

Philosophical Features of Vexhi Buharaja's Poetry

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Abstract

This paper focuses on one of the most prominent elements of Vexhi Buharaja's poetry, which is Islamic mysticism. Buharaja has shown a significant interest in Eastern culture since early on. In 1940, he published a series of articles in magazines like "Kultura Islame" and "Njeriu", dedicated to the scholars and poets of the East, including Namik Kemal, Teufik Fikret, Saadiu, Nizamiu, and Shiraziu. Buharaja was an expert in the culture, history, art, and literature of the Eastern countries. He translated some of the most important works from this area into Albanian and was deeply influenced by Islamic culture and philosophy. This influence is evident in his original poems, which were written between 1940 and 1944. Although he only wrote a total of 20 poems and two literary sketches, they are rich in content and have multidimensional value. These works were published in various periodicals of the time, including "Kultura Islame", "Zani i Nalte", and "Njeriu". According to records of his life, at the age of 22, he won first place in a literary competition in 1942 with a poem titled "Përpara Tomorit" ("Before Tomori"). Although his contribution to poetry was modest compared to his work in translation and study, his original creations still embody a unique spirit that is of interest to researchers for analysis. In this article, we will analyze Islamic mysticism using the method of analyzing poetic texts and descriptivism. This approach sheds light on the individuality and creativity of Buharaja, an Albanian poet who has not been given the recognition he deserves in contemporary Albanian literature. Additionally, it provides insights into the influence of Eastern literature on this Albanian author. The study of Islamic philosophy, objective idealism, absolute being, and chronotopic (time and space) are the key areas of focus in this analysis.

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Introduction

Islamic culture has had a significant impact on Albanian literature for centuries. It began in the 18th century with Albanian writers using the Arabic alphabet, such as Muhamet Çami, Nezim Berati, Sulejman Ramazani, and Hasan Zyko Kamberi. The influence of Islamic culture on Albanian literature continues even today, with many contemporary Albanian writers being stylistically and thematically influenced by it.

One of these contemporary writers is Vexhi Buharaja. Although he is considered a minor author in terms of the number of poems he has published, but from the point of view of the aesthetic value of these poems, his writing style is unique and important. Buharaja faced many difficulties in life, including persecution by the Albanian totalitarian regime, which made it challenging for him to cultivate the genre of poetry. As the researcher Ymer Çiraku notes, Buharaja's virtuoso violin strings could carry the worries and music of the soul, but not the rhythms and rumbles which were required during the time of the totalitarian system (Çiraku, 2009, 204).

Buharaja embraced Islamic philosophy and the poetic features of Persian literature, particularly those of famous Persian authors such as Firdusi, Saadi, and Shirazi. He lovingly translated their works into the Albanian language, and this influence is felt in the poems he wrote, which were inspired by the authenticity of Buharaja. While Islamic mysticism was extensively explored in the poetry of Naim Frashëri, Buharaja realized it in a different form.

In the poetry of this author it is explored a unique way of ascending from the physical realm to the cosmic space, where universalized thoughts and emotions also exist. The key supporting and guiding principle in Buharaja's poems is objective idealism. This philosophy is present in all of his works, but it is presented and obtained in different ways. This paper will further elaborate on the characteristics of Buharaja's poetry.

1. The mystical spirit, the philosophical essence of Buharaja poetry

The interpretation of Vexhi Buharaja's poetry has been the subject of much debate among researchers. Some classify it as elegiac, philosophical, erotic, or landscape poetry. These classifications are based on textual elements that highlight the features of each type. However,

the common denominator for all of these classifications is the fermentation of the philosophical view of objective idealism, or mysticism. What exactly is objective idealism and how did it become a part of Vexhi Buharaja's poetic opus?

Objective idealism is a philosophical worldview that considers a superhuman consciousness, known as the "absolute idea", "world reason", or simply "idea", as the primary basis of everything that exists (Khalidi, Muhammad A.: 2005, 64). Plato and Hegel are the most well-known representatives of this form of idealism, but their followers were numerous. The influence of objective idealism was not limited to its birthplace in ancient Greece and the Western world, but also spread to the Middle East and beyond (Audi R, ed.: 2015, 447).

Arab philosophers and thinkers inherited the essence of objective idealism from Greek philosophers. They renewed, re-dimensioned and completed this philosophy to develop a system of their own, which was stamped with Islamic philosophy. In this philosophy, the "absolute idea" is defined with a clear referent, which is the eternal God, as the Creator of everything. Everything that exists, from the smallest to the largest, is only a manifestation of the absolute idea. God not only created nature, society and the mind of man, but he also regulates them because he is all-powerful. This type of philosophy is the foundation of mysticism in literature (Adamson et al. 2005, f. 87).

Vexhi Buharaja was an Albanian poet whose work was inspired by Islamic mysticism. He was particularly influenced by Persian authors, whose poetic style had a dominant mystic element. However, unlike these authors, Buharaja incorporated elements of Albanian nature into his work, giving it a unique perspective and making it an original contribution to Islamic mysticism in Albanian poetry.

The initial lines of the poem titled "Se je lule që s'humbet..." ("You are a flower not to lose") encapsulate the philosophical notion of absolute and objective ideas. The verse commences with a poignant illustration, "Flower, you are so beautifully beautiful (...)." The author further expounds on the idea, emphasizing its superiority over companionship, "You are above friends, so we say. You have a fragrance that is beyond description."

In the first verse, the poet presents the concept of the creation of the world. The lyrical subject, who is identified with the poet himself, tries to find the origin of the creation of life and

being through a rhetorical question. This is where the concept of emanation comes to the fore, supporting the theory that the world necessarily flows from God. It is believed that the world was created by God's command, which is mentioned in Quran, surah Yasin-82: "When He wills a thing, His command is only to say "Become!", and He immediately becomes."

The text below appears to be a philosophical reflection on the concept of God as the first mover and giver of life to all beings in the universe. It also discusses the meaning of the word "pardon" as a symbol of the gift and mercy of a supernatural power that controls everything, including life. The flower, which is a poetic element in Buharaja, is not only a literal and allegorical representation but also a symbol of life itself. This flower carries a great meaning and emotional significance, and it seems to naturally align with the essence of being.

The verse "Të ka vën' një Dor' e lirë" ("A free hand was given to you") reflects the idea that the world was created by a divine or supernatural power. The phrase "Free hand" implies the existence of an external force that creates and regulates all things. The word "Dor" represents the graphic signs that decode the external referent from which the making and unmaking of matter takes place. The use of a capital letter in the presentation of this word, along with the qualifier "free," outlines the Creator of the world and the universe.

The flower, representing life itself, is a product of God's creation. The poetic element of the hand was chosen as the main limb that shapes or creates it. In one sense, the hand represents the human limb that performs an action, which is the instigator or cause of something. It also indicates the way or skill with which something was done. At the same time, the hand signifies the completion of work or the consequences of actions, which carry traces of the properties or qualities of the action. In the poetic meaning derived from Buharaja, the hand is presented in an abstract and not concrete form. This is not an ordinary hand but an unusual one, belonging only to the Creator. The grammatical device of the capital letter, which is used to mark proper names, expresses this fact. The use of the word "free" with the determinant "hand" supports the idea that this hand has absolute power, which knows no limits in the time or spatial spectrum.

Another principle of objective idealism is presented in this poem, which states that the universe is a reflection or shadow of an idea. This is illustrated through the analogy of the relationship between human beings and the Divine. The copy of the objective idea is manifested through humanity.

The verse “je mbi shoqe, ndaj të themë” (“you are above my friend, so we say”) connotes the philosophical concept of differentiation and escalation of matter within Islamic philosophy. This philosophy essentially distinguishes people based on their obedience to Allah and their performance of good deeds. While people are regarded as equals according to Islamic beliefs, their priority is determined by their commitment to the Creator's laws. Consequently, Buharaja employs the comparative degree to emphasize this priority, stating that "you are above friends."

Buharaja’s poems often express the philosophy of objective idealism in the functioning of the universe. However, the way in which this philosophy is presented and obtained varies. The isotopic field, which reveals the relationships and functioning of the universe, is evidence of this philosophical essence. Keywords such as sunlight, the wheel of the sky, hope, happiness, solitude, infinite Heaven, mercy, night, dawn, vitality, fading, purple and mystery, are just some of the elements that demonstrate the philosophical atmosphere and creative worldview of our poet.

2. Techniques of realizing objective idealism through verses

The poem from Buharaja explores the theme of the zoomorphic world, where the existence of the Creator is felt in every element of the poet's vocabulary. This world appears in various forms such as a rose, a flower, a cypress, a lily, a bunch of jasmine, grass, basil, forest, and wreath. The elements of the plant world are frequently used in several Buharaja poems, and in many cases, the same element is used in different contexts. For example, the word “flower” is used eleven times, and each repetition is covered with a different poetic background. However, all the uses of this word have remained true to the philosophical essence of the poem. The multitude and variety of uses are explained by the fact that plants are the most tangible referents of the physical cycle of matter. Matter passes through the links of fragility, beauty, delicacy, and then fading. The matter is always in a position of “needy” and is always looking for support, while God is the power that fulfils and completes everything.

Buharaja’s poetry, as a function of objective idealism, is dominated by the multidimensional matter of the cosmos. Through the use of atmospheric phenomena such as rain, sun, volcano, and earthquake, as well as fluid elements like water and fire, and zoomorphic forms such as sheep, frog, partridge, butterfly, bird, nightingale, etc., powerful philosophical

messages are conveyed. For example, in the poem “Heart”, the experience of human life is expressed through the verses: Do të puthin kaqë rreze, rreze lar me uj’ floriri, /Do të falen kaqë mendje, mendje lyer me drit’ qiriri,/ Det’ i jetës do’ marr’ valë...! (“They will kiss so many rays, rays bathed in golden water, / So many minds will pray, minds painted with cand light, / Sea of life will take waves...”).

Based on the general context of the poem, another aspect of the objectivist point of view is understood, namely the experience with difficulties, vicissitudes, pain and problems of various kinds, which are marked directly in the verse: Det’ i jetës do’ marr’ valë...! (The sea of life will take ' waves...!).

The undulating and cyclical patterns of the ocean's waves serve as a poignant metaphor for the vicissitudes of human existence. Our lives are marked by an array of emotions ranging from elation and contentment to sorrow and despair, from fervour and enthusiasm to apathy and lethargy. While experiencing such emotional extremities can have contrary effects on individuals, it is often those who are able to withstand the trials and tribulations that emerge stronger and develop a closer relationship with their creator.

3. The concept of chronotopos according to the "absolute idea"

The concept of chronotopos is another dimension of objective idealism that consists of two axes: time (chronos) and space (topos). However, this concept does not exist in the plane of the absolute idea because the Creator is eternal, infinite, and omnipresent. God has no defined geographical space. He is present everywhere in every particle of the universe. This principle is the foundation of Islamic philosophy, representing the universal and eternal oneness of the true being. When the matter is variable or non-constant and in a permanent state of flux, only the soul is immortal. Everything else is subject to impermanence. This is also evident in Buharaja’s verse: “Ky livadh s’do mbetet/Pa një lule, pa selvi.../Njëra vishket dhe kalon.../...vjen një tjetër... bukuri...” - (“This meadow will not remain without a flower, without a cypress, one fades and passes, while another comes... beauty”).

Cyclical time refers to the repetition of events, actions, and images. Everything in this sense repeats itself, moving in a cyclical order that is subject to the flow of time. The nature of cyclical time is not only expressed through symbols but is also directly conveyed in verses. The

verse “njëra vishket dhe kalon.../...vjen një tjetër bukuri” – (“one fades and passes.../...another beauty comes”) demonstrates the cyclical nature of time. Eternity is impossible for every creature of God as it is conditional and temporary in this world. Even though a flower withers and completes its cycle, it repeats itself with its own seed. Similarly, despite the disintegration of all its particles, the mast repeats itself. Buharaja unequivocally states that the meadow will not remain without flowers. Finally, the concept of beauty also appears, highlighting the role and merit of the Creator. The flower cannot become beautiful by itself, nor can man beautify it. It is an external objective force that realizes and gives form to all creatures.

Buharaja’s poetic conception suggests that the absolute idea existed before nature and man. This idea is integral to the dialectical development of everything, including nature and society. The chronotopic axis of the matter revolves around the universe in both an abstract and general way, as well as in a concrete way that mentions Albanian subject toponyms, and hydronyms, such as Mount Tomorri, Osumi, Shëndnaum, and historical figures that reveal clear references to specific periods, such as the poem dedicated to Margarita Tutulani. Margarita Tutulani was shot together with her brother Kristaq on July 5, 1943 by the Italian fascists. This clear axis of time and space transcends a universal poetic system, which includes the poet’s philosophical point of view and constitutes the essence of Buharaja’s work.

Conclusions:

In this philosophical analysis of Vexhi Buharaja’s poetry, it becomes clear that the essence of his philosophy is centred on love for the Creator and the mystical spirit. According to Buharaja, every aspect of the earthly world, including spiritual sensations and thoughts, is derived from the cosmic world. God is not only seen as the creator of the universe, but also as the driving force behind our inner and outer worlds. The concept of emanation is at the heart of his poetry, which supports the theory that the world flows from God and was created by God’s command. Buharaja incorporates universal features of Islamic philosophy into his work, while also infusing it with elements of Albanian nature and mentality. This is further proven in the analysis of his poetics in this study.

Upon conducting an analysis of some of the principal poems, it has become evident that Islamic philosophy presents the mechanics of the universe in three distinct ways, each with its unique teachings. These teachings, in turn, provide a unique perspective on the workings of the

universe. It is worth noting that the Islamic philosophy approach is different from that of other philosophical schools. Consequently, it is a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge on the subject.

First, through the isotopic field, which directly reflects the matter of the universe, such as the light of the sun, the wheel of the sky, the infinite sky, mercy, night, dawn, vitality, fading, mystery, etc.? This matter appears through atmospheric phenomena such as rain, sun, volcano, and earthquake; through the fluid elements, such as water and fire; through zoomorphic forms, such as sheep, frogs, partridge, butterflies, birds, nightingale, etc.; through phytomorphic elements, such as: rose, flower, cypress, lily, bunch of jasmine, grass, basil, forest, flower wreath, etc. These elements are the most concrete referents of the physical cycle of matter, which is dependent on God's laws.

The present text delves into the concept of chronotype, which serves to distinguish between the cyclical time of the universe and the eternal time and space of the Creator. The verse of Buharaja briefly touches upon the idea that solely the soul can lay claim to immortality, whereas everything else is subject to temporal power.

Thirdly, by using graphic signs within the text, general words can take on the connotation of specific words, suggesting the existence of an external force that creates and regulates all things. For instance, the term "Freehand" does not represent a product of human creation. However, by capitalizing the first letter and combining it with the adjective "free," it suggests the existence of a Creator who is responsible for the world and the universe.

The three quotations presented underscore the essence of Buharaja's poetry in terms of both its subject matter and stylistic elements. It is evident that Buharaja's literary works essentially embody the philosophy of object idealism. The poet's style and content converge to expound the concept of object idealism through his verses.

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