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"THE ISSUE OF NATIONAL CHARACTER IN AZERBAIJANI DRAMATURGY"

Despite its numerous contradictions, Azerbaijani literature during the Soviet era remained an integral part of our culture and represented a significant phase in the history of our 20th-century literature. In spite of all the pressure, persecution, and ideological impositions of the time, Azerbaijani literature survived and gave rise to many valuable works of art. The seventy-year-long totalitarian regime of Soviet ideology forced many nations, including the Azerbaijani people, to view the world solely through the lens of Bolshevik ideology — in other words, through “rose-colored glasses.” Particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, even a simple inclination towards the culture of the East was considered a betrayal of socialism, leading to the persecution of thousands of intellectuals under the label of “Pan-Turkism” during the repressions of 1937. [1, p.240]

The literature of the 1960s marked a turning point as it began to reinterpret traditional themes through a new artistic perspective. Writers and dramatists of this era portrayed the aesthetic essence of art in a broader and more dynamic manner than in previous decades. The emergence of lyrical-psychological characterizations and the prioritization of the human factor became central to literary discourse. As is well known, the issue of lyrical-psychological characterization has always been among the most pressing concerns in both literature and art criticism.

In contrast to traditional Soviet literature, the new Azerbaijani literature—both in prose and drama—had significant advantages in transforming social reality into artistic reality. There are numerous classical examples of national character in Azerbaijani literature, including *Vaqif* (from *Vaqif* by Samed Vurgun), *Jahandar Agha* (*Dəli Kür* by Ismayil Shikhli), *Bayram Bey* (*Don't Look Back, Old Man* by Ilyas Afandiyev), *Boyuk Bey* (*The Song Remained in the Mountains* by Ilyas Afandiyev), *Karbalayi Ismayil* (*The Snowy Pass* by Farman Karimzade), and *Rustam Kishi* (*The Great Support* by Mirza Ibrahimov). These works offer profound illustrations of national character. Through these figures, authors have portrayed the spiritual and moral values of the Azerbaijani people, synthesizing qualities such as courage, resilience, pride, honor, masculinity, and loyalty to ethical values—attributes inherited from our ancestors.

It is an undeniable truth that national character is one of the defining elements that makes any literature unique. Every national literature, in the broadest sense,

embodies the national character and thus addresses the crucial issues of national reality. Such works generally serve as thoughtful meditations on the historical development, psychology, and worldview of a people, encapsulating the moral and ethical identity of the nation. [3, p.109]

One of the most compelling literary examples in this regard is *The Great Support*, a novel by People's Writer Mirza Ibrahimov. Against the backdrop of public and political events unfolding in rural and collective farm life, the novel vividly presents memorable and distinctive examples of national character. The character of Rustam Kishi is particularly notable for his originality and the depth with which his inner world is rendered. He plays a pivotal role in the development of the plot, the emergence of conflict, and the characterization of other figures.

Yet, the praise, accolades, and admiration he receives—his frequent mentions in high-profile meetings as a "matchless chairman" and a "model leader"—ultimately confuse and overwhelm him, deepening the tragedy of his character. The richness of folkloric elements in *The Great Support* significantly contributes to the novel's success as a literary work focused on the creation of national character.

Ismayil Shikhli's *Dəli Kür* and Farman Karimzade's *The Snowy Pass* also achieved significant acclaim by offering a contemporary perspective on recent history and exploring the evolution of national character. In *The Snowy Pass*, the writer elevates the figure of Karbalayi Ismayil to the level of a symbolic representation of manhood and humanity. Through this character, readers are exposed to the finest attributes of genuine national identity.

Thus, the prioritization of the human factor in Azerbaijani prose and the in-depth exploration of the inner world of ordinary individuals became a defining feature of this literary movement. These developments marked a turning point in the essence and character of Azerbaijani prose. During the early 20th century, national self-awareness began to take shape with particular intensity, and national character emerged as a prominent theme in both literature and culture.

The 1960s witnessed profound transformations across Azerbaijani literature, music, ballet, theater, visual arts, and cinema. Director Tofiq Kazimov, who played a significant role in the history of Azerbaijani stagecraft, directed several plays at the Academic Theater and became a central figure in this cultural revival. From the moment he was appointed chief director, he consistently invited representatives of the younger generation to the theater. Among those who answered his call were young actors such as Amaliya Panahova, Hamlet Khanizade, Samandar Rzayev, and Shafagha Mammadova. Hasan Turabov also emerged as a prominent actor under Kazimov's direction, consistently playing leading roles in his productions by the late 1960s. [8, p.13]

Over the years, Tofiq Kazimov directed a wide range of productions at the Academic Theater, including Shikhali Gurbanov's *Without You* (1967), Ilyas

Afandiyev's *I Cannot Forget* (1968), *The Destroyed Diaries* (1969), *The Sound from the Gardens* (1975), Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's *After the Rain* (1971), Imran Gasimov's *When the Tale Begins* (1973), Alexander Vampilov's *The Son* (1974), Maksud Ibrahimbeyov's *Hope* (1976), Anar's *The City's Summer Days* (1977), Akram Aylisli's *The Branches from Which the Birds Flew* (1978), and *The Flat Hill* (1980). These plays, presented in a lyrical-psychological style, brought about a major transformation in the theater's repertory policy.

In general, Azerbaijani dramaturgy of the 1960s gave rise to a number of playwrights whose unique styles contributed to the creation of compelling and memorable representations of national character. In the artistic works of People's Writer Ilyas Afandiyev, national character is intricately connected with national mentality. The unity between the fate of the nation and the fate of the individual serves as the backbone of such plays. With realistic and nuanced portrayals, the playwright reveals the complex and often contradictory nature of his characters.

In his play *The Song Remained in the Mountains*, the struggle for freedom of the Azerbaijani people is depicted through the symbolic lens of Karabakh. The issue of national character creation has always remained a central concern in both literature and theater. In this particular work, the character of Boyuk Bey stands out as a new type of literary personality in 20th-century Azerbaijani literature.

After 1990, the stage of the Academic National Drama Theater began hosting both classical and contemporary Azerbaijani, Russian, and international plays. In addition to reviving previous productions in new stagings, the theater introduced works such as Ilyas Afandiyev's *The Solitary Hawthorn Tree* (March 6, 1991, dir. M. Farzalibeyov), *The Mad and the Sane* (Sept 9, 1992), *The Ruler and His Daughter* (Oct 14, 1996), Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's *Where Is This World Going?* (Sept 30, 1991, dir. B. Osmanov), *The Sword That Cuts Ourselves* (April 20, 1998, dir. A. Kazimov), and many more.

The repertoire also included Garcia Lorca's *The She-Wolf* (Dec 24, 1991), M. Hagverdiyev's *Oh, Women, Women* (June 30, 1992), Nabi Khazri's *Love Lives On* (Sept 18, 1994) and *Vengeance Will Not Wait for Doomsday* (May 24, 1995), Kamal Abdulla's *The Light of Millennia* (Jan 12, 1995), V. Babanli's *A Mother's Revenge* (May 18, 1995), Ali Amirli's *The Patron* (Dec 12, 1995), and works by Elchin such as *Ah, Paris, Paris!* (Nov 1, 1997) and *My Beloved Madman* (Nov 25, 1998).

These productions, among many others, demonstrate that the artistic legacy of the 1990s was deeply rooted in the developments of the 1970s. The surge in national emotion and rapid self-awareness that characterized the 1990s were organically linked to the cultural atmosphere of the 1970s. [15, p.107]

Unfortunately, the 20th century was far from favorable for the development of national culture. The world, already shaken by revolutionary upheavals at the beginning of the century, once again found itself at a crossroads by its end. As a

result of Armenian aggression, Azerbaijani territories were occupied one after another. Thousands of innocent people were killed, wounded, or displaced. People from Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh region were forced to abandon their homes and seek refuge in other parts of the country. Cities and villages were destroyed, and citizens experienced not only material losses but also profound moral and psychological devastation. Cultural heritage monuments built over millennia were destroyed, and numerous cultural institutions located in the occupied territories were looted. Despite these challenges, the Academic National Drama Theater continued staging major productions throughout the 1990s. Among them were Ilyas Afandiyev's *The Mad and the Sane*, *The Solitary Hawthorn Tree*, and *The Ruler and His Daughter*; Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's *Where Is This World Going?* and *The Sword That Cuts Ourselves*; Nabi Khazri's *Burla Khatun*; and Nariman Hasanzadeh's *Pompey's Invasion of the Caucasus*, among others. On December 27, 1991, the Azerbaijan State Academic Drama Theater was officially renamed the Azerbaijan National Academic Drama Theater. During the independence period, the Theater undertook its first tour to Turkey, presenting Ilyas Afandiyev's *Our Strange Destiny* and *The Lovers' Reunion in Hell*. On a second visit, the Theater performed *Where Is This World Going?* In October of the same year, *The Lovers' Reunion in Hell* was staged in Berlin, Germany. In May 1996, the Theater took part in the second International Chekhov Festival in Moscow with *King Lear*. In November 1998, the troupe toured several Turkish cities—Erzurum, Sivas, Kayseri, and Ankara—presenting *The Ruler and His Daughter*, *The Sword That Cuts Ourselves*, and *My Beloved Madman*.

The Academic National Drama Theater went on to perform in many prestigious international festivals. In 2006, it participated in the 3rd International Theater Space Festival in Istanbul and the 4th "Tuganlyk" Festival of Turkic-Speaking States in Ufa with Elchin's *The Killer*. In 2008, at the 18th International Experimental Theater Festival in Cairo, the Theater staged *The Game of Crime*, based on Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. It also took part in the 8th Black Sea States Theater Festival in Trabzon in 2007, performing Otar Ioseliani's *If Only the Cart Hadn't Turned Over...*

In 2008, it presented Elchin's *Among the Bees* and Ali Amirli's *The Patron* in Kazan, as well as in Ankara, Konya, and Tarsus. In 2009, it staged Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's *The Sword That Cuts Ourselves* in Ankara and Kayseri, and performed Turkish playwright Tuncer Cücenoglu's *Avalanche* at the "One Breath, One Voice" International Festival in Konya. Thus, throughout these years, Azerbaijani theater continued its creative quest with growing determination.

On April 10, 1998, the historical drama *The Sword That Cuts Ourselves* (Göytürks), written by Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, was premiered. Directed by Agakishi Kazimov, with stage design by Ismayil Mammadov and music by Javanşir Guliyev,

the production was dedicated to the 1450th anniversary of the Göytürk State and the 80th anniversary of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. [17, p.438]

People's Writer Ilyas Afandiyev's drama *Sheikh Khiyabani* is another outstanding example of national character portrayal. The play is dedicated to the memory of Sheikh Mohammad Khiyabani—a prominent public figure and national hero—who led a revolt against the monarchy in 1920 and established a short-lived Azerbaijani national government in Tabriz. Both the play and its staging center on the idea of national freedom and independence, resisting both internal and external oppression. Its greatest achievement lies in bringing the image of the freedom fighter Khiyabani to the Azerbaijani stage for the first time.

The verse dramas of People's Poet Nariman Hasanzadeh—*Let the East Know*, *The Atabeys*, and *Pompey's Invasion of the Caucasus*—were also successfully staged at the Academic National Drama Theater and drew significant public attention. *The Atabeys* stands out as a highly original dramatic work, presenting a distinct approach to the creation of national character. People's Poet Nabi Khazri's play *The Sword Driven into the Soil* is based on the second story of the epic *Dede Qorqud*, titled *The Plundering of Salur Kazan's Home*.

In playwright Ali Amirli's drama *The Patron*, the character of philanthropist Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev is portrayed with great attention to his moral and national qualities. Charity has long been a deeply rooted value in Azerbaijani culture. From the second half of the 19th century, prominent national entrepreneurs—such as Taghiyev, Shamsi Asadullayev, Murtuza Mukhtarov, and Agamusa Nagiyev—used their wealth to fund public education, build schools, theaters, and hospitals. Among them, Taghiyev remains the most iconic figure. Referred to as the “father of the nation,” he is the first Azerbaijani whose statue was erected during his lifetime. [19]

In all of the dramatic works analyzed above, leading artists not only promoted the ideals of national unity and independence, but also depicted the individual aspects of national character with artistic distinction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the creation of national character has been one of the central directions of Azerbaijani dramaturgy and literary thought. At different stages of the twentieth century, writers and playwrights sought to present national identity in close connection with individual human destiny. Despite strong ideological pressure during the Soviet period, national and moral values were preserved through artistic images. From the 1960s onward, the emphasis on the human factor allowed national character to be portrayed in a deeper and more psychologically nuanced way. During the years of independence, themes of national memory, freedom, and historical consciousness came to the forefront of dramaturgy. All these factors confirm that national character remains a fundamental aesthetic and ideological pillar of Azerbaijani drama.

Günəl İqbal qızı Əliyeva

Xülasə

Azərbaycan ədəbiyyatı Sovet dövrü mədəniyyətimizin ayrılmaz bir hissəsi olub, XX əsr ədəbiyyat tariximizdə mühüm bir mərhələ təşkil edir. Həmin dövrün bütün təzyiq və təqiblərinə, ideoloji təsirlərinə rəğmən ədəbiyyatımız yaşamış və bir çox qiymətli sənət nümunələri yaranmışdır. 60-cı illər ədəbiyyatının ənənəvi mövzulara tamam fərqli bədii təfəkkür işığında nəzər salması, öncə özünü onda göstərirdi ki, bu nəsrin və dramaturgiyanın yaradıcıları sənətin estetik qayəsini əvvəlkindən daha geniş təsvir edirdilər. Məqalədə adları çəkilən dram əsərlərində görkəmli sənətkarlar xalqın milli istiqlaliyyətini və milli birliyini tərənnüm etməklə həm də hər bir obrazın fərdi milli xarakterini özəlliklə təsvir etmişlər.

Açar sözlər: Azərbaycan dramaturgiyası, ədəbiyyat, teatr, mədəniyyət, yazıçı

Gunel Iqbal qizi Aliyeva

Summary

Azerbaijani literature was an integral part of our Soviet culture and constitutes an important stage in our 20th century literary history. Despite all the pressures and persecutions and ideological influences of that period, our literature survived and many valuable examples of art were created. The fact that the literature of the 60s looked at traditional themes in the light of a completely different artistic thinking was first manifested in the fact that the creators of this prose and dramaturgy described the aesthetic goal of art more broadly than before. In the dramatic works mentioned in the article, prominent artists glorified the national independence and national unity of the people and also specifically described the individual national character of each character.

Keywords: Azerbaijani dramaturgy, literature, theater, culture, writer

Гюнель Икбал кызы Алиева

Резюме

Азербайджанская литература была неотъемлемой частью нашей советской культуры и представляет собой важный этап в истории нашей литературы XX века. Несмотря на все давления, преследования и идеологические влияния того периода, наша литература выжила, и было создано много ценных произведений искусства. Тот факт, что литература 1960-х годов рассматривала традиционные темы в свете совершенно иного художественного мышления, впервые проявился в том, что создатели этой прозы и драмы стали шире, чем прежде, описывать эстетическое назначение искусства. В упомянутых в статье драматических произведениях выдающиеся деятели искусств воспевали национальную независимость и национальное единство народа, а также особо подчеркивали индивидуальный национальный характер каждого персонажа.

Ключевые слова: *Азербайджанская драматургия, литература, театр, культура, писатель*

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Rəyçi: *filologiya üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru Sevinc S.Əhmədova*