

Postmodern Concept of an Individual in the Oeuvre of Turkish Authoress Buket Uzuner

Shemshurenko Oksana Vladimirovna and Nigmatullina Alsu Mansurovna
Kazan Federal University, Kremlevskaya St. 18, 420008 Kazan, Russia

Abstract: This study presents viewpoints of both domestic and Foreign, Turkish literary historians and critics on the problem of defying postmodernism as a literary school. There has been expressed an opinion that methodology of studying Russian postmodernism in the researches of domestic authors allows investigating literary postmodernism in Turkey. The article also demonstrates viewpoints of Turkish literary historians on the problem of postmodernism in Turkish literary. One of the investigated issues becomes building postmodern concept of an individual in the oeuvre of Turkish authoress Buket Uzuner, one of the prominent representatives of Turkish literary postmodernism. For the purposes of comprehensive investigation of the problem mentioned a wide range of study methods has been applied, including scientific and theoretic method of analyzing literary sources, descriptive method, method of compositional analysis of literary text. In the course of the investigation, we have found out that the author, pursuing an aim of building adequate postmodern concept of an individual, often touches upon the following topics that are related to spiritual searches: world-view crisis, creative work, childhood, etc. Peculiarities of prose and artistic time continuum as well as some linguistic peculiarities of Buket Uzuner's works have been studied and analyzed. Analysis of various angles of Buket Uzuner's creative works allows composing approximate world building of the authoress. She often touches upon existential topics (like creative works, love, etc.) and the readers are invited to mull those over. Buket Uzuner's style is characterized by fragmentary and eclectic nature and dynamic narration. Performed study allows us to make an important conclusion that concept of an individual in the oeuvre of Buket Uzuner, associated with sincerity, loneliness (which looks more like a retreat) reflects social changes that are taking place and touches on meditative rethinking of the world and one's place in this world.

Key words: Postmodernism, concept of an individual, Buket Uzuner, chronotope, fragmentary nature of composition, incompleteness of artistic time continuum, linguistic peculiarities

INTRODUCTION

The term "postmodernist literature" describes typical features of literature of the mid-to-late 20th century (fragmentary character, irony, black humour, etc.) and also attitude to ideas of the Enlightenment that are appropriate for modernist literature.

Postmodernism in literature, just like postmodernism in general is difficult to identify, since there is no consensus on specific features of this phenomenon, its frames and significance.

According to Skoropanova (1986), postmodernism as a literary school is "a complex of literary works that appeared in various countries of the world, belief and methodology base of which are presented by ideas and concepts of post-philosophy (or similar beliefs) which esthetics is based on textuality principles and grounds pluralism of beliefs, cultural languages and styles, created

by means of reconstruction of cultural inter text and modeling hyper-reality which forms essential aspects of poetics". Proving that Russian postmodernism is a new trend in Russian artistic literature and an independent branch of international postmodern literature. Skoropanova (1986) analyzes its philosophic and esthetic base, corresponding complex of problems of psychoanalytical, anthropological, cultural and philosophic character as well as the language of postmodern works of Russian writers. Methods of literary postmodernism research, suggested by Skoropanova (1986) is supported by other leading domestic scientists and literary critics (O.V. Bogdanova, V. Kuritsyn, N.B. Mankovskaya and others). Similar ideas may be found in works of modern literary historians and critics (Amineva, 2014; Amineva *et al.*, 2014).

Methods of literary postmodernism research in works of the above mentioned authors open wide opportunities

for research of literary postmodernism in Turkey. Researcher of Turkish postmodernism Repenkova (2010) notes that while “studying Turkish literary postmodernism it is not possible to rely on Turkish researches who only record formal, surface indications of postmodernism (poly stylistics, citationality, considering world to be a text)”. Besides, at the beginning in 1980s, Turkish literary historians and critics appeared to be unable to “read” postmodern artistic code in the artworks of national writers. In the early 1990s, Turkish researchers started using the term “postmodernism” with respect to postmodern writers whose oeuvre became the subject matter of robust discussions. At the same time, first early large studies were published in which new phenomena in Turkish prose of the mid 1980-1990s were in this or that way were connected with postmodernism (Ecevit, 1996).

In 2000s postmodernism in Turkish literature becomes a “mainstream” (Repenkova, 2010). Turkish literary researches correctly notes some “exhaustiveness” of national postmodernism which like the whole Turkish society is in need of new ideas.

Postmodernism that created principally new value system, however, got the idea of spiritual searches of an individual, inherited from the previous stages of Turkish literature (like subjective psychological prose “Bunalyım”). This idea is still a defining one, though it is realized in various frameworks. Another trait that combines Turkish postmodernism with “Bunalyım” literature “a crisis literature” is the subject of crisis of belief system, spiritual searches. Though, unlike “Bunalyım” literature which is also interpreted like the “literature of detachment” (Zaitsev and Ulchenko, 2008), postmodernism doesn’t emphasize an opposition of an individual with the society. Vice versa, it creates new concept of individual in Turkish literature which is not characterized by separation of human with the world.

Occurrence and development of postmodernism as a literary trend in transition period for Turkish society at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries is characterized by overcoming former realistic canon with its image-and-mimetic reflection of material world which is based on esthetic triad “truth-goodness-beauty” and also by formation of new esthetic quality. Pluralistic paradigm of postmodernism (esthetics of simulacrum), based on post-structural concept “the world (conscience and the unconscious) like a text”, postulates heterogeneous multiplicity of cultural codes (languages, methods and styles), perpetually moving and establishing which is opened into “the infinity of sliding defining simulacrum” and which is able to “generate endless number of meanings”.

The rationale of our scientific research is defined by transforming of postmodernism into mainstream of the country’s literary process, growing interest of readers to it as well as the ill state of exploration of this artistic phenomenon in study of Turkic languages.

The subject of our research is analysis of postmodern concept of an individual in oeuvre of Turkish writer Buket Uzuner in terms of philosophical, esthetic and artistic components which allows performing a range of typological observations and favors systematization of literary and artistic process in Turkey in general. Thus, our research is called for answer the following questions:

- Which are the main postmodernism topics that are presented in the works of Buket Uzuner? How these topics help us reveal personality characteristics in author’s works?
- Which peculiar features of postmodern narration found their reflection in Buket Uzuner’s prose?
- Which language peculiarities that distinguish postmodernism from other trends in Turkish literature are used by the author in her works?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Material for the research was presented by stories from the story-book “Gunes yiyen cingene” by Buket Uzuner, one of the prominent representatives of Turkish literary postmodernism.

While working with research materials, we applied a wide range of research methods, including scientific theory of analyzing literary sources, descriptive method and method of compositional analysis of literary texts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Having analyzed the texts of Buket Uzuner’s stories, we have detached several topics, typical for postmodernism which were covered in details in the oeuvre of Turkish writer.

One of the most important topics that was touched upon in Buket Uzuner’s works, expands on the following idea: “an individual is self-aware as an equal part of the Universe, a microcosm that co-opts all multivalent and absurd world”. Let us provide an example of how reflections about personal crisis take place in one of Buket Uzuner’s stories “Fantasies that didn’t submit either to its’ country or to its’ realit”:

“As a result, he’s in crisis again. He feels sadness and impossibility even for a moment to get rid of mental boredom and emptiness that has been pursuing him since childhood. What to do, what to strive for, what to be useful in? (After all, should I be useful for anything?)”.

“She recollected her friends, business and here cat Mumuk, waiting her to return to Ankara. Is it all? Does it mean it is all that can be contained by the life of a person who soon will be thirty (in 5 months she will be thirty)? On the other hand, the youth, filled with Africa’s blossom, Europe’s aromas and Turkey’s music! That’s ok but what can be build within 29 years and what can be destroyed within this period? What can be missed and what should be mastered?”.

Such inner turmoil is not considered to be something out-of-line on the contrary, it seamlessly entwined into characters’ routine.

Maybe it is this feature of postmodernism (the fact that re-thinking of life values is performed tranquilly without personal breaking) allows speaking about its optimistic tone, when used by Buket Uzuner:

Another argument for this viewpoint is the fact that Buket’s stories, where the main topic is re-thinking and searching for reason to live are optimistic ones. Postmodernism doesn’t impose its style of thinking to anyone and this is what differs it from modernism. At the same time, postmodernism doesn’t find it necessary to persuade readers of happy end. Heroes haven’t found the reason to live but they know that such reason exists. We consider this trait to be specific for Buket Uzuner’s postmodernism. Two stories are dedicated to this “Fantasies that didn’t submit either to its country or to its reality and “The Gypsy who swallowed the Sun”. It should be noted that the name of the second story gave the name to the whole story book which emphasizes its meaning.

Buket Uzuner was born in 1955 in the capital of Turkish Republic, Ankara. Having obtained a diploma of biological faculty of University of Khadzhetep, she continued her researches in the sphere of microbiological ecology and sociology at the University of Bergen (Norway) and the University of Michigan (the USA), worked as a professor at the University of the City of Tampere (Finland) in the sphere of environment protection.

Buket Uzuner’s prose has been published, since 1977 in periodic publications “Varlyk”, “Gergedan”, “Olushum”, “Denemech”.

Buket Uzuner is a winner of such awards like Yunus Nadi’s Award for her novel “The sound of fishes’ traces” and the award of Network Faculty of Istanbul University for her novel “Sand cay the blue melody”.

Analysis of Buket Uzuner’s should be considered within united form and content which allows looking into worldview of the author.

Covering a topic of creation (in very wide context of not so much the result as the act of creation itself and the

topic of human relationships, united by common theme the theme of a dream and creation is the most significant in study of Buket Uzuner’s creative works.

There is an interesting tradition to denote creation not only as an act of transformations but to define creative element as a symbol of appetite (often man's appetite to woman). Such tendency is seen in the novel “Secreted letters of Anais”, the main character of which is a young man who has just passed through divorce after 5 years of marriage, moves to a new flat. If at first the aims of the main character are humble and uncertain (like to start a new life, get rid of the past with its bitterness and ruin of his hopes), his appetency chop around after finding the letters of the former lodger to her beloved man in the secret place.

These letters are full of emotions and bit by bit imagination starts dominating over reality. An impression is warmed up by such detail as a name change. True and rather prosaic name of the proprietress Aichakhanym is changed by an unusual nickname Anais. Gradually inebriated imagination of the young man finishes drawing the whole image of Anais intelligent, gentle, very emotional and very lonely woman. Despite of the fact of writing sincere letters to the main that is not interested in her (which sometimes suggests regarding some vulgarity of the main female character), the young man is caught in a net of these spells.

Creation in this novel refers not only to the heroine (the letters that open her soul) but the main male character as well it is he who creates the image of the heroine using his imagination.

The topic of creation and childhood, the period when people have creative power are able to create and transforms the reality is combined in another novel “The Gypsy who swallowed the Sun”. The novel may be called as world outlook one, so much precisely, it combines the whole life of the main character, starting from rebel childhood to “normal” adult life. The Sun is the symbol of something that you can't reach, the symbol of a dream, the thing that the main character asked his parents to give to him in his childhood. The conflict between aspirations and reality starts from mother's reply: “Learn to abandon the unobtainable, you've already grown up!”.

A dream is the thing that helps the character move forward and make progress. It should be noted that in “normal” adult life abandoning dream fill finally lead to gradual alienation from the essential and most interesting part of life: poems are moved to the drawer, the runlet near which the main character used to play in his childhood is run dry. “I was not able to get used to thoughts and talks in well-defined frames and hated sitting at those detestable desks”.

The turning point was appearance of pictures with multicoloured suns and then the artist itself a young dark-haired woman. Further, dialogue is notable for its sincerity and details which is not typical for a dialogue that two strangers may be involved in. In our opinion, it would be more correct to call in a dialogue between the character and its subconsciousness.

There are a lot of philosophical notes and juxtaposition of senses in the story which again make us remember about combination of philosophy and literature (in postmodernistic period). Here one may find the theme of Sun-worshiping in pagan times, the theme of willingness to possess the Sun (though it means that the other would be left in the dark), the theme that was brought into the name of the story the Gypsy who ate the Sun who appears in character's dream, saying: "You're going to love a woman whose name is Sun". The conflict that takes place in reality, repeats in the dream as well when an antagonistic mother says "Learn to abandon the unobtainable". The Gypsy impersonates the fate itself.

Further development of creative theme is seen in the story "Purple and the others" where gradation manifests itself in the fact that creative work is a power not only the power of art (letters, paintings, etc.) but the power of life itself. Ability to rule one's destiny is a part of strong women's nature who are mentioned in the story. The son, the grandson or the lover are linkers between them.

Almost every story of Buket Uzuner tells us about love and interrelations between man and woman. Analyzing the stories where this topic is one of the key ones, we have suggested that there is some pessimistic mood that may be seen in Buket Uzuner's stories with regard to trust and long-lasting relationships where lovers' feelings wouldn't fade away.

We hit upon this conclusion by the fact that the cycle of stories, we investigated contained only two examples of happy marriage: in the story "Purple and the others" and "The woman inside the man" but we considered them to be exceptions, since in the first case there is an emphasis on women's spiritual strength (thus, happy marriage could have been used by the author in order to emphasize the main idea) and in the second case the author introduced two parallel plots, one of which was a fantasy one (where the woman appeared inside the man) and the real one where the character wasn't happy in his marriage.

He is exhausted by thoughts like "I love her. Though, I often think about how far my egoism grew and that she lacks my attention. I stop loving myself because knowing my hatred to any routine, I have still chosen a comfortable style of life. If one doesn't love himself, he stops loving anyone else".

It's interesting that Buket Uzuner's characters express their emotions very clearly and understand the roots of their problems very profoundly while doing this in brief by using one or two sketches. In this case, the character understands the reason of his alienation in routine life.

As a modern writer, Buket Uzuner also uses a few sketches to describe changes in position of women in Turkish society. In this case, there is a very meaningful quotation, taken from the story "A delicate man will have a daughter":

Well, what about your independent female friends? You mean women, having reached thirty five were not able to find a man that would suit them and so they chose to be alone? Or some of them, having gone through divorce, decided to live alone? Do you mean you don't know any woman who is strong, clever and skilled enough to live alone?"

Buket Uzuner shows changing model of woman's position in society and sad changes in the number of stable family ties.

Along with the plot, one of the most important components of the story is chronotope which is typical for Buket Uzuner's stories. The term "chronotope" which combines time and place in its essence was introduced by M.M. Bakhtin.

Chronotope is a formally substantive literary category that expresses non-separability of time and place in literary work. "In literary and creative chronotope space and time are combined in one, being comprehend and specific. Time here closes down and becomes fore firm and artistically viewed while space is intensified and involved into the movement of time, plot and history. Such cross of rows and merge of marks characterize artistic chronotope" (Bakhtin, 1975).

Primarily attractive thing in Buket Uzuner's stories is fragmentary nature (building composition when the story is constructed of several parts, like a mosaic) and specific widening of both time and space.

The term "fragmentary nature of a composition" itself has another synonym, often used by literary historians "assembling" which denotes the method of building piece of writing, when discontinuity of the image predominates and the image is split on fragments. Buket Uzuner often uses assembly composition in her works. "Purple and the others" consists of separate plot lines in each of which characters tell their stories. What at first sight seems to be a chaotic pile-up, gradually turns to be a harmonic history of one family. Interesting are the chosen framing epigraphs that create circular plot structure:

Buket Uzuner likes pointing out fragments with titles, emphasizing that they refer to various temporal coordinates or reflect reality in different ways: "The first

fantasy”, “The second fantasy”, “Return to reality), “Fantasies that didn’t submit either to its country or to its reality”. Both epigraphs belong to Nilgun Marmara.

Such approach allows depicting in impressive way connections with phenomena that can’t be vividly seen to apprehend the world profoundly in its diversity and profusion, contrariety and unity. In other words, assembling corresponds to the world view that is characterized by counterpoint and epic width.

Such “epic width” in other words, “the ability to expand narrative space and time” is typical for Buket Uzuner's oeuvre in general: “The majority of her works are created by Buket Uzuner in the form of rather large stories that look like novels. Spaces and temporales change at a blistering space, like we deal with a travel novel. Each page of Buket Uzuner’s works is full of diversity”.

Buket Uzuner traveled a lot and visited many lands. Always taking travels seriously, she finds ways to render diversity of the world in her works.

The first feature that should be mentioned is “incompleteness of artistic time continuum” (Chernets *et al.*, 2004). Closed (in other words, finished) temporal is considered to be absolute beginning and absolute ending of the plot; absence of opened ending, resolution of conflict (return to parents’ house; achievement of stable position in life; death, wedding).

Incompleteness of artistic time continuum is a distinguishing feature of literature of the 20th century in comparison with earlier stages. The lines between strict literature frames and life are blurred.

Another peculiarity of artistic time continuum of Buket Uzuner's stories is density, i.e., a large number of events and a large range of time slots. It is often obtained at the account of retrospective narrations and introduction of description of characters’ past (often a childhood):

- Life of three generations in the story “Purple and the others”
- Brief description of characters’ past “Fantasies that didn’t submit either to its’ country or to its’ reality”
- Childhood of the main character “The Gypsy who swallowed the Sun”
- Characters’ past given in a newspaper paragraph in the story “The woman inside the man”
- The past, described in the story “Secreted letters of Anais”
- A quick change of seasons in the story “Metamorphose in Jalaloglu: It used to be said that she was seen with a dossier under her arm in Jalaloglu in early Summer first, then in the mid Winter and finally in early Autumn

“Leon and she have been making appointments to each other within 11 years and have been visiting each other on various continents).

The feeling of “expansion” in Buket Uzuner's stories is created not by time only but by space as well. It is achieved at the account of including a lot of places into narration which become the platform for the action as well as including some places that are only skimmed over but which also create the feeling of some cosmopolitanism:

“Does it mean it is all that can be contained by the life of a person who soon will be thirty (in 5 months she will be thirty? On the other hand, the youth, filled with Africa’s blossom, Europe’s aromas and Turkey’s music!”.

Aspiration for detailization is another important feature of the oeuvre of the writer, we are investigating. Stylistically, it is a delineation of the situation with several important details which are so much important that they become symbols. A few details are used to describe the situation, the repetition of which create a peculiar atmosphere of the story. This raises emotional effect when narration is colored in individual shades. In order to continue studying effects of the stories, let us consider language peculiarities.

Language peculiarities are also aimed at creation of confidence as if the author wills to create “very intimate” dialogue between herself and the reader. This is furthered by such devices as:

- Dialogue form of narration
- Reflexive questions. They are often forwarded to the reader the author may argue with the reader or ask him for an advice

“How can you know what will happen to you in some time or what is worse, how can you know what will NOT happen to you?”

“How can you know whom you’ll meet or what is worse, how can you know whom you will not meet in two months not to speak of two years?”

Simplicity of the language and syntax also helps to create sincere atmosphere. We may also see some words, borrowed from other languages.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of various views of Buket Uzuner's oeuvre allows making an approximate world view of the authoress. First, we should note her engagement into existential topics (like creation and love) and the readers are invited to contemplate on them. Dialogues facilitates involving the readers in the process.

Stylistically Buket Uzuner's oeuvre is characterized by eclectic and fragmentary nature and dynamic narration. Buket Uzuner's postmodernism with its sincerity, loneliness (that looks more like a retreat) reflects social changes that are taking place and touches on meditative rethinking of the world and one's place in this world, since "in specific nature of art, starting from Aristotle's "Poetic art" imaginary presentation of reality ("imitation") is emphasized along with artistic generalization, obtained by means of artistic transformation of reality" (Nikolaev, 1998).

Peculiarity of postmodernism is its generalization of accumulations of all cultural epochs, combined with decanonization at the same time. Postmodernism is a "synthesis of return to past and moving forward" (Skoropanova, 1986). Turkish postmodernism, having adopted the practices of American and East European art was not in the end reduced to thoughtless copying; moreover, it developed in its own unique way and not being a superficial trend, it had preceding streams. Turkish postmodernism of the 2000s demonstrates some "fatigue" (Repenkova, 2010), though the "death" of postmodernism in Turkish literature is withdrawn for an indefinite period as is evidenced by a wide range of topics, touched upon in the works of Turkish postmodernists. Moreover, postmodernism covers more and more cultural areas in Turkey, like music, art, cinema, theater, architecture.

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