The Process of Changing Position of Mohtasham Kashani in Persian Literary History

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Biographers' reports on the life and art of their contemporaries constitute and reconstruct the main part of our literary historical knowledge. However, the reality is that the reports of contemporaries about the personality of co-author and artworks are not coherent and that there are many conflicts and contradictions in those reports. There are also many conflicts and contradictions in those reports even from that time on, and it has been constantly changed and transformed. The diversity of opinions among critics can be a worrying issue for a literary historian, which makes it difficult for him to work. Another problem is that this multiplicity of opinions about Mohtasham vanishes in one or two centuries after the death of the poet, and a unified narrative about his character and his poetry governs Persian biographies (Tadhkiras). In fact, the historian faces two major problems: first, the fluidity of opinions and contradictions in the poet's contemporary reports; secondly, the certainty of the literary historians' opinions about Mohtasham. But what makes Mohtasham famous? Does it contain all aspects of his personality and art? Or is it a historical and discursive selection of his works?

2. Review of Literature

The present authors' points of view is based upon Hermeneutical literary history. In this theory, the literary works are historical. The work has a dialogue with audience via history. In this dialogue, the meanings of works get pluralized. The work has a dialogue with its contemporaries. They interpreted their contemporaries' works upon horizon.

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3. Method

In order to answer the research questions, we first extracted a set of reports about Mohtasham from his contemporary biographers and described the multiplicity and non-occurrence of the reports. Then we showed the process of overcoming and defining some opinions in terms of the chronological era. Our attitude in this paper is based on the method of the history of hermeneutic literature.

4. Results and Discussion

Before examining the reports of Mohtasham's contemporaries and the subsequent biographers, it is necessary to specify the period of the biographies which were with Mohtasham at the same time. If we decrease the contemporary period of time to his own lifetime (1529-1588/935-996) and his generation, we should dedicate all the time (contemporary period of time) to Mohtasham by the year 1602/1010 AH. But if we extend this time to the lives of those who realized Mohtasham's presence, it includes at least 30 years after the death of Mohtasham, and those who wrote their works from Seventh decade of 15th/10th century to the third decade of the 16th/11th century (about Years 1553 to 1621/ 960 to 1030 AH) will be considered as his contemporaries. One of the presuppositions related to the information of contemporary biographies is to find a true and definite narrative about his poet and poetry. Such a presupposition is based on the coincidence of the reports with the literary event and is usually based on biographer's observations but with no go-betweens. The more the poet's reputation is, the more the difference in the views of contemporaries toward him is. This point is certain about Mohtasham Kashani. Different causes have been involved in the emergence of controversy among contemporaries, which we interpret them as constitutive variables of 'contemporaneity blindness'. The three variables of time, environment, and social relationships presented in this section have led to the emergence of differences, contradictions, and ultimately the multiplicity of contemporary biographers' opinions. The two sides of contemporaneity are multiple and non-deterministic due to the fact that they are influenced by the time, place, relationship, and discursive contradictions caused by these variables and present a changeable and multifaceted image of the poet and his poetry. This kind of plurality and alterability of the two sides of contemporaneity has turned the reports of the contemporary biographers into a complex of disproportionate, weak and sparse opinions about the poet (Mohtasham). These three variables will affect both sides of contemporaneity, both the historian's opinions and literary critics as well as the subject of literary history (i.e. literary event). We can say that contemporaneity blindness is, in fact, the outcome of instability

subject and object (biographer and poet). This is the case that cause the contemporaries not to have a true and clear belief of their understanding. As far as we are from the time of Mohtasham, the biographers bring about a single narrative of his life and also his art. They select specific issues from the contradictory opinions of his contemporaries. Soon, all reports, descriptions and indices related to the poet would be considered definite and is spread in all biographies with different words and phrases and that limited selection gradually emerges in the center of the biography of the poet.

5. Conclusion

The narrative of the Safā's history of literature from Mohtasham also stayed in the tradition of biography writing (writing of Tadhkira), the narrative of Golčin Maʿāni in the book of the *Maktab-e woquʿ dar šeʿr-e fārsi*, and various reports are collected about MOḤTAŠAM. The narrative that the commentators of Mohtasham' Divan have made in the introduction is also the same. None of these three current studies has questioned the process of evolution of reports, the focus of opinions and selections during his lifetime and in the history of his audience and has not explained the origin, habitat, and credibility of the data and judgments of their sources.

This article showed how and under what circumstances the index of Mohtasham's reputation was shaped. Traditional literary histories are mostly introduced, analyzed and evaluated by poets and their works based on their popularity indices. In criticizing the history of literature, this question has a significant role in how the reputation index is formed. The audience-focused literary history will give a clear picture of the presence and the life history of Mohtasham. Mohtasham has a multidimensional personality in reality; however, he is downgraded in the history of literature. Some of his artistic outcomes include the invention of the method of 'Vasoukht' and 'Woqu', the openness of male love, the eulogy of monarchy and power, the Shi'ite elegy, the Quatrain (Robaei), the history maker material (Madde Tarikh), the plotter, and he was outstanding in each of these aspects in his time. But among these, he became famous for his elegy. It is worth noting that the determination of the poet's index of reputation in literary history is necessarily reductive, indicating that any discourse reduces the dimensions of artist's creativity to only one dimension that is consistent with the horizon of expectations of that discourse. Although Mohtasham has a high position in a religious group due to his elegies, this discursive growth has diminished two aspects of the poetry: One is the reduction of his works to the elegy and the other one is the reduction of his audience and leading them to a belief group. Of the two aspects of his art, which has been highlighted at least in the history of the

biographies, the elegy and the Ghazal (Woqu), only the elegy in his biography has been focused, whereas his creative individuality has been marginalized in the way of inventing and shaping the theory of Woqu/Vasoukht. His creativity in terms of 'Qasida' and 'Robaei', particularly in his two works, treatises of Jalaliyah and the story of lovers.

The true report of the poet's personality and individuality and artistic rank should be sought not only in the reports of one or more reliable sources along with him, but also in the process of his movement. The literary historian should represent the process of movement of the poet throughout his life as well as the movement related to his works in literary history with a precise timetable. How did the poet live in different ages? What had he been thinking about? What are the aspects of change in his life? Which works belong to what period of his life? On the other hand, the history of the reactions of the audience of his works must also be written separately, in different times, such as in geographic regions, what reactions have appeared in different discourses in relation to his works? His fame index has changed throughout history after his life. What was the basis for those changes? This is a report from Mohtasham Kashani, which parallels the reports of the content and values of his works and gives us a reliable knowledge of him. Mohtasham and his works are considered as a 'literary event', which is a live and eloquent event. The changing position of Mohtasham Kashani depends on the various responses that his works have received.. Finally, the reason for the survival of the literary event are determined by all disagreements.

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