in the genre of biography in recent decades have been dominated in contemporary British literature. Approximately 3,500 biographical works are published each year. Peter Ackroyd has gained a great deal of popularity among these writers for his style of writing. His novels such as “Ezra Pound” (1980), “T.S.Eliot” (1984), “Charles Dickens” (1990), “William Blake” (1995), and “Sir Thomas More” (1998) are biographical novels. From this point of view, it is expedient to identify and study the specificity of biography genre taken special place in the writer’s creativity, and to determine the place of the writer’s works in contemporary English literature.

The study of the theme “The genre of biography in English literature” is based on works of popular genres in the last decades of the last century, especially on novels by Peter Ackroyd. Biographical novels that “open the boundaries” between modern biographers and history have provoked serious controversy in the literary and scientific thinking of Western European literary critics, and the peculiarities of the genre have become the subject of discussion.

A thorough acquaintance with Peter Ackroyd’s biographical novels allows us to conclude that the role of biographical writings on phenomenological writers in British literary history has a special place in British literary and artistic thinking. In this regard, the study of the works in biographical genre in English literature in the Western European, including English literary criticism, is relevant to the actuality of the research work.

Although the study of the genre of biography in the XX century English literature has been of great importance in the literary criticism of Azerbaijan, also around the world, including issues related to various problems of English literature, the subject we have mentioned has not been monographically investigated before. However, in the context of studies that focus on these or other related

topics, the French writer A.Maurois, British researcher L.Hermione, American researcher D.Pristash Christine, Russian researchers V.Shubina, I.V.Lipchanskaya, O.Y.Akhmanov, Azerbaijani researcher Y.Abdullayeva² were brought to the attention of the literary and scientific circle. The study of English literature on the basis of various genres has been of great interest to literary critics around the creativity of Julian Barnes, Angela Carter, John Fowles and Peter Ackroyd, who have become objects of the XX century postmodern literature and biographical novels. However, the PhD thesis “The genre of biography in the XX century English literature”, presented for discussion in literary-scientific audiences, can be considered a new investigation not for only identifying facts or events in the biography or life of a writer but also for determining the role and significance of the main characters of biographical novels accepted as classic or bestseller in the literary world in the context of national and world literature.

The object and subject of the research. The object of the research contains the biographical novels of Peter Ackroyd, possessing special place in his creativity such as “Chaucer. Brief Lives”, “Shakespeare: The Biography”, “Venice. Pure City”, “Dickens: Public Life and Private Passions”, and “Wilkie Collins”.

²Abdullayeva, Y.A. Characteristics of the development of the genre of biographical novels in Western European literature // – Baku: Azerbaijan University of Languages, Language and literature, – 2012. No 2, – p.155-165; Akhmanov, O.Yu. The genre strategy of the detective in the work of Peter Ackroyd: / Diss. of candidate of philological sciences / – Kazan, 2011. – 161 p.; Lipchanskaya, I.V. The image of London in the work of Peter Ackroyd: / Diss. of candidate of philological sciences / – Ivanovo, 2014. – 184 p.; Shubina, A.V. The problem of the biographical genre in the work of Peter Ackroyd: / Diss. of candidate of philological sciences / – St. Petersburg, 2009. – 183 p.; Hermione, L. Biography: A Very Short Introduction. / L.Hermione. – The UK: Oxford University Press, – 2009. – 170 p.; Maurois, A. Aspects of Biography. / A.Maurois. – Published in the UK: Cambridge University Press, – 2014. – 200 p.; Pristash, D. Christine. Englishnesses: Traditional and Alternative. – Conceptions of English National Identity in Novels by Julian Barnes, Angela Carter, John Fowles and Jeanette Winterson: / A Diss. Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy. / – Indiana University of Pennsylvania, – August, 2011. – 246 p.

The subject of the research is the location and role of the genre of the biographical novel in the postmodern era in the history of the West, including English literature, as well as the scientific discovery of the peculiarities and novelty of Peter Ackroyd's biographical novels.

The goal and objectives of the research work. The main goal of the PhD thesis is to make scientific-theoretical generalizations based on the literary creativity of Peter Ackroyd, who is best known for his work in biographical genre in English literature, to identify the characteristic features of the genre of biography.

In this regard it is advisable to carry out the following objectives in the PhD thesis:

- To identify new trends and tendencies in English literature in the postmodern literary stage of the XX century literature;
- To determine the origin of the biography genre, the scientific and theoretical basis of its characteristic features;
- To explain scientifically the basics, origins and features of biographical novels in English literature;
- To show the key points of Peter Ackroyd's works written in biographical genre, to present important goals and directions of his literary activity in this field.

The research methods. The research relies on biographical, comparative-typological, structural-semantic, and intertextual methods in the study of the genre of biographical novels, based on a broad-based tradition of studies of genres in national and Western literary studies.

The main provisions for defense are:

- In the last decades of the twentieth century, the biographical novel genre, which incorporates a multidimensional experimental method, arises from the need to thoroughly study the biography of classical artists and toponyms of modern human thought;
- With the novels “Geoffrey Chaucer. Short Lives” and “Shakespeare: The Biography” Peter Ackroyd set a new stage in the development of the biography genre;
- The author introduces a new concept of Venice in the Anglo-Venice relationship in the biographical novel “Venice. Pure City”;

– The biographical novels “Dickens: Public Life and Private Passion”, “Wilkie Collins” focus on critical realism or the urgent and actual problems of the Victorian era.

Scientific novelty of the research work. A comprehensive and monographical study of the genre of biographical novels in the history of the XX century English literature is tried to study, the study and evaluation of literary biography of creative artists in the history of literature, and its delivery to the literary-scientific community is grounded to be the most important and significant issue in front of literary criticism.

The polemical attitude to the works of a number of scholars and researchers in the context of Russian and Western European literary criticism was presented in the thesis, but these studies were not regarded as standard in the research work. However, the pretensions put forward by the applicant and the materials involved to analyze in the thesis are of particular interest in the literary criticism of Azerbaijan. In this regard, identifying the features and peculiarities of the biographical novel genre, which has become a literary tradition in Western Europe, including English literature, may be one of the important means of integrating Azerbaijan with the literature of the peoples of Western Europe and the United Kingdom. In addition to these aspects, which justify the scientific novelty of the research, the study of the genre of English biographical novel for the first time in Azerbaijan literary-scientific thought provides the scientific novelty of the thesis.

In Azerbaijan literary criticism the investigation dedicated to the study of biographical genre in the English literature can benefit both the literary and scientific community, as well as science.

Theoretical and practical significance of the research. For the first time in the PhD thesis, biographical genres were reviewed on the basis of monographic analysis based on biographical novels by Peter Ackroyd in the XX century English literature, and the genre-specific features were analyzed, interpreted and summarized. The results of the thesis, based on the biographical novels of Peter Ackroyd in Azerbaijani literary criticism, can be used in the course of the XX century British Literature.

Approbation and application. The theme of the research work was approved by the meeting protocol № 13, dated April 30, 2012 at the Literature Problems Council of the National Museum of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences named after Nizami Ganjavi on and recommended for re-approval by the Scientific Council of the Azerbaijan University of Languages.

The applicant's articles, abstracts and provisions on the topic of the thesis have been published in scientific journals and collections in the Republic and abroad, international and national scientific conferences.

Name of the organization where the dissertation is performed. The work was performed at Department of Literature of Foreign Countries at Azerbaijan University of Languages.

The total volume of the dissertation with a sign including a separate volume of the structural units of the dissertation. The research work consists of the introduction, three chapters, the summary and the list of applied literature. The dissertation Introduction – 6 pages, Chapter I – 40 pages, Chapter II – 50 pages, Chapter III – 53 pages, the result is 3 pages, and the total volume of the symbol is 291 070 characters.

BASIC CONTENTS OF THE THESIS

In the *Introduction* to the thesis the relevance of the topic, the object and subject of the research work, the purpose and objectives, the hypothesis, the material, background of the thesis, the scientific novelty, methodology, theoretical and practical significance of the research, are presented.

The first chapter of the thesis is called “**Contemporary English Literature and Literary Genres**”. In the subchapter named “*New Trends in Literature and the Genre of Biographical Novels*”, it is possible to see that dystopian novels, spy novels, detective novels, fantastic novels, literary portraits, biographical novels, and dozens of genres have been more prominent in the XX century English literature. The literary position of the literary prose in this century is of particular interest.

In modern English literature, the concept of English national identity has been found in novels by John Fowles (1926-2005), Julian Barnes (1946) and Jeanette Winterson (1959). John Fowles's "Daniel Martin" and "The Magus", Julian Barnes's "England, England and Metroland", Angela Carther's (1940-1992) "Nights at the Circus and Wise Children" and other works are engraved in the memory of the reader as examples of the art that holds the public pulse of the time.

The introduction of postmodernism as a term in literary circulation dates back to the early 1980s. More recently, postmodernity formulated after literary-artistic modernism in Western society and culture has emerged as the highest modernist project since 1956. Due to the references and investigations of literary scholars, the author of the first postmodern work, is said to be the 1969 Nobel Laureate, Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), a British-born Irish writer (Samuel Beckett, 1906-1989).

When it comes to the general literary peculiarities of the postmodern era, it is noted that the mixture of such tendencies, for example, parody, pastiche, scepticism, irony, fatalism, the mixing of "high" and "low" cultural allusions are thought³ by modernist pioneers.

In our opinion, each of the literary genres used in different periods of literary history, has its own peculiarities. It would be more objectionable to simply say that postmodern literature touches on newer themes in these genres, and that the artistic description and solution of the problem are of different tastes and colours.

Writing biographies of well-known female artists began to gain popularity in the last decade of the twentieth century. The "Oxford Dictionary of National Biography", founded by the biographer and publisher Colin Matthew in 1992, is a popular publication of biographies about famous women now in the biographical genre. This publication is in fact a continuation of the work of the English biographer and critic Sir Leslie Stephen's (1832-1904) "Dictionary of National Biographical", published in 26 volumes in 1885-1890.

³ Postmodernism. – The Oxford Companion to English Literature. / Ed. by Dinah Birch. Seventh Edition.– New York: Oxford University Press, – 2009. – p.797

Postmodernism, evaluated as a concept of soul of the late twentieth century, has transformed the return of past spiritual values and cultural heritage to its ultimate goal or reference point. From this point of view, the “revival” of the genre of the biographical novel in the late twentieth century may be considered the most obvious manifestation of postmodern literature. One might argue that genre of biographical novels considered to be “child” of postmodernism is not merely the life and worldview of a particular artist, but also his philosophical and aesthetic outlook, a school of philosophical reflection on the philosophy of life.

The second section of the chapter, “*The Restoration of History in Biographical Novels*” reveals that there is a great interest in the biography of the writer's life, as well as literary portraits in the literary sales market, and since the middle of the nineteenth century biographical novels have widely spread all over Western Europe. At the same time, it should be noted that a new branch in the field of literary criticism has been created. This is called biographical literary criticism or criticism. Critic Rahim Aliyev writes: “*For the first time, biographical literary criticism has linked literary creativity and the science of creative psychology to literary analysis*”.⁴

At first glance, the content and theme of a novel written in a biographic genre may not seem so exciting to the reader. However, this genre has its own peculiarities: biography is not simply a chronicle of a writer, a poet, or a city, a river... a history or a biography. The character of the biographer in the novel written in this genre is, above all, notable by the uniqueness of the individuals who deserve the right to live at all times, or the great “fame” of the famous place, river, city, and village, as well as the respect of the people should be measured. Writing such works has sparked the readers’ interest in the biographical genre.

Thomas More’s “The History of King Richard III” (first published in the Chronicle of Richard Crafton in 1543, a perfect edition of the work by William Rastell in 1554) was directly compiled by the author’s observations and humanistic details, the

⁴ Aliyev, R. Theory of Literature. / R.Aliyev. – Baku: Mutarjim, – 2008. – p.60

realistic artistic portrait of King Richard was depicted. It is true that the historical tragedy of the “King Richard III” written by William Shakespeare (the play was performed in 1592-1593, published in 1597), was presented as a dramatic image in his selected works published in the English Historical Kings series. However, although both Thomas More’s biographical work “The History of King Richard III” and William Shakespeare’s “King Richard III” contains the word “history”, both of them are different in genre.

It is possible to say that the genre of biography, which became popular in Britain, flourished in the XIX century and even “lived” the flowering period. The role and service of biographers in this range is invaluable. The biographical works of Hallam Tennyson, John Lockhart, John Forster, Anna Thackeray Ritchie and other biographers on the well-known personalities of British culture and literature draw attention as the experiments of modern British biographical traditions.

While in the field of culture and literature, Peter Ackroyd has published his works in biographical genre that bring greater artistic success. His biographical works have not escaped the attention of literary criticism as the most aesthetically pleasing the readers and the most comprehensive samples of the writers and poets known in the history of literary and artistic thinking of the world, including Great Britain.

Thus, biographical works, which have become one of the favorite genres of a wide readership with rich traditions and moral values, can be said to be a perfect work “lightening” the socio-philosophical and artistic aesthetic thinking of well-known ones who lived and created at different times. This opens up great opportunities, first of all, for the study of works written in biographical genres through the new research prism of contemporary literary criticism in the development of the history of literary thinking in Britain.

Peter Ackroyd’s position as a writer, biographer, historian, and literary critic draws special attention in biographical novels about the life and identity of writers, poets and playwrights. We consider that the writer-biographer, who created a new type of modern

biographical novels, was able to create the unity of the past and the present with his ideological and aesthetic search.

Biographical forms can be submitted as follows:

- biographical novel;
- multimedia biography;
- biographical films;
- CD-ROMs and online biographies;
- biography and portraits (the creator of this genre is Ralph Ueltzhoeffer, a German artist, and his works were created in 2001);
- biographical research.

Undoubtedly, in recent debates, the limitation of all biographies with only prose works raises many questions. In our opinion, talking about fiction, the fact that biographical novels are written in prose again proves that in our modern times, the arguments for researchers' approval go far beyond the general contexts of fiction.

Chapter II of the thesis is entitled “**Biographical Novels of Peter Ackroyd: Historical Reality and Its Artistic Expression**”. In the subchapter named “*The Revival of Geoffrey Chaucer's Biography of Life and Creative Activity*” is noted that Peter Ackroyd in his biographical novel “Chaucer” sheds light on the life and creativity of the poet, as well as his heart, on the basis of historical documents and archival materials and has confirmed the biographical judgment in the history and literature of the period.

In recent textbooks and literature encyclopedias, Geoffrey Chaucer's birth date is noted to be approximately 1340 years. Peter Ackroyd writes in Chapter I of the book “Londoner”: “*Chaucer grew up, and found his true place, in what he called ‘our citee’. He was born, in the phrase of Oscar Wilde, into the purple of London commerce... Geoffrey Chaucer first saw the light, therefore, in a wealthy and influential household. The date of his birth is not certainly known but all the available evidence suggests some time between 1341 and 1343*”.⁵

⁵ Ackroyd, P. Chaucer. Brief Lives. / P.Ackroyd. – London: Vintage Books, – 2005. – p.1-2

Researcher Shahin Khalilli in the article “Chaucer’s Oriental Motives”, published in the journal “Science and Life”, introduces professor Nevill Coghill’s judgment on the Eastern connection of Geoffrey Chaucer: *“The tales presented in the book (“The Canterbury Tales” – Kh.I.) the pilgrims tell come from the works of Chaucer’s near contemporaries. Some come from further afield, from the ancients, from the Orient”*.⁶

Thus, Geoffrey Chaucer hasn’t little connection with the culture and literature of the Oriental countries. If a series of facts and elements about the poetic description of the Caucasus Mountains, dozens of Oriental scholars, and Eastern sayings are reflected in the biographical novel, Peter Ackroyd’s novel would undoubtedly be more interesting and readable.

One of the translators of “The Canterbury Tales”, writer and researcher Ivan Kashkin, writes referring to the historical principle in the stories of Geoffrey Chaucer: *“In such a nature of Chaucer’s historical principle, it is in vain to give a systematic and direct description of events, or a compelling and contradictory historical process that is directly reflected in “The Canterbury Tales”. However, even these events have become a leading means - it contains the voices of the people of his (Geoffrey Chaucer – Kh.I.) era and reflects their appearance as a mirror. We cannot find this in any English writer who is a contemporary of Chaucer.*

Chaucer, the “founder of realism,” carries his magnificent mirror on the highways of England, and accurately reflects everything that falls in his charm.

Chaucer’s mirror did not reflect the historical cataclysms (sharp, devastating revolutions), otherwise the mirror would fall on the writer’s trembling hands. But events have impressed him much, and this mirror reflects those people who made history by their hands”.⁷

⁶ Khalili, Sh.H. Chaucer’s Oriental Motives // – “Science and Life” journ, – 1999. № 3-4, – p.12.

⁷ Kashkin, I. Geoffrey Chaucer. – Chaucer Geoffrey. The Canterbury Tales. / Translation from English I.Kashkina and O.Rumer. – M.: Pravda, – 1988. – p. 22-23

The existence of literary and artistic art is certainly a reflection of the realities of life, social life, and the history of society.

It is possible to find unique portraits of people of different social classes who made the history by their hands in Geoffrey Chaucer's works.

In the study of researcher, prof. Sh. Khalilli's "The Eastern World of Geoffrey Chaucer" there is a noteworthy point, as a result of the analysis based on the materials of "The Canterbury Tales" by a realistic English poet. He writes: "*Chaucer's close acquaintance with the Oriental world, Oriental science, and the works of Eastern scholars can be clearly seen in "The Canterbury Tales"*".

By referring to the works of scholars such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980-1037), originally known as Bukhari scholar, philosopher and physician, Arabian philosopher and doctor, and Latin name Averroes, true name Ibn Rushd Abood-Vahid Muhammed ibn Ahmad (1126-1198), and as well as others, Chaucer proved that he had a certain understanding and knowledge of Eastern science and philosophy".⁸

As English poet William Shakespeare, we can courageously say that poetic expressions confirming Geoffrey Chaucer's guides of Oriental (Turkish) history and culture are depicted in "The Canterbury Tales". This means, first of all, that the word art, which does not know what the boundary is, is "transmitted" through words or manuscripts from the East to the West or from the West to the East.

The second subchapter named "***The Image of Shakespeare in the Novel "William Shakespeare: The Biography"***" refers to a number of scholars who rightly say that the works of the British playwright and poet William Shakespeare (1564-1616) are his "best biography". Although William Shakespeare does not compile his biography in poems and plays, his creative works provide some insight into the biography of the poet and playwright. From this point

⁸ Khalilli, Sh.H. The Eastern World of Geoffrey Chaucer. // – Baku: Language and literature. International Theoretical-scientific Journal, – 2006. No 1 (49), – p.89-90.

of view, the work of “Shakespeare: The Biography” by Peter Ackroyd published by Vintage Books is of great interest.

It would be more accurate and valid to say that the study of William Shakespeare’s biography coincided with the second half of the XIX century. Edward Dowden’s monograph “Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Intelligence and Art” was first published in 1875.

William Shakespeare’s creativity has played an important role in the literary and cultural life of Azerbaijan, numerous plays, poems and 154 sonnets were translated into Azerbaijani, and a number of monographic investigations have been conducted.

The following judgment by the deceased linguist and literary scholar Ismikhan Rahimov on the scientific study of William Shakespeare’s life and works is of interest. He writes: “*In the XVII and XVIII centuries, none of the writers of Shakespeare’s life doubted that his works belonged to William Shakespeare of Stratford*”.⁹

Although Peter Ackroyd appreciates William Shakespeare’s art and genius, he has revealed that Shakespeare had written plays with a number of writers well-known in the theatre world in common.

Peter Ackroyd points out that the genius playwright wrote “All Is True”, as well as his play “The Two Noble Kinsmen” with John Fletcher: “*There seems to be no doubt, however, that ‘The Two Noble Kinsmen’ was the next collaboration between William Shakespeare and John Fletcher. On the title page of the first edition published in quarto form in 1634, it is described as being ‘presented at the Blackfriars by the Kings Maiestie servants, with great applause: Written by the memorable Worthies of their time: Mr. John Fletcher, and Mr. William Shakespeare. Gent’. It is worth nothing that Fletcher’s name is mentioned first*”.¹⁰

⁹ Rahimov, I. William Shakespeare is one of the geniuses shaking the world. Selected works. [In two volumes]. / I.Rahimov. – Baku: Ganun Publishing, – Vol. I. – 2004. – p.9

¹⁰ Ackroyd, P. Shakespeare: The Biography. / P.Ackroyd. – London: Vintage Books, – 2005. – p.474

When it comes to William Shakespeare's genius, the writings or services of co-authors have for some reason been left behind. But such truths cannot be ignored. It is necessary to recognize the great role of John Fletcher's efforts and talent in William Shakespeare's gaining world fame.

Thus, it is no coincidence that the novel "Shakespeare: The Biography" which has been the focus of research and biographical novels dedicated to the life and creativity of William Shakespeare in recent decades has become a new research object of the literary criticism. Every fact or event that the reader of the world, including Azerbaijan, wants to learn about the English playwright and poet, has always been in the spotlight, as well as the literary theorist's own opinion on it.

Peter Ackroyd skillfully used the ideas and judgments about the various elements of William Shakespeare's personality and creativity of the well-known writers, as well as William Shakespeare's contemporaries and predecessors, and adapted them to the overall context of the text. Such flexible and logical arguments have challenged the fact that the novel is based on facts and is readable. In this regard, Irish writer and poet James Joyce's (1882-1941) laconic statement on William Shakespeare's dramatic works draws particular attention: "*James Joyce noted that "banishment from the heart, banishment from home" is a dominant motif in Shakespeare's drama*".¹¹

Chapter III of the thesis is titled "**The Unity of Myth and Reality in Biographical Novels**". In the first subchapter named "**Myths and Historical Reality in the Novel "Venice. Pure City"**" is said that in his biographical novel "Venice. Pure City", the author created a new version of the historical, social and literary reality of Venice in a readable and interesting style. The book consists of thirteen chapters. Those chapters are listed as follows: I. City from the Sea; II. The City of St. Mark's; III. Ship of State; IV. Republic of Commerce; V. Empire of Trade; VI. Timeless City; VII. The Living City; VIII. The Art of Life; IX. Sacred City; X. The Shadows of

¹¹ Ackroyd, P. Shakespeare: The Biography. / P. Ackroyd. – London: Vintage Books, – 2005. – p.104

History; XI. City of Myth.

The title of each chapter covers various areas of Venice by the biographer-writer, and the material of each chapter is presented by the author based on scientific and historical evidence.

The reader believes the descriptive facts facing him in every line of the novel because the author's description of the hidden sides, events of the commercial, political, cultural and literary life, is based on the memory fact of history, documentary archival material in Peter Ackroyd's biographical novel "Venice. Pure City".

In this regard, the samples of ancient folk art of the Venetians in biographer-writer's mentioned novel are of particular interest. Peter Ackroyd writes: *"If there is not much poetry in Venice, there is a great deal of song. The folk songs of the city, however, bear no resemblance to the expression of high deathless passion in other folk traditions; there is no pity, and no tragedy. There is pathos and sentimentality. 'Would you weep if I were dead?' a mother asks her infant child. 'How could I help weeping for my own mamma, who loves me so much in her heart?' Sentimentality is the enemy of true feeling, and suits a city where the mask is preeminent. But the folk songs are also filled with gaiety and optimism, a joyful seizing of the day that might be related to the mercantile tradition of the city. There is also an element of shrewdness allied with the fantastical. It was once believed that cities could not create or nourish folk songs – that such songs flourished only in rural areas – but Venice disproved that pastoral myth... Like the Venetian liking for 'sweet and sour' in food, the songs are a mixture of acid and honey."*¹²

The facts and truths in the judgment of Peter Ackroyd draw more attention in the biographical novel, and the lyricism based on Venetian folk traditions reveals parent-child relationship, the mysterious beauty and spirit of urban folk songs of the songs before readers' eyes.

In the text of Peter Ackroyd, the original expression of interest and admiration to the East, including Turkish culture and art, is of

¹² Ackroyd, P. Venice. Pure City. / P.Ackroyd. – London: Vintage Books, – 2010. – p.274-275

particular interest. We would like to present a translation of that episode so that it can be readily understood by the reader:

*“By some it was considered to be oriental, with the basilica of Saint Mark as the very model of a mosque and the Rialto as a souk. That was why the city was so distrusted by other European nations. It contained within itself intimations of ‘the Other’. ... ‘Alas Venetian race,’ Pius II wrote in 1458, ‘how much of your ancient character have you lost! Too much intercourse with the Turks has made you the friend of the Mohammedans.’ The façade of the ducal palace, facing the lagoon, is Muslim in inspiration. There are in fact borrowings and adaptations – of Islamic architecture and Islamic art – throughout the city. Even the Venetian colours, ultramarine blue and gold, are derived from the Middle East. The trade routes, the organised seagoing caravans, even the craft guilds, of Venice were Muslim in origin. There was a genuine sympathy with, and admiration for, Islamic civilisation that was not unconnected with distaste for papal pomp. In the paintings of Carpaccio, for example, Venetian interiors are shown to be decorated with objects of eastern provenance; the throne of the Virgin in Gentile Bellini’s ‘Virgin and Child Enthroned’ is placed carefully on a Turkish carpet or prayer rug”.*¹³

Venice, which contains the most well-known examples of the Oriental, Turkish cultural and literary world, can in some ways be called the transmitter of the Eastern and Turkish worlds. Such peculiarities, complementing the artistic portrait of Venice, which are not indifferent to the most striking pearls of the world peoples, are sufficiently expressed in the biographical novel.

As for the Venetian literature, biographer-writer said: *“Distinguished writers have been drawn to Venice over the centuries, but the city has not nourished many writers of its own. The two most famous of its native sons are Marco Polo and Casanova, both of whom wrote what were essentially memoirs. Casanova offers*

¹³ Ackroyd, P. Venice. Pure City. / P.Ackroyd. – London: Vintage Books, – 2010. – p.431-432

an interesting case history of the Venetian genius".¹⁴

Azerbaijan-Venice relations have historically been built on economic and political grounds. It is worth mentioning: The information and descriptions of Shah Ismail Khatai's period in the "Diaries" consisting of 42 volumes, devoted to the Safavid state of Azerbaijan by the medieval chronicler Marin Sanudov (1466-1536), are undoubtedly additions to the foregoing. The 571-page collection of Amoretti, collectively edited and preserved by the staff of the Oriental Institute in Rome (B.S.Amoretti), contains 937 documents.¹⁵

The biographical novel presented on Azerbaijan-Venice relations has not been even mentioned in detail. We would like to add that Azerbaijan's trade and diplomatic relations with Venice also cover the years preceding Shah Ismail Khatai's coming to power (1501). Another Venetian diplomat, Constantine Laskari, visited Azerbaijan on the eve of the Venice-Turkey wars of 1499-1502, and provided information to the Venetian government on 14 October 1502 about the "Safavid people and the Safavid soldier of Turkish origin".

Economic and diplomatic relations with a number of Western European countries have also contributed to the transfer of many works on the cultural and literary life of Azerbaijan to museums and archives of those countries. For example, many miniatures of Soltan Muhammed, one of the most famous masters of Tabriz art, are still preserved in museums in London, Leipzig and Venice. However, it is the subject of a separate research in the context of cultural and literary relations.

The second subchapter of the thesis, "*The Invisible Aspects of 19th Century English Writers' Biography in Peter Ackroyd's novels*" states that the textbook on the secret and open details of Charles Dickens' life is largely inaccessible in scholarly publications. For some reason, during the reign of the former Soviet ideology, it was banned from the literary or biographical interpretation of the

¹⁴ Ackroyd, P. Venice. Pure City. / P.Ackroyd. – London: Vintage Books, – 2010. – p.272

¹⁵ The history of Azerbaijan from ancient times to the 20th century. / Edited by Z.M.Bunyadov and Y.B.Yusifov. – Baku: Azarnashr, – Vol. I. – 1994. – p. 418

critical material or biographical details of the secular life of both world and former Soviet writers and poets.

The novel “Dickens: Public Life and Private Passion”, first published by Peter Ackroyd in London in 2002, was published in 2003 in America.

We read in Chapter I of Peter Ackroyd’s novel: “...*he had been born an actor, and as a child became an astute singer of comic songs with all the actions and all the attitudes. In his later public readings he was hailed as the greatest performer of his age, but his genius was first nourished in the local taverns where his father brought him to sing and dance... As a child he owned a toy theatre, and from that time forward he never lost his vision of the world as a stage. It could be argued that all of his novels sprang out of that vision: certainly his own life was, as it were, encircled by stage fire*”.¹⁶

Charles Dickens, who started working at the “Mirror of Parliament” editorial office when he was 19 years old, has been interfere chaotic politics of his day. Fear of hard work and poverty of British children forced to work at an early age has lived in his memory for the rest of his life. All of this is reflected in realistic fiction of Charles Dickens’s writings.

Talking about the love affair in Charles Dickens’s life, Peter Ackroyd names Mary Hogarth, the sister of his wife, who has fulfilled his heart with emotions. The biographer has tried to revive the chronicle of this very young girl in the eyes of the reader. One of the most memorable aspects of the biographical novel is the provision of drawings and photographs that coincide with the texts in Peter Ackroyd’s book. On page 36 of the book, we read at the top of Mary Hogarth’s painting: “*Catherine’s younger sister, Mary, joined them as companion. She was now fifteen, and Dickens had already conceived the strangest and most innocent passion for her*”.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ackroyd, P. Dickens: Public Life and Private Passion. / P.Ackroyd. – Published in the United States by Hydra Publishing, – 2003. – p.9

¹⁷ Ackroyd, P. Dickens: Public Life and Private Passion. / P.Ackroyd. – Published in the United States by Hydra Publishing, – 2003. – p.36

Chapter III of the biographical novel tells of the birth of the writer's first child, his son, named Charles, while he worked on both novels "Pickwick" and "Oliver" every morning. One day, Charles Dickens, Catherine Dickens and her sister Mary Hogarth arrive home from a spectacle, when his sister-in-law rose to her bedroom upstairs in a good mood, shouts loudly. The next morning, Mary Hogarth dies in Charles Dickens's arms. Peter Ackroyd revived the scenes of death and love intertwining on the pages of his book. We read in the book: "*Thank God she died in my arms*" – Dickens wrote to an old friend – "*and the very last words she whispered were of me...*"¹⁸

This is one of the most memorable moments of love inspiration. The words "Young, Beautiful, and Good" are engraved on the grave of a young girl whom Charles Dickens loved.

On the way of the writer's life his love for great life and humanity and his compassion are beyond measure. The secret passion and love for women of Charles Dickens, who can't remain indifferent has had a devastating effect on the whole family.

"*He (Dickens – Kh.I.) was always considered to be an 'odd' person; as his school companions had observed many years before, for example, he was prone to 'immoderate laughter'. But this was only one feature of a generally extravagant and nervous personality*",¹⁹ wrote Peter Ackroyd, explaining many aspects of the writer's personal life in order to clarify every detail of Charles Dickens's personality and manners.

Peter Ackroyd's biographical novel, devoted to Wilkie Collins, explores the headline of writer Wilkie Collins's novel "Woman in White" with a small strip on Charles Dickens's daughter Kate.

Pay attention that passage from the biographical novel: "*In the middle of July 1860 Charles Collins (Wilkie Collins's brother – Kh.I.) married Dickens's (Charles Dickens – Kh.I.) daughter, Kate, at Gad's Hill where Collins (Charles Collins – Kh.I.) and his mother were among the guests. It was not a very cheerful affair. Dickens*

¹⁸ Ackroyd, P. Dickens: Public Life and Private Passion. / P.Ackroyd. – Published in the United States by Hydra Publishing, – 2003. – p. 45-47

¹⁹ Ackroyd, P. Dickens: Public Life and Private Passion. / P.Ackroyd. – Published in the United States by Hydra Publishing, – 2003. – p.63

(Charles Dickens – Kh.I.) *believed that his daughter was getting married only to escape from him, and he regarded his son-in-law with suspicion as a weak-willed and dilatory individual; he may also have believed him to be impotent or even homosexual. There were no speeches and, at the end of the day, Dickens (Charles Dickens – Kh.I.) was found sobbing into his daughter’s wedding dress”*.²⁰

Although Wilkie Collins does not cover this scene in his novel “Woman in White” we consider this scene has made the writer think more and the unfortunate destiny of a girl dressed in a white bridal dress is expressed in the novel’s name and harmony.

The life stories of the nineteenth century London, which was directly witnessed in the works of the writer, “conquering” its joy, pleasure, horror, and danger, described them artistically.

The signature of Wilkie Collins, who once co-starred with Charles Dickens in the arranging of several performances, was then overshadowed. Even many university students welcomed quietly the fact that analytical material about his creativity was removed from the curriculum.

Peter Ackroyd’s new biographical novel about Wilkie Collins, the author of the first large-scale storytelling in English literature, once a literary artist, with original writing style in many parts of the United Kingdom, the United States, and Europe, confirms the great potential of the biography genre.

At present, it is particularly important to study the life and creativity of one or another writer in English literature on the basis of biographical novels.

The generalizations we make as a **Conclusion** of our research are as follows.

The research of the subject we first mentioned in comparative historical method in Azerbaijani literary criticism will allow for more careful study of life and creativity searches in the history of English literature, as well as scientific refinements of certain problems about literature and its creators. In this regard, it would be advisable to present the provisions of the study in the following way:

²⁰ Ackroyd, P. Wilkie Collins. / P.Ackroyd. – London: Chatto and Windus, – 2012. – p.89-90

– The genre of biographical novels, which incorporates the unity of documentary biography and artistry in the last decades of the twentieth century, can be called a revival of the forgotten way of life and creativity of classical artists in documents;

– In the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s of the 20th century, as well as the on the threshold of the new millennium the genre of the biographical novel has not lost sight of the ideas and theories of postmodern literature, and has created a new type in the context of the values of classical works of his creative personalities, amidst the successes and accomplishments of past history that have not yet entered the present stage;

– In the biographical novel “Chaucer. Brief Lives” by Peter Ackroyd, the founder of English Poetry, Geoffrey Chaucer may be considered the best expression of the “Englishman” presented by the biographer to the reader. The famous “The Canterbury Tales”, creating a brilliant embodiment of the “Englishman” of the classical artist, is in general an “epic poem of Englishness itself”;

– In Peter Ackroyd’s 546-page novel “Shakespeare: The Biography” a new William Shakespeare image was created in the history of English literature, based on archival documents and opinion of its contemporaries, with the intuition and imagination of the British Renaissance biographer William Shakespeare. The novel we mentioned above may play a role in the accurate evaluation of Shakespeare’s literary heritage.

– Venice which plays an important role in the economic, political, cultural and literary relations between the West and the East is a new artistic image of the historical, economic, political and cultural relations with the West, including Azerbaijan in the biographer-writer’s novel “Venice. Pure City”;

– Peter Ackroyd’s “Dickens: Public Life and Private Passion” as well as the biographical novel “Wilkie Collins”, about Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins, the famous and literary writers of critical realism during the reign of Victoria (1832-1901) are the artistic presentation of unknown essences and problems of the writers illustrating that biographical novels are a reliable source for literature study and research.

– Using biographical novels and research is particularly important for the people of the cultural and literary environment, intellectual circles of Azerbaijan, in the teaching of the world and as well as the British literature at the universities of our Republic. Thus, unlike historical novels the advantage of biographical novels is, above all its basing on reality rather than unity of fiction and truth. Biographical novels, which have become popular works of art of the time as artistic samples, play a role of “spiritual bridge” of the past contributed to the future.

The main contents and scientific provisions of the dissertation are reflected in the following articles and the PhD thesis by the author:

1. Biography genre in British literature: origin and development // – Baku: AUL, Language and literature, – 2012. No 1, –p. 172-176
2. The biographical genre in the English literary twentieth century (on the material of the novel-biography of Peter Ackroyd “London”) // – Simferopol, Scientific notes of Taurida National University. V.I.Vernadsky, Philology. Social communications, – Volume 26 (65), – part 1. – 2013. No 1, – p. 130-136
3. Psychological and analytical approach in the biographical novel “Wilkie Collins” by Peter Ackroyd // – Baku: BSU, The actual problems of study of humanities, – 2013. No3, – p. 119-122
4. Opportunities to enrich the literature of the biographical novel // – Baku: Baku State University, Language and literature. International scientific-theoretical journal, – 2013. No 4 (88), – p.153-155
5. The Artistic Expression of Historical, Social and Literary Reality in Peter Ackroyd’s biographical novel “Venice. Pure City” // Materials of the XVIII Republic Scientific Conference of Doctoral Students and Young Researchers: [In 2 volumes]. – Baku: Azerbaijan University of Languages, – 19-20 December, – Vol. II. – 2013. – p. 191-193
6. The historical organization and peculiarities of the biographical genre // The First International Scientific Conference of Young Researchers, dedicated to the 90th Anniversary of the National

- Leader of the People of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev. – Baku: – 26-27 April, – 2013. – p. 546-547
7. Some features of the biography genre (based on Peter Ackroyd's book materials "Shakespeare: The Biography") // Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Proceedings of the XVII Republican Scientific Conference of doctoral students and young researchers: [In 2 volumes]. – Baku: – Vol. II. – 2013. – p.57-58
 8. Some Facts and Problems Connected with the Biography of William Shakespeare // – Bulletin of Moscow State University. Scientific journal. Series 9. Philology. – Moscow: Publishing House of Moscow State University, – 2014. No 5 (11). – p.110-118
 9. Peter Ackroyd and Contemporary Biographical Novel (The Place of Classical Artists in the Biographical Novel) // The II International Scientific Conference of Young Researchers, dedicated to the 91st anniversary of the National Leader of the People of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev. Materials. – Baku: – 18-19 April, – 2014. – p. 398
 10. Charles Dickens's Biographical Image (based on Peter Ackroyd's novel "Dickens: Public Life and Private Passion" // – Baku: Baku Slavic University, The actual Problems of study of humanities. Interuniversity collection of scientific articles,– 2015. No 2, – p.100-104
 11. The Novel "Chaucer. Brief Lives" by Peter Ackroyd in Biographical and Historical Context // Збірник наукових праць (за матеріалами XIX Міжнародної науково-практичної конференції 30-31 грудня 2019 року). Релігія, релігійність, філософія та гуманітаристика в сучасному інформаційному просторі: національний та інтернаціональний аспекти: зб. наукових праць, – Монреаль: СРМ «ASF», – 2019. p.34-36

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