

Shahla Aliyeva

*PhD (Art Study), Professor
Baku Choreography Academy
(Azerbaijan)*

shahlaaliyeva2014@gmail.com

PLOT OF REPRESSION AND APATHY IN THE 1990s REPERTOIRE

Abstract. The article talks about repression and apathy in dramatic works included in the repertoire of the Azerbaijani theater in the 1990s of the last century. In those years, dramas were staged dedicated to the bloody repressions of the 1930s. On the other hand, the Karabakh events that began shortly before created a tense psychological atmosphere in the republic. This circumstance played an important role in the interpretation of the artistic solutions of dramatic works dedicated to these events. The article talks about the works of such playwrights as Shikhali Gurbanov, Nabi Khazri, Ilyas Afandiyev, Nahid Hajizadeh, and analyzes the director's plan and the acting.

Key words: Azerbaijani theater, victims of repression, Karabakh events, Hasan Turabov, Marahim Farzalibeyov.

Introduction. Historical stage works in the repertoire of the Azerbaijani theater have always been distinguished due to their popularity. Playwrights, directors and actors were interested in the historical genre even at the beginning of the last century, at a time when professional theater was rapidly developing, and various drama works related to this genre were staged. Nariman Narimanov's

“Nadir Shah” (1899), Abdurrahim Bey Hagverdiyev's “Agha Mahammad Shah Qajar” (1907), Jafar Jabbarli's “Ədirnə fəthi” (“Conquest of Edirne”) (1917) and others are the first exemplary drama works written in the historical (historical-tragedy) genre in Azerbaijani drama. The historical events were associated somehow with the socio-political processes of the time in those works.

As you know, the Azerbaijani theater came a long and glorious way in the 30s-80s of the 20th century. Today, many works, which were created in those decades and went down in history as the “Soviet era”, are included in the golden fund of our national culture thanks to the great work of directors and actors.

On the contrary, the 90s of the last century was the “difficult” period of our national theater art. The reason for this is obvious: the negative processes that took place against the background of the collapse of the Soviet power – political, economic and cultural decline, groundless land claims of our shameful neighbors, and lack of appreciation of moral values created a pessimistic, existential mood in the society. The theater, being a sensitive type of artistic culture, felt all this and reacted negatively to unpleasant situations.

The interpretation of the main material. It is no coincidence that besides other themes, drama works, which we call the plot of repression and apathy, were widely represented in the repertoire of the Academic National Drama Theater in the 90s. But what does the repression and apathy include? Of course, repression means the countless victims of 1937 and Stalin’s era in general, and this is known to everyone. Apathy is the result of the bitter situation caused by the defeat syndrome at the initial stage of the Karabakh wars. The Azerbaijani sons fought bravely, almost without weapons and ammunition, while help came to the insidious enemy continuously in those years. However, the uneven balance of forces led to painful land losses.

Today, repression and apathy are a thing of the past. However, both themes exist still in the theater, and the human factor, the syndrome of resiliency of a spiritually strong personality are at the heart of this.

But when did these two themes come to the theater and what form does the connection between them take? Let’s try to make that clear.

The atmosphere of the 80s is remembered by our elderly and even middle generation people. Infamous Gorbachev launched the so-called “revelation” policy in order to cover up his incompetence in the political and especially the economic and economic spheres. Although this policy was aimed at distraction, it was not actually useless in terms of studying the tragedies of recent history in a broad sense. Many of our poets, writers and playwrights created valuable works of art on the theme of repression in the 80s. One of them was the play “Gecə döyülən qapılar” (“Knocked Doors at Night”) by the Folk poet Nabi Khazri.

Repression and apathy are close to each other in terms of tragedy and historical sequence. Artistic works on this theme were written almost at the same time. The time difference between them was not more than 5-6 years. Karabakh tragedies entered the theater's repertoire even before our writers had finished writing drama works dedicated to the memory of the victims of 1937. Nabi Khazri's play "Gecə döyülən qapılar" ("Knocked Doors at Night") (director Marahim Farzalibayov) was staged in 1989, and Nahid Hajizadeh's play "Qisas qiyamətə qalmaz" ("Revenge will not last long") (director Lutfi Mammadbayov) in 1995.

Today, the Republic of Azerbaijan is living its strong and glorious period. Our lands have been completely liberated from the enemy, and the sovereignty of the state has been fully ensured throughout the territory of our republic. Economy and industry are constantly developing. The level of well-being of citizens and Azerbaijani people is constantly increasing.

Repression and apathy may seem "outdated" to someone against the background of all this. But a peculiarity of theater arts is the organic association of the past with modernity. The bloody events of the 1930s and 1990s live and develop in the memory of the theater. In this sense, the theater is a reliable safe place of the nation's blood memory, genetic code.

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We prefer to consider the plot of repression and apathy in terms of history and modernity. This is also due to the periodicity of the repertoire. So, works on both themes were staged in the 90s and are periodically staged in the modern era. Apparently, the difference between history and modernity is no more than 30 years here. However, the interesting features of the director's interpretation, the rich gallery of characters created by successive generations of actors add new touches to the theme every time.

As we mentioned above, Nabi Khazri's play "Gecə döyülən qapılar" ("Knocked Doors at Night") was staged by director Marahim Farzalibayov in 1989. This play, written in a dramatic style, can also be called a historical tragedy. However, there is a certain sense of optimism and faith in the future in the work and in the director's interpretation. Of course, this is a manifestation of the author's approach to the theme from the level of modernity (for that period).

The work has a series of interesting characters. Good acting makes these characters more vivid and colorful. The Katib (secretary) (Ramiz Malikov), mother Mehri (Amaliya Panahova), Nisa arvad (Amina Babayeva), teacher Gani (Burjali Asgarov) and others attract attention constantly to the tension and emotionality of the dramatic plot. The role of the Secretary played by the late Ramiz Malikov, a talented actor, gives a very rich impression. However, this richness is based on the feelings of sternness, arrogance, pride. Who is the Secretary? Professor İlham Rahimli, a well-known theatricologist, answers this question: “The character of Mir Jafar Bagirov was called Katib (Secretary) (Ramiz Malikov) in this play (“Gecə döyülən qapılar” (“Knocked Doors at Night”) – author), and that character was more likely to be generalized in Marahim Farzalibayov’s new work. This character was a connecting link in the chain of higher ups - secretary - region secretaries - CC and other disaster makers” [4, p. 275].

It should be stated that the theatrical character of Mir Jafar Bagirov, who was the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, whose name is not declined, was also created in other plays on the theme of repression. The character of Mir Jafar Bagirov was also featured in İlyas Efendiyev’s play “Sevgililərin cəhənnəmdə vüsali” (“Meeting of Lovers in Hell”) (1989) (director Hasan Abluch; later Marahim Farzalibayov), and the late actor Alabbas Gadirov acted this character in a very prominent way, through high-quality manners. It is interesting that this character was embodied more clearly in İlyas Efendiyev’s work, and in this respect, it was much different from the character in Nabi Xazri’s play. However, the character of Mir Jafar Bagirov in the stage work of both playwrights was undoubtedly presented in a negative character. This aspect of his character was combined with aspects such as coldness, selfish, haughty and mercilessness, and he was portrayed realistically on stage. Alabbas Gadirov and Ramiz Malikov were able to create a nightmarish existential character of the “secretary” with colorful paints. Of course, this character had a negative tone and was not the leading character in these two mentioned plays. But for some reason, the audience remembered this character as an anti-hero, and this was undoubtedly due to the fact that this character could influence the course of fateful events.

The theme of repression found actually its way into the repertoire and the stage since the time of the “warming” associated with the name of Nikita Khrushchev, who went down in history as the failed Soviet leader. As a successful dramaturgical example created in that period, it is necessary to

mention the drama “Sənsiz” (“Without You”) by the statesman and writer-playwright Shikhali Gurbanov. “Sənsiz” (“Without You”) was also popular at that time and is still played on the stages of our theaters today [3]. Shikhali Gurbanov was a bigoted citizen and did not hesitate to show mistakes boldly. “He continued to fight against ignorance and envy, using all types of ideological weapons, ethical and aesthetic criteria, with the difficulties he encountered for the happiness of his people. There are many types of such weapons. One of these weapons is artistic creativity, distinguished by its power, expressiveness and mass. His plays, librettos, stage works, philosophical tragedies have enriched Azerbaijan Drama and Musical Comedy theaters with new content and form searches” [2, p. 15].

“Sənsiz” (“Without You”) was staged in the production by director Tofig Kazimov for the first time in 1967. For the sake of justice, it should be stated that this work was considered a rather bold step due to its content even at that time. Although the production of the play in a lyrical-psychological style relegated the repression tragedies to the background, the salient embodiment of the broken destinies of young people could bring to attention the scale of the tragedies, even in a romantic style.

Shikhali Gurbanov’s “Sənsiz” (“Without You”) faded into the background in the “stagnation” atmosphere of the 70s, and was not played for a long time. However, the director Oruj Gurbanov turned to the work “Sənsiz” (“Without You”) in the environment of the so called “revelation” promoted by the shameless Gorbachev, when the theme of repressions of 1937 came up again. The first rehearsals for the play began back in 1985, when Gorbachov’s “revelation” policy was just beginning. However, the economic difficulties that started during that period and later, the tension in the social and political atmosphere in the country, and finally, the groundless land claims of our infamous neighbors had a negative impact on the staging of the play and the theater environment in general. The Drama Theater was closed for repairs for a long time. The play was finally presented to theatergoers at the Russian Drama Theater only six years later, in 1991. At that time, the events of Karabakh were gradually exaggerated artificially, the events began to get out of the control of the state (Soviet state!). Another layer - the layer of Karabakh tragedies, which was formed at the subconscious level under the influence of existing realities, was added to Oruj Gurbanov’s director interpretation, who was working at the Ganja Theater at that time, in such circumstances. So, repression (horrors of 1937) and apathy (the mood of indifference and

spectator pessimism caused by the failures in Karabakh in the society) were united in one production on the stage.

Hokuma Gurbanova (Sevinj) and Malik Dadashov (Tarlan) were the first protagonists (1967) of “Sənsiz” (“Without Your”). For the sake of justice, it should be stated that Hokuma Gurbanova’s lyrical-psychological style of acting had a more natural and convincing effect than Malik Dadashov, who usually acted in multi-planned (even negative) roles. After nearly a quarter of a century, Hijran Mehbaliyeva (Sevinj) and Alabbas Gadirov appeared on the stage for the first time in those roles.

One aspect of theater art is that acting performance is erased from memories over the generations and replaced by a new style of acting. Usually, a middle-aged audience can see a role played by an actor representing two generations. It is obvious that many performances are preserved in the archives of radio and television, and come to the meeting of listeners and spectators at times. Historical photos can also be added to this list. However, all this cannot ensure reliable connection, consistency between generations for some reason. Those who once watched the role of Tarlan performed by Malik Dadashov may not have seen the performance of Alabbas Gadirov in that role later. If “Sənsiz” (“Without Your”) returns to the repertoire in the future, the audience of the younger generation and even the actors will not know anything about the magnificent performances by Malik Dadashov and Alabbas Gadirov. Of course, this is certainly regrettable. However, the aspect that regulates the events and creates optimism is that the play in the historical genre acquires a new, modern atmosphere according to the era. Professor Jafar Jafarov, correspondent member of ANAS, wrote: “Modernity, being a concrete-historical period, reflects the development of society and therefore changes, perfects, becomes the basis for a new leap” [1, p. 81]. As a continuation of this idea, let’s emphasize that the future structures are distinguished from the past structures exactly by their contemporary, modern sound, and this can be considered as an advantage of those structures. The character of Tarlan performed by Alabbas Gadirov was remembered not only for the actor’s multi-faceted performance style, but also for his ability to reflect the bitter and painful truths of the time in a lyrical-psychological harmony on stage. Other characters in the work – Farhad (Ramiz Novruzov), Maral (Firangiz Mutallimova) completed the general signature with their rich performance styles.

As a side note, let us emphasize that several artistic characters of the supreme Soviet leaders have been created in Azerbaijani drama and cinematography since the 20s and 30s of the last century. The creation of artistic characters of figures such as Lenin, Stalin, Kirov, Orjonikidze, Mir Jafar Bagirov was widespread in those years. But of course, these characters (with the exception of Lenin) began to be presented in a negative tone after the 60s. Samad Vurgun created the character of Joseph Stalin – Koba (Aghasadig Garaybeyli) in the play “Xanlar” (“Khans”), Enver Mammadkhanli created the character of Kirov (Ismail Daghistanli) in the play “Şərqi səhəri” (“Dawn of the East”), and of course, these characters were a positive character according to their time. The characters of Stalin (Mikhail Gelovani) and Mir Jafar Bagirov (Rza Tahmasib) in the feature film “Bakının işıqları” (“Lights of Baku”), which was directed by Alexander Zarkhi, Rza Tahmasib and Iosif Heyfits in 1950, were also given in a positive context. But after that, the situation changed, even if these characters were on stage, they began to be presented in a negative context. These characters have an unambiguously negative tone in the dramas of Shikhali Gurbanov, Ilyas Efendiyev, Nabi Khazri and others, reflecting the tragedies of 1937.

Talented writer-playwright and screenwriter Nahid Hajizadeh’s play “Qisas qiyamətə qalmaz” (“Revenge will not last long”) reflects the plot of apathy. The events in the play illuminate the Karabakh tragedies at the level of literary drama. The work was staged for the first time in 1995 under the direction by Lutfi Mammadbeyov. Hasan Turabov (Umid), Safura Ibrahimova (Salatin), Yashar Nuri (Simran), Burjali Askerov (Jurkhan) and other actors performed in the play. Having a well-trained cast, this play was successful from the very beginning. The lyrical dialogues between Umid and Salatin, who are an elderly couple, referring to the melancholy, sad melody, and the tragicomic style of Simra’s performance were the successful moments of the production. Another reason for the work’s success was the topicality of the theme. The so-called “First Karabakh War” military operations were already behind at that time and the defeat syndrome created a feeling of flabbiness and apathy in the society. “Revenge will not last long» was able to create a high spirit in the society at such a moment.

Hasan Turabov didn’t appear on stage since the late 80s due to his age and illness. While the artistic council was working on the division of roles, Hasan Turabov announced unexpectedly that he wanted to play the role of Umid. The plot is that the graves of Umid and Salatin’s martyred children were in

the mountains occupied by the enemy. Father and mother cannot reach the graves. They calm only in giving hope to each other. In a broader context, it meant the belief that the land would be liberated. It was very important to dispel the apathy in the society at that time. On the other hand, the Azerbaijani audience loved and believed in Hasan Turabov. At such a moment, acting in the role of Umid by Hasan Turabov, who had been away from the stage for several years, caused great excitement not only in the theater environment, but also in the society. This was the educational and ideological importance of the work.

Conclusion. The 90s of the last century were the fateful period of the Azerbaijani scene. This sacred temple of art lived, kept its art traditions alive and developed, even though it was difficult, during that difficult period, when different, conflicting opinions and biased proposals from the major reconstruction of the theater to its closure were voiced.

The repertoire of the theater was quite rich in the 90s. It included plays of Azerbaijani, world and Russian classics, as well as works based on modern life. Besides all this, the plot of repression and apathy took a main place in the theater environment in those years. Of course, this was due to the challenges of the times, the uneven course of different processes created by time. The coincidence of the embodiment of repression and apathy on the theater stage, i.e. mainly in the 90s, became the form of artistic embodiment of these processes on the stage.

The development of events entered a healthy and fair level as the years passed, as Azerbaijan's economic power and military potential strengthened, negative situations were eliminated, and the sufferings of Karabakh were sent to the archive of time. But, all this continues to live on the literary-art istic level in the theater. The difference between the 90s and today is not more than 30 years. Some of the plays performed at that time are still in the repertoire today and come to the meeting with audience in new forms of literary and artistic interpretation. Also, new stage plays are created on those themes. All this is a clear sign that the plot of repression and apathy is still of great interest in the theater environment.

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Şahla Əliyeva (*Azərbaycan*)

1990-cı İLLƏRİN REPERTUARINDA REPRESSİYA VƏ APATİYA FABULASI

Məqalədə Azərbaycan teatrının repertuarında yer alan dram əsərlərindəki repressiya və apatiyadan bəhs olunur. Dövr kimi ötən əsrin 1990-cı illəri götürülmüşdür. Həmin illərdə 30-cu illərin qanlı repressiyalarına həsr edilmiş dram əsərləri səhnəyə qoyulurdu. Digər tərəfdən elə həmin dövrdə Qarabağ hadisələri cəmiyyətdə psixoloji gərginlik yaratmışdı. Bütün bunlar səhnədə repressiya və apatiya sindromlarının bədii həlli üçün əsas rolunu oynayırdı. Məqalədə Şixəli Qurbanov, Nəbi Xəzri, İlyas Əfəndiyev, Nahid Hacızadə kimi dramaturqların bu mövzuda olan əsərlərinin səhnə həlli təhlilə cəlb edilmiş, rejissor və aktyor işindən bəhs olunmuşdur.

Açar sözlər: Azərbaycan teatri, repressiya qurbanları, Qarabağ hadisələri, Həsən Turabov, Mərahim Fərzəlibəyov.

Шахла Алиева (*Азербайджан*)

ФАБУЛА РЕПРЕССИЙ И АПАТИИ В РЕПЕРТУАРЕ 1990-х ГОДОВ

В статье говорится о репрессиях и апатии в драматических произведениях, вошедших в репертуар азербайджанского театра в 1990-х годах прошлого столетия. В те годы ставились драмы, посвященные кровавым репрессиям 1930-х годов. С другой стороны, начавшиеся незадолго до этого Карабахские события создавали напряженную психологическую атмосферу в республике. Это обстоятельство сыграло важную роль в интерпретации художественного решения драматических произведений, посвященных тем событиям. В статье говорится о произведениях таких драматургов, как Шихали Гурбанов, Наби Хазри, Ильяс Эфендиев, Nahid Гаджизаде, анализируются режиссерский замысел и игра актеров.

Ключевые слова: азербайджанский театр, жертвы репрессий, Карабахские события, Гасан Турабов, Марахим Фарзалибеков.