

A Comparative Study of Zweig's *Schachnovelle* and Alavi's *Her Eyes* from the Perspective of Realism

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Stefan Zweig and Bozorg Alavi, as two well-known authors of the contemporary German and Persian literature and representatives of the school of realism tended to create realistic works, depicting a completely authentic atmosphere of the social and political state of their time. Bozorg Alavi seemed to develop this writing style as a possible influence of studying and living in Germany and by getting to know the literary works of German authors. He became one of the pioneers of the realistic narrative in Iran. The realistic perspective in *Her Eyes*, Bozorg Alavi's work, bears a great resemblance to the realistic perspective of Stefan Zweig in *Schachnovelle*. This article is an attempt to compare the realistic aspects of the above-mentioned works. The comparative study of these two works would determine, based on an investigation into the realistic factors, that Alavi and Zweig bare similarities in terms of their writing styles and these similarities indicate the influence of Zweig on Alavi in creating the novel *Her Eyes*.

In order to see how these two works emphasize realism in their narrative art, both presented facts and examples from the standpoint of characterization, narrative perspective, plot and the representation of time and space.

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The realistic and detailed characterization of the figures, in terms of their appearance as well as their inner moods, is one of the most important goals of every realist author, which has been accomplished by Alavi and Zweig. One of the features of the realistic figures is that the reader would keep them better in mind because of their special characteristics. This can be seen in the most important protagonists of both of the above-mentioned works. Their particular behavior and their objectively depicted physical characteristics make the reader feel more intimate and friendly towards them and fully familiar with them. Moreover, almost all of the figures in Alavi's and Zweig's works – as is the case in realistic literary works – show, in addition to their peculiar traits, the typical characteristics of people resembling those living in their own time.

In regard to the narrative point of view, realistic works usually use the first-person or third-person narrative perspective, and the narrator, like a reporter, recounts the events from the outside. Zweig's influence on Alavi can also be clearly seen in their narrating techniques. In most of Zweig's works, there are two narrators reporting the narrative from the perspective of the first person singular. *Schachnovelle* also begins with the first person narrator perspective. Then another narrator, who also belongs among the characters, performs the narration, which is an overview of his past. Bozorg Alavi also uses this narrative style in his work, *Her Eyes*. This narrative perspective actually arouses the reader's interest and contributes to the increased credibility of their works.

An essential part of both works is the political and social aspects of Stefan Zweig's and Bozorg Alavi's age. *Schachnovelle* is seasoned with political and social aspects of Zweig's lifetime, that is, the time when millions of people suffered in the concentration camps of the Hitler regime or were affected by other Nazi injustices. Zweig pursued in *Schachnovelle* the goal to reveal the brutality of the fascist regime and to criticize the National Socialists on the part of a victim. *Her Eyes* is also similar in this respect to *Schachnovelle*. In addition to presenting a new section of the life of a militant artist, Alavi also presented in his work the social and political situation of Iran during Reza Shah's twenty-year reign, as well as the fear and anxiety prevailing that time.

In presenting the psyche of their characters, Stefan Zweig and Bozorg Alavi are influenced by the teachings of the psychologist Sigmund Freud. Both authors pay special attention to the description of the inner nature of their characters in that the

two figures themselves depict their feelings as well as their psychic conflicts and events from their own perspective. Thus, the exact psychoanalytic descriptions that Alavi and Zweig give of their characters are comparable and indicative of their similar writing style.

Looking at the element of Plot in both works, one can see that both *Schachnovelle* and *Her Eyes* begin quite appropriately and with an authenticity-begetting introduction, so that the reader becomes completely familiar with the atmosphere prevailing the narrative and can clearly imagine the conditions at that time. Like Zweig's *Schachnovelle*, *Her Eyes* also takes on a tragic, open ending. Through the open ending, the authors contribute to the alienation of the reader and give him the feeling that this is a true event, which happens to be developed into a literary work.

Another element in which the Realist writers are very interested is the place and time of their works. Space and time are necessary items for making a work seem realistic. Both works refer to the time, in which the authors lived, and the places are those that they either experienced or heard about. Thus, they convey to the reader an illusion of truth and so enhance the authenticity of their narrative. Stating real places in the world, such as Austria, Buenos Aires, Tehran, Paris, etc., where the events have taken place, as well as the detailed description of places reveal their realistic style.

Considering realism a description and representation of reality, this study proved that many realistic elements are included in both works. The figures, themes and even the depicted times and places are very authentic and realistic in both works. The objective account of the events as well as the psychologically accurate observation of the characters that marks Zweig's literary works can also be recognized in *Her Eyes*. *Her Eyes* is unmistakably following the kind of realism present in Zweig's *Schachnovelle*, and Alavi's acquaintance with the European literature, especially with Zweig's works and writing style as well as the comparisons made in this study, lead to the conclusion that Bozorg Alavi may well have followed Zweig as his model in his writing style.

Keywords: Bozorg Alavi, *Her Eyes*, Stefan Zweig, *Schachnovelle*, Realism, Characterisation, Plot.