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Prof. Dr. Khaled EL JUNDI
Samira KHADHRAOUI ONTUNC

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RECEPTION OF NASIMI'S WORK BY ORHAN PAMUK IN "THE BLACK BOOK"

Prof. Mykola Vaskiv
Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine
Dr. Oksana Prykhodko
National Aviation University, Ukraine

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for his illuminating help with editing this paper in English.
Authors*

Abstract

Two years ago, in 2019, according to UNESCO, the entire world celebrated the 650th anniversary of the birth of the prominent Azerbaijani poet Seyid Imadeddin Nasimi. In Azerbaijan, 2019 was declared as the "Year of Nasimi.". Translations of works by the Azerbaijani classic and collections of studies of his works have been published in different countries. Moreover, it is important to mention the comprehension of Nasimi's work by Orhan Pamuk in *The Black Book*. The Turkish writer is well acquainted with the theory of Hurufism, and connection with the work of Nasimi. However, it seems more important to go beyond hurufism, to extend its principles of symbolism to different areas. The desire and opportunity of knowing the world, to discover secrets, truths through objects, phenomena of material existence, especially through speech and writing, through reading the hidden semantics of tokens - this is what attracts Pamuk in the works of the Azerbaijani poet, without any close attachment to religion – mystical isolation, or orthodoxy.

Pamuk borrows some ideas from Nasimi (as well as Naimi) and unfolds in *The Black Book*. It is clear that Pamuk's postmodern (or even post-postmodern) vision does not mean that such a symbolist interpretation of these theses (in *The Black Book* they are linked into the system, asserted as a methodology of knowing oneself and the world) is the only correct one. However, the writer, albeit ironic, gives these ideas a system of universal historiosophical character.

Key words: contemporary Turkish literature, Orhan Pamuk, "The Black Book", comparative studies, reception, intertextuality.

INTRODUCTION

These days, it is too narrow to consider Nasimi's work through the prism of only the philosophical intricacies of Sufism and, in particular, Hurufism.

The poetry of the writer convinces that the symbolism of the Qur'anic text, letters and sounds, their reading in facial features, occupies an important place in it, but much more often it is love that balances on the border of a specific love story and Sufi allegorical desire of the ecstatic believer to merge with Allah.

Besides, it is the above-mentioned motif of the *godlikeness* of the human being, but Nasimi focuses precisely on the infinity of the spiritual world of humans, its diversity, and human self-sufficiency. This makes it necessary to consider the work of the classic of Azerbaijani poetry in a much broader context than Hurufism and Sufism — we mean Eastern literature in general and even world literature.

In 2019, according to UNESCO, the entire world celebrated the 650th anniversary of the birth of the prominent Azerbaijani poet Seyid Imadeddin Nasimi. In Azerbaijan, 2019 was declared

as the “Year of Nasimi.”. Translations of works by the Azerbaijani classic and collections of studies of his works have been published in different countries. Anniversary events did not miss Ukraine either.

There was an unveiling of a monument to the poet in Kyiv, and ceremonial presentations dedicated to the anniversary of his birth. First, it is worth mentioning the publication of a collection of works by Nasimi [1], which included works previously translated by Pavlo Movchan, Stanislav Telniuk, and Mykola Miroshnychenko. Nevertheless, most of the poet’s texts are the translations of Dr. Dmytro Chystyak [3], made intentionally for this collection.

Nasimi within the Scope of Eastern Renaissance: Turkish Outlines

In this regard, it is quite appropriate to consider the lyrical works of Imadeddin Nasimi through the prism of the concept of the Russian literary critic-orientalist Nikolai Konrad (1891-1970). N. Konrad was primarily a researcher of Japanese language and literature, a good connoisseur of Chinese literature, as well as an excellent connoisseur of Western European literatures. The researcher was inclined to theoretical generalizations of the results obtained, which could be explained by direct communication with Russian literary critics — former formalists, as well as interest in the methodology of the formal school in general.

The consequence of this was M. Konrad’s theory that the Renaissance in literature covered not only Western European countries but also Eastern countries. Moreover, the Renaissance appeared in the Eastern literatures earlier than in Europe. “Based on the newly realized individual facts of the cultural history of China in the VIII-XII centuries, the author (N. Konrad. – *authors*) proposes to see in certain facts the signs of the era in the history of XIV-XVI centuries Europe called *Renaissance* <...> Then paying attention to certain phenomena of cultural history of Central Asia and Iran in IX-XIII centuries, the author expresses the idea of the possibility of establishing the concept of “Renaissance” as a global phenomenon, not local; phenomenon for the history of great cultural peoples” [4, p. 5]. In addition, let the expressions “certain facts”, “certain phenomena” not be misleading, because the concept of N. Konrad was the result of thorough and long-term research.

The researcher was forced to have strong, indisputable arguments in favour of his theory, because its publication was risky for him. This was explained by the fact that N. Konrad’s views were at odds with the statements of the classics of the Marxism, first of all with the provisions “concerning the geography of the Renaissance” expressed by F. Engels. <...> To the new cultural community, which developed in XV-XVI centuries, he is awkward only the countries of Western and Central Europe; here, as a result of the “greatest progressive coup”, a new European literature emerges, which extends to that part of the Slavic countries that belonged to “Latin Europe” - Dalmatia and Croatia, the Czech Republic and Poland” [7, p. 65]. Therefore, M. Konrad had to argue his theory properly, so as not to be accused of revisionism of Marxist theory, which was considered in the USSR almost a political crime and threatened at least excommunication from public research.

This helped the researcher as, in fact, he was not the first one to express the ideas about the Eastern “Renaissance”. Thus, Konrad’s investigation [4, p. 241–242] had predecessors: Sh. Nutsbidze with the monograph “Rustaveli and the Eastern Renaissance” (1947), J. Javakhishvili’s “History of Georgia” (1948), V. Chanturiy’s “Pedagogy of Georgian Humanism of the XI-XII Centuries” (1961), V. Chaloyan’s “Armenian Renaissance” (1963). V. Zhirmunsky spotlighted the idea of the Caucasus Renaissance in the article “Alisher Navoi and the Problem of the Renaissance in Oriental Literatures” (1961), I. Braginsky presents this thesis in “12 Miniatures” (1965) (N. Konrad mistakenly calls the book “Iranian” miniatures”). I. Borolina and others discussed Turkish literature of the XIV-XVI centuries through the prism of Renaissance tendencies Taking into account Georgian researchers from the mid-1950s, M. Konrad formulates the first provisions of his theory, bringing them together in the

final collection of articles “West and East” (1970). N. Konrad may have known the work of the Swiss scholar Adam Metz (died in 1917, the study was published only after his death) “Muslim Renaissance”. Nevertheless, it is significant that A. Metz’s book was published in the USSR in 1973.

Nikolay Konrad, as already noted, was an excellent connoisseur of Japanese and Chinese literatures. Influenced by the works of his predecessors and his own study of Eastern literature, he concluded that the Renaissance (as a cultural and historical epoch, not just a rapid tendency) originated in the VIII century in China. From there it “moved” to Japan, later it covered the Persian lands and the Turkic literatures, the literatures of Transcarpathia, and only then it covered the countries of Europe.

Influenced, in particular, by M. Konrad’s theory, Ukrainian scholar D. Nalyvaiko [5; 6; 7] (along with other researchers) transfers Renaissance tendencies to Ukrainian literature (also contrary to the assertions of the classics of Marxism), limiting himself to the assertion of the late pre-Renaissance, which turned into the Baroque.

Regarding Eastern literatures and the Renaissance, the apotheosis of Konrad’s theory was the second edition of the two-volume work “Literature of the East in the Middle Ages”, which was published under the editorship of N. Konrad. However, the researcher did not submit any section to it, probably because of his health problems, because in 1970 – the year of publication of the two-volume book – the scholar died.

Very quickly, Soviet literary criticism (apparently under pressure from above) began to harass Konrad’s theory, accusing the author and his followers of shifting, attributing almost accidental coincidences to the literary process and the search for communities where they did not exist. It is from such positions that both the expert in European literatures R. Samarin and the orientalist B. Riftin criticized the theorists of the East Renaissance. Very quickly, Konrad’s concept of the Renaissance was “evicted” to distant academic margins, as not being worth mentioning.

Metaphysical Symbolism of Nasimi’s Works in Pamuk’s “The Black Book”

In Nasimi’s work, the image of blood often appears as a synecdoche, a symbol of human flesh. “Let the devil settle in the blood of the human being, But the name is secret - in the essence of human beings” [1, p. 138]. Blood, the body is the bearer of sinfulness, the manifestation of the essence of “Diablo”, so the poet-mystic is constantly disturbed, oppressed by such imperfections of the human being. That is why Nasimi constantly emphasizes the need to get rid of the burden of the flesh in order for the divine spiritual essence of human beings to be revealed.

P. Akhundova notes that the classic of Azerbaijani literature, as well as hurufism in general, was an apologist of *asceticism*. “Hurufism was unique among other Sufi tariqats - this doctrine did not support asceticism and rejection of earthly pleasures <...>” [1, p. 18]. Although, if we do not take into account the glorification of women’s perfect beauty, which symbolized the beauty and perfection of Allah, it is difficult to find Epicurean motifs in Nasimi’s poetry.

Interestingly, the poet connects his own doubts about the correctness of the chosen way not only because of the attraction of his own flesh over the spirit. Imadeddin Nasimi clearly identifies himself as an Azerbaijani. This is a definition of ethnicity, as well as - more broadly - to the Turkic community, its worldview and religious beliefs, which from the point of view of Islam is a sort of *paganism*.

However, this paganism (obviously *Tengriism* or *Zoroastrianism*) is both a source of doubt for the poet and another way for the Truth, which leads to the same result as the movement to the Truth through deep knowledge of the essence of Islam: “I am a pagan and a Muslim same Azeri. / I am a shepherd and I am lost in the variety of roads” [1, p. 117]; “Although I will

beat idols, Azer - I am too" [1, p. 159]. If a human being, in particular, the poet, is a container of dichotomy, of eternal doubt, then he is also a way, a form, a way of overcoming these doubts, a renunciation of carnal sinfulness.

Knowledge of human beings, of human essence, according to Nasimi, lies primarily in self-knowledge, in the ability to find and preserve the divine. "He who knew the Lord knew himself" [1, p. 91]. "You must know yourself - then know the Lord, / so in prayer Mustafa knew himself from the beginning" [1, p. 96]. "Without knowing yourself, you are a stranger to yourself, / and the epoch is a mystery to you, a dungeon" [1, p. 120]. Nasimi creates his own Hurufite hermeneutic circle: through the knowledge of Allah you know yourself better and better; having known yourself more deeply - the essence of the world is fuller, and "You know the Lord", because "Everything is obvious - God's reflection is supernatural" [1, p. 147].

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Nasimi's work and Hurufism are inextricably linked. Yet we return to the problem of the greatness of Nasimi as a poet. We predict that the poetic reproduction of Hurufite ideas is much easier to perceive and remember in general than the philosophical and religious considerations of Naimi. Nevertheless, perhaps researchers of Nasimi's work are too focused on the Hurufite basis of the poet's work, reducing him to an illustrator, a poet-popularizer of the ideas of Hurufism.

It is very interesting to mention the comprehension of Nasimi's work by Orhan Pamuk in *The Black Book*. The Turkish writer is well acquainted with the theory of Hurufism, and connection with the work of Nasimi.

However, it seems more important to go beyond hurufism, to extend its principles of symbolism to different areas. For example, what Nasimi discovered for himself and his listeners and readers: "<...> not only the Qur'an, but also the world is full of mysteries <...>" [2, p. 437].

The desire and opportunity of knowing the world, to discover secrets, truths through objects, phenomena of material existence, especially through speech and writing, through reading the hidden semantics of tokens - this is what attracts Pamuk in the works of the Azerbaijani poet, without any close attachment to religion - mystical isolation, or orthodoxy.

Pamuk borrows some ideas from Nasimi (as well as Naimi) and unfolds in *The Black Book*: "The world is a book" [2, p. 244]; "<...> Behind the visible world around lies a simple mystery, whose shackles are able to be cast off as soon as it reveals its secret <...>" [2, p. 287].

And in order to "reveal the secret", "the way to get rid of", the author of the novel resorts to another conceptual thesis of Nasimi - you need to know yourself ("<...> for the human being there is no recipe for how to become yourself" [2, p. 302]).

It is clear that Pamuk's postmodern vision does not mean that such a symbolist interpretation of these theses (in *The Black Book* they are linked into the system, asserted as a methodology of knowing oneself and the world) is the only correct one. However, the writer, albeit ironic, gives these ideas a system of universal historiosophical character.

Moreover, “he looks at the universe as a mysterious place full of mysteries and subtexts. Those who perceive the world as routine, unambiguous and completely predictable, are doomed to defeat, and hence to slavery...” [2, p. 446].

Fazlullah Naimi, the founder of Hurufism, is also mentioned in *The Black Book*. However, Pamuk is not limited to the Hurufite religious-mystical essence, but rather he ignores it, going far beyond it. The novel is about the teaching of Fazlullah as principles and ways to know *transcendent truths*, irrational world, secret knowledge through sounds and letters.

“According to Fazlallah, sound serves as the boundary between being and non-being. After all, everything materialized from *the invisible* has its own sound... As for the most developed form of sound, it is obviously a *word* <...> *word* is magic and consists of letters. As for the letters that denote the quintessence of being, its meaning and the presence of Allah on earth, they can be clearly seen in human images” [3, p. 434].

CONCLUSIONS

Nasimi’s work and Hurufism are inextricably linked. Yet we return to the problem of the greatness of Nasimi as a poet. Why is his name much better known and more popular in Azerbaijan, in the East, in the entire civilized world than the ancestor of Hurufism Fazlullah Naimi? We predict that the poetic reproduction of Hurufite ideas is much easier to perceive and remember in general than the philosophical and religious considerations of Naimi. Nevertheless, perhaps researchers of Nasimi’s work are too focused on the Hurufite basis of the poet’s work, reducing him to an illustrator, a poet-popularizer of the ideas of Hurufism. Orhan Pamuk resorts to such a valuable perception of Nasimi’s work and Hurufism in the novel. As we discussed, the contemporary Turkish writer is not limited to the Hurufite religious and metaphysical essence, however, rather he ignores it, going far beyond it. Pamuk’s “*The Black Book*” is about the teaching of Fazlullah as principles and ways to know transcendent truths, human knowledge through sounds and letters.

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