Nizami Ganjavi

«ELM» PUBLISHERS
BAKU — 1981
The great Azerbaijan poet and thinker Nizami Ganjavi is one of the rare geniuses of the past whose creative activity forms a distinctive and original stage in the history of the development of world culture. His broad, versatile and rich heritage which reflects poetic, scientific and cognitive qualities long ago proved to be true examples of eternal marvellous art.

Nizami's creative activity is unique in the depth of its content, the interpretation of images and characters, and its moral ethical aim. Masterly portrayal of man's personality, varied feelings and emotions of man's ego, his joy and grief, his natural aspirations are the problems put forward and solved in Nizami's works and all these interweave and mingle with the social intent and purpose of the poet. Psychological probing into the spiritual world of man, observation of his anxieties, experiences, confusions and achievement of his aim—all acquire philosophical and ethical sense in Nizami's poems.

Nizami is the creation of the 12th century. The poet was born in an ordinary Azerbaijan family, but gained worldwide fame. His creative work, by its volume, scope and influence is not confined to the boundaries of a definite epoch and locality. The humane ideas and views, vital and noble desires inspired by Nizami are those of our living contemporaries. And even now Nizami is among us with his social and spiritual Virtue, Clarity, Beauty and Nobility.
It is impossible to study a man-of-letters in isolation from the socio-economic and ideological-cultural background which plays an important part in his formation as a poet and in his evolution. For he is a citizen of the environment in which he lives and creates and as a citizen and thinker, his heart beats simultaneously with the pulse of his era.

In Azerbaijan the epoch of Nizami is characterized by the spirit and development of Renaissance and many towns lived the life of Renaissance in the true meaning of the word. Tabriz, Shamakhi, Ganja as transit cities and Baku as a port acquired great economic and military importance. The country's internal and foreign trade increased, money circulation grew. The principal states of Azerbaijan Eldaghizlar and Shirvanshahlar minted their own coins. Azerbaijan coins with the seals of the 12th century are on display in different museums of the world nowadays. Crafts flourished widely. Silk, woolen and cotton cloths and magnificent carpets were woven, while various consumer goods made out of metal and glass were produced. The most important caravan roads, which linked the trade centres of the West and East, passed through Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan had trade relations with Armenia, Abkhazia, Central Asia, Greece, Byzantium, Iranian districts and provinces, Iraq and the Northern countries. Azerbaijan merchants visited these countries and exchanged goods. In its turn Azerbaijan was visited by merchants, travellers, scientists and men-of-art from Greece, China and India and mutual economic and cultural relations expanded. Though Azerbaijan was considered an agricultural country the feudal system of production and consumption succeeded the framework of agrarian limitations and caused the flow of population from rural parts into cities.

Under the influence of severe spiritual and economic pressure the impoverished landless peasantry moved to the cities and were forced to learn a trade in order to earn their living.

According to original sources many Azerbaijan cities had populations of about 100,000 to 300,000. As it is known, even the population of Ganja, Nizami's native town, was 500,000. The cities were beautified by palaces decorated with stone and metal carvings, fine designs and ornamental epigraphs. Mosque minarets and domes stood high with their brightly shining enamel and glazed roofs. Expensive metals—gold, silver, copper and iron—were extracted in the districts and provinces. Baku was famous for its salt and oil from ancient times. Fishing and hunting developed and the latter, in its turn, stimulated the growth of fur production. Azerbaijan was famous as a country for her fine fruit plantations, vineyards and planted fields. But this abundant wealth of the native land served only a handful of exploiters. Class inequality was conspicuously evident both in the cities and in the villages. The peasants as well as townspeople suffered from the evils of oppression, despotism and bribery and they starved. As a result of all this in many areas of the country riots and disturbances broke out and clashes took place between the working masses and the feudal landowners.

The country experienced diverse periods in its history. Political power was strengthened markedly in the states of Eldaghizlar as well as Shirvanshahs. Rapid development of trade, establishment of various relations with foreign countries, the possibility for many cities of Azerbaijan of serving as transit points opened up great opportunities for the rapid prosperity of science and culture. Both states—Eldaghizlar and Shirvanshahs—fostered art and enlightenment to a certain extent and founded new schools and madrasahs. Azerbaijan scholars dealt with such sciences like medicine, astronomy, geography, mathematics, and geometry; Eastern languages, logics and theology were taught in schools and madrasahs. The development of Azerbaijan science and culture was interrelated with that of the peoples of the Near and Middle East. Azerbaijan's cultural ties with the neighbouring Armenian and Georgian peoples also grew.

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1 З. М. Буньятов. Государство атабеков Азербайджана. Баку, изд-во «Элм», 1978, стр. 188.
As a result of some socio-historical causes the Arabic and Persian languages prevailed in the majority of countries of the Near and Middle East, and the profound knowledge and use of these languages by the Azerbaijan intelligentsia and the sameness of the literary language created favourable conditions for the all-round development of science and culture. Azerbaijan scholars and men-of-letters visited the cities of Iraq, Iran and Central Asia and kept close contacts with their colleagues.

Serious changes took place in the ideological sphere of the period. The official Islamic religion which strove to retain its unconditional and implicit hold on all the social institutions of the Middle Ages could not prevent the advance and spread of anti-Islamic doctrines, currents and philosophical and scientific ideas. Azerbaijan scholars studied the works of such distinguished thinkers of the Middle East as Al-Farabi, Al-Biruni and Ibn Sina whose creative works were full of the ideas of the Renaissance; through the Arabic translations they became familiar with the works of Plato, Aristotle and Euclid.

The ideas of ancient maniism—which considered substance to be eternal and identified it with God—regarded man as a microcosm embodying Earth and Heaven. The democratic views of mazdakism and khurramism, and their doctrine of the equal division of earthly blessings coincided with the mood of the broad masses of the people.

The representatives of the ruling ideology were also alarmed by the intra-Islamic currents which completely contradicted Islam in many fundamental respects. The epoch of Nizami in Azerbaijan was especially favourable to the progressive pantheist doctrines of sufism, a very complicated and diverse school of thought which emerged in the 12th century and widespread all over the Islamic East.

The author of such philosophical works as «Hikmat-ul-ishrak» («Awareness of light»), «Etigad-al-hukama» («Faith of scholars»), «Risalat al-eshg» («Treatise on love») and one of the rare geniuses of the 12th century in Azerbaijan—Shihabaddin Yahya Sohrawardi—headed a philosophical school of thought by the name of «Ishragiyya» («Philosophy of light») famous in the history of social thought of the Middle and Near East, and based on the pantheist and spiritual evolution theory and which was the synthesis of ancient Greek philosophy, Eastern thinking parsism, sufism and rationalism.

In the first half of the same 12th century the existence and activity of great thinkers of Azerbaijan shook Islam to its «sacred» foundations. One of them: Eyn al-Guzat Hamadani who devoted himself to the struggle against the unfounded laws of religious ideology to the last days of his illustrious and joyful life, as a true champion of freedom and humanism raising the banner of spiritual perfection and sacredness of personality, challenged the broad masses of people not to follow blindly religion and its dogmas.

Even in the 8th—9th centuries the activity of motazilis—movement opposed to official Islam was known. Sources show that motazilism, which advocated wisdom and awareness and rejected the predestination of Man's actions, was widespread in Azerbaijan in Nizami's time.

In the 12th century in Azerbaijan we see the great activity of an organization called «Akhi» («The Brotherhood»). In the struggle against the contradictions and contrasts of feudal reality, the members of the organization «Akhi» did not only serve as a spiritual and moral bulwark for the labourers of the villages and towns, but also spoke openly against injustice and lawlessness in support of the toiling masses.

In 1191 the reactionary clergy ordered the murder of Eyn al-Guzat Hamadani (a pantheist Azerbaijani philosopher and literary critic), far from his native land. In 1191 Shihabaddin Sohrawardi was executed. Such were the times that many intellectual, progressive men

2 Очерки по истории азербайджанской философии, т. 1. Баку, изд-во АН Азерб. ССР, 1966, стр. 45.
3 Э. А. Гордеевский. Избранные сочинения, т. 1. М., 1960, стр. 135.
were thrown into prison, killed, executed and hanged. But it is impossible to stop human progress.

Movements struggling against reactionary dogmas which obscured the minds of men with dreams about Heaven and Hell and propagated indifference to objective reality and to earthly blessings grew day by day, and turned into cultural movements with a stabilized world outlook. This was Renaissance—the Azerbaijan Renaissance. It emerged as one of the specific features of the Eastern Renaissance in the Middle Ages and was directed against the gloom of the Middle Ages. Its historically objective background was conditioned by the socio-economic and cultural life of Azerbaijan in the 12th century. Its ideological foundations were deeply rooted in the local Median and Albanian culture as well as Persian, Tadjik, Indian, Turkish, Greek and Chinese culture up to the Middle Ages and later parsiism, maniism, mazdakiism, Indian hymnosufism, khurramism, sulism, akhiism were the inexhaustible sources from which this Renaissance grew from an ideological point of view. Finally it was fed by the science and philosophy of ancient Greece and Eastern peripateticism.

The glow of the 12th century Azerbaijan Renaissance was conspicuously reflected in poetic philosophy — in the artistic-philosophical thinking which directly expressed itself in the form of images. The main content of Azerbaijan literature of this period was the humanist conception which emerged in the form of «man and nature», «autonomy of personality» and which was directed against the theocentric theories, as the best example of world Renaissance. If the heritage of Nizami's contemporaries — such as Falaki Shirvani, Mujuraddin Beylagani, Izzaaddin Shirvani, Givami Mutarrizi and Mahsati Ganjavi — is viewed in the light of world literature and social thought we find many similarities, parallels, and ideas common to the works of the progressive representatives of the literature of the Western Renaissance of later centuries.

Features identical to those of Azerbaijan Renaissance poetry soon emerged in the poetry of the Armenian and Georgian peoples and as a result of it a Caucasian Renaissance art came into existence.

«Close economic and cultural relations of the Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijan peoples throughout history enable us to speak of the Renaissance of the Caucasian peoples. Renaissance literature, and Renaissance art of the Caucasian peoples of the 12th to the 14th centuries are distinguished by their deep humane qualities, inseparability from life, national thinking and folklore. The images of the poem of Shota Rustaveli «Champion in the Tiger's Skin» attract attention for the vividness of earthly feelings and the power of human emotions. Fables of the great Armenian poet Mkhitar Gosh drew their strength from the life of the people, and embodied progressive and humane ideas by their critical and profoundly sarcastic approach to the evils of feudal society. The ideas of the Renaissance were also vividly expressed in the architecture and fine arts of the Caucasian peoples of that time».

The basic language used in poetry was Persian. Beginning from the 7th century the Arabian caliphate was established in the majority of countries of the Near and Middle East. Despite the strong resistance movements for national independence, not long passed before Azerbaijan fell under the rule of the Arab caliphs, too. Islam became the official religion and Arabic became the predominant literary language. Under the political banner of Islamic religion, the caliphate strove for the Arabization of all the peoples of the East. But people constantly opposed and revolted against the policy of the caliphate and all this shook the foundations of the caliphate's rule. Already in the middle of the 8th century intradynastic struggles in the caliphate flared up and the dynasty of Amavilar was replaced by the dynasty of Abbasilar (750—1258). The Persian nobility played an important role in Abbasilar's seizure of power in the caliphate and in this way they entered into the central government and took over

4 М. Ибрагимов. Ренессанс в Азербайджане. «Азербайджан» жур., 1979, № 7, с. 163.
the most important state affairs. During the reign of Abbasids, vice-regents in the main provinces and regions were appointed from Persians. Persian vice-regents paid great attention to the development and well-being of their native tongue and tried to spread their language in the countries they ruled. In the 9th — 10th centuries, although Arabic kept its importance as the language of science, religion and theology, in poetry the Persian language dominated.

In the 11th century during Saljuq's great march from the East towards the West, a rich and perfect literature in the Persian language existed in Central Asia. This literature existed here for about a century producing the literary school which united such intelligent men-of-letters as Rudaki Abu Shukur Balkhi, Gisai, Dagig, Asjodi, Farrukhi and also the world famous Firdousi. The best examples of Persian verse were created in the palaces of the Samani and G澤navi rulers. «Shah-nameh>, which revived the heroic traditions of ancient Iran, was written in prose and verse.

The new rulers of Iran and Central Asia — the Saljughilar inherited from their predecessors not only the machinery of state but also a great literary heritage in Persian. Moreover, they spread it to all corners of the great Saljuqian Empire. If poetry in Persian was widespread only in the Eastern provinces (Mavarunnahr, Khorasan), during the reign of the Persian dynasty of Samanid, then during the reign of the Turkic dynasties of Gゼnavi and Saljughilar, Persian as a literary language began to be used in a large area from India as far as Asia Minor.

A great expert on classical Persian-Tajik poetry and an outstanding orientalist, Y. E. Bertels clearly shows that «the absence of national self-consciousness» prevented the Saljuqian rulers from thinking of the progress of their native tongue. Neglecting their native language, the Saljuqians used Persian as an official language and the language of poetry and prose and made their subject emirs, feudals and lords follow their example in palaces. Knowledge of the Persian language was the first sign of one's «membership of the nobility». Persian was spoken in the palaces and feudal manors during the reign of the United Saljuqian Empire and later when the Empire was broken up into small independent states.

School and madrasahs functioned in the Persian language, poets composed verse in Persian (though occasionally there appeared works in Turkish such as «Kutadgu biliq» by the 11th century Uigurian poet Yusif Khas Hajib, but these were exceptions). Ousting local languages, Persian gained international status.

Persian was the official state language of the 12th century Azerbaijan feudal palaces, too. In Shirvanshah's as well as in Eldaghiz's reign the «assembly of poets» was conducted in Persian and the participants of these assemblies competed in Persian. It was the same with the literature (written) created outside the palaces, mainly in towns. Azerbaijan poets followed the literary traditions of the epoch: voluntarily or against their own will yielded to the requirements of the literary canons of the epoch. But the latter differed from the former. The latter thought in Azerbaijan and expressed themselves in Persian. Studies have revealed a great number of facts in support of this idea.

As it is distinct from written literature, Azerbaijan oral literature of the 12th century existed in the native Azerbaijan language as in previous centuries. The best examples of folk poetry were created and rapidly spread from town to town, from country to country, from mouth to mouth. In squares and bazaars, in front of large audiences, ozans-troubadours sang and narrated the legends of Dada-Gorgut, the story of «Leili and Majnun», of «Farhad's eternal love», stories about Alexander and the heroic deeds of Babak, in their native tongue. The narrator brought to their native people in their native vernacular

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5 Е. Э. Бертельс. Великий азербайджанский поэт Низами. Баку, изд-во АзФАН, 1940, стр. 36.

6 Г. Араслы. Низамида халг созлары, халг кифада во азербайджанлык маалыматлар. «ССРИ ЕА Азербейчан филиалынын хабарлары», Бакы, 1942, № 8.
marvellous fairy tales which can be traced to ancient times while mothers sang lullabies in their mother tongue over their babies' cradles.

Such was, in brief, the historical, social and cultural picture of the epoch of Nizami in Azerbaijan.

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The poet was born in the family of a townsman, an inhabitant of ancient Ganja by the name of Yusif Zaki, son of Muayyad. He was named Ilyas by his parents, but was immortalized as Nizami Ganjavi in history. Assembled later on, by unknown scribes under the common title «Khamsa» («Quintuple») the unfading examples of literary art, his poems «Storehouse of Mysteries», «Khosrov and Shirin», «Lelli and Majnun», «Seven Beauties», and «Iskandarnama» (book of Alexander the Great) which consists of two parts — «Sharafnama» (dealing with Alexander's glorious military marches) and «Igbalnama» (dealing with Alexander's later life) made him the immortal poet of the world.

The creative activity of the poet gives us evidence of his thorough madrasah education. Logic, medicine, law, astronomy, geography and the much-developed science of the Middle Ages in the East—astrology are the spheres of knowledge where Nizami tried his strength. He was especially interested in history, philosophy and theology and studied them with great zeal.

He displayed an early interest in poetry and creative work, and attracted attention by his unique talent and diligence. This is shown by his literary heritage:

To get a sparkling jewel that shines in the darkness
I switch on the lamp of my brain hundreds of times.
(Kh. Sh., 776)

To search for a virgin word is like exhausting one's soul
And not everybody is able to do it. (Sh., 37)

He who extracts pearl from stone
Takes possession of the word with difficulty. (Ig., 12)

It is doubtless, that Nizami had a complete collection of lyrics—a divan, consisting of gazals, qasidas, rubaiyats, tarjibbands, tarjibbands and others, but only a small portion of this heritage has reached us. Small extracts from his lyrics that we have at our disposal illustrate that throughout his life the poet created lyric poems alongside with great epic works.

The flower of his life—his beloved wife Afag—was sent to him as a gift by the ruler of Darband as a sign of deep respect and recognition of his lyrics. Afag was sent to Nizami from Darband as a servant, but the poet did not look upon her as a servant, made her his wife and lost her very early. The «Kipchakian beauty» of Nizami died in her early youth, but the poet constantly and repeatedly remembers her and his fleeting, disappointing love in his works.

Afag gave birth to a son called Mohammed. From Nizami's works it can be seen that his son Mohammed had a great love for poetry and art.

Ganja was considered as one of the capitals of Eldaghizs at that time. The residences of Atabays and many state enterprises were situated in Ganja. It is very likely, that in the luxurious palaces of Eldaghizs many poets lived and worked. Festivals and ceremonies in the palaces might also have attracted the young poet. Being a man of good education and rare talent, Nizami had all the opportunities to reveal his abilities. But he did not want to take initiative. He soon

Come and see how I dig pits at night,
Not pits, I dig my own soul.
For a pearl that I extract from my mouth
What battles I do wage with myself;

7 Here and henceforth Nizami is quoted in literal translation from scientific and critical texts published in the Soviet Union.
determined that exterior glitterings were deceptive and moved away from the palaces before he approached them. The purity of designs and wisdom dictated to live on barley bread sparingly, but be the lion of his own house.

Very often we encounter the criticism of the palace poets who sold themselves for money, position, fame and glory. Possibly, the panegyrist palace poets who spent their time writing poems full of exaggerated praise for their hosts saw their worst enemies in the person of Nizami, and tried by all means to defame him in the eyes of the rulers. It is felt from his works that from his early youth there had been an intense spiritual antagonism between him and the panegyrist poets of the palace and he had an aversion to them. Among these poets there were men who often adopted his ideas and poems, and cast a slur upon his reputation:

The thief of my house, for hire
Discredits me. What can be done? he is a thief.
When a thief is looked for in the street, all the thieves
Run into the street and shout «the thief, the thief». point at somebody.
What they have stolen from me, let them own it as their honest toil,
But let them be sinners if they speak badly of me.
They see the honest work of anybody, but deny it,
They do wrong, but do not realize it. (L. M., 75—76).

There was another reason why Nizami moved out of the palace. He could not but see talented and proud men among the palace poets. But the palace acted savagely and cruelly against the man having these two qualities.

But the poet needed some means to live on and therefore he was obliged to devote poems and sent them to the rulers of the country from time to time. Even this effort of the writer emerged from the necessity of calling the rulers to justice and truth. His glory as a poet spread not only to his native land Azerbaijan, but echoed in many remote countries as well. The number of admirers of his art grew day by day, year by year. And the poet made good use of his fame to save Virtue and Beauty from the clutches of Evil and Ugliness.

His entertaining stories in verse which embodied his humane views and thoughts on social equality were sent to palaces. Nizami devoted many congratulations and greetings in verse to the rulers of his time. But all of them sounded like really severe accusations, and his honey tasted as if it were poisoned.

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The marvels of Nizami's art are closely related to the thoughts and aesthetic tendencies of his great predecessors. On the one hand, he heard the melodies and songs of folk ashigs (troubadours), listened to the fairy-tales and legends of story-tellers with great enjoyment, on the other hand, he read and learned the poetry of his own people and the peoples who were close to them from the point of view of historico-social and cultural relations. We come across many themes identical to Nizami's in the works of Yusif Hajib Khas. The problem of justice in «Kutadgu biliq» forms the leitmotif of Nizami's poems. Nizami read «Shahnama» repeatedly and considered the author of this grand epic as his teacher. He reflected upon the philosophy of Omar Khayyam and regarded the rebellious spirit and social protest of Khagani's lyrics to be his own.

In accordance with the socio-political and literary requirements of the epoch, Nizami, like many other Azerbaijan poets of his time, wrote in Persian. Owing to this, he won the general recognition and fame all over the Near and Middle East in a short time. The themes of his poems were also broad. The events described took place either in ancient Madain, Greece, India, China, or in many other countries. He spoke either of Alexander of Macedon, Iranian princes Khosrov and Bahram, or the Arab youth Leili and Majnun. Whatever or whoever he described, and wherever the events took place, he still remained a true son of Azerbaijan, a Turk in all circumstances and everywhere. He was inspired by his native land, its fascinating nature, the mirth and grief of his people and ancestors, their way of
life. Nizami glorified the beauties of the lilac- and poppy-covered fields of Mughan, the cool springs and woods of Barda. The imagination of the poet brought the great Macedonian knight Alexander to Barda and made him bow in front of Nushaba, an Azerbaijan who came from the people. Wasn't it Shirin, a bewitching Azerbaijan lady, who played a decisive role in the spiritual awakening of the shah of Kayan? Nizami's Leili and Majnun were immortalized in the world as «Turks in Arabic garments». Inspired by the blue skies of Gunja, by its green valleys, by its tall mountains with waterfalls, fascinating lake Goy-Gol, the foothills where antilopes and gazells grazed, the poet portrayed «the nude lady» of the «Sandy deserts». And what about the «Turkish spirit» in Nizami's poetry? The poet searched for something «Turkish» in all his positive heroes and always emphasized them. It is also interesting that Nizami often liberally used words and expressions like «Turk», «Turkic», «Turkish type of face» on nearly every page of his poems. The poet used these words and expressions in the meaning of «Azerbaijan», «peculiar to an Azerbaijanian» and related them to such concepts as «divine», «beauty» and «bravery». Wasn't it the «Turkic spirit» which was conspicuously in Nizami's poetry in his early lyrics, and the poems «Storehouse of Mysteries», «Khosrov and Shirin» that prompted the Shah of Shirvan Akhistan to ask Nizami to put the immortal love legend «Leili and Majnun» into verse? Nizami wrote in Persian, but in the manner of an Azerbaijanian and Turk, Khagani's and Nizami's use of Persian language greatly varies from the language of Persian poets and this fact is not denied even by the well-known Iranian scholars of Nizami.

Virtue was one of the main factors characterizing Nizami. He underlines this leading feature of his literary «ego» in many parts of his works and introduces himself to the readers in the following way:

If you can, carry the burden of all men. (L. M., 102)
If I had the right by law I would not allow anybody to depend on anyone. (Sh., 135)

Here Nizami comes close to sufis. But, as it is well known, sufism never was a monolithic ideological school of thought. If its progressive wing, based on pantheism, stood for defence of light from darkness, glorified virtue, and generosity, propagated justice and condemned all kinds of social inequality, its reactionary wing called the people to obey God's will, denied everything that was real and humane, agitated harmful, mystical and ascetic ideas. The latter, in reality, was the defender and servant of the ruling feudal Islamic ideology. But the former reflected the aspirations of the masses and therefore were received sympathetically by them in most cases. Townsmen and craftsmen especially kept close contacts with these sufi residents.

Nizami always opposed the harmful wings of sufism which propagated ascetism, an austere life and the philosophy of patience and this is proved by the facts. It is doubtless, that as a man of his epoch, Nizami believed in God, and relied upon His mercy, because He was the creator of Man, the crown of the Universe, because He endowed Man with wisdom and the ability to feel, the perception of Virtue and Beauty. By this way of thinking belief in God did not deny the existence of objective reality, but sounded like an assertion of earthly beauties. According to Nizami, part of God is seen in all earthly beauties. Nizami sought for a part of God in all the «familiar designs». The relations of «particular and general», «individual and common» in Nizami's works come from progressive pantheist views of sufism which greatly influenced socio-philosophical thought in the Near East.
and Azerbaijan throughout the Middle Ages. But Nizami made these
to Virtue and Azerbaijan throughout Virtue to Progress. schols of Nizami have always refuted such groundless, non-scientific arguments. Even nowadays there are scholars who support these accusations. The following statement from Cassel’s Encyclopedia of Literature may serve as evidence: «In his youth he (Nizami. — R. A.) often attended mystic circles, preferred asceticism and the life of a hermit».
The author of an article on Nizami, published in Nouveau Larousse Universel, points out that Nizami’s poems («Storehouse of Mysteries», «Leili and Majnun», «Iskandarnama») were written under the influence of the mysticism of sufism.

The contradictions of feudal life, the unbearable atmosphere caused by the rule of religion, constant oppression of the broad masses, acts of violence and brutality, murder of many innocent people as a result of palace and religious intrigues griped the poet, and gave rise to pessimism.


But if taken as a whole the philosophy of pessimism and despair does not emerge as a prominent feature of Nizami’s poetry. Nizami is characterized by an optimistic spirit and proceeds from this position in his creative work. «Life has been created for beauty and happiness» is the thesis which forms the foundation of his world view:

The world’s grief is not worth thinking about, be inclined to delights.

This is a palace which has not been built for grief.

The world has been created for mirth and pleasure.

Not for tyranny and grief. (Sh., 462)

Why do you yield yourself to grief?

It is not good to live in grief the whole year. (Sh., 463)

Every instant of life is valuable,

To spend it bitterly is not good. (Sh., 464)

The poet calls on men not to give in to despair even in the worst conditions, to be brave and to strive for happy days: «Be a man of will. Those who don’t have it are like insects crawling on the ground. Sighs never help».

Why do you become a servant to the weeds?

Why do you become a puppet in hands of the villains?

Why do you keep your neck ready for anyone to strap?

Why do you agree with all the sufferings?

Straighten your shoulders like a mountaintop!

Be irreconcilable to the insidiouslyness of the world.

If you weave silk as good as iris

You will drink sediment from the pure soil.

Misery would cause inner pains.

Humility would humiliate man.

Like a thorn keep your weapon ready!

Only then can you take bunches of flowers into your arms. (L. M., 97)

Can we equate the philosophy expressed in these lines with the world view of an ascetic hermit who considers the spiritual and physical sufferings and economic difficulties to be a sign of love for God, op-
poses all kinds of activity—free thinking, independent action, initiative? These lines are not the doctrine of a mystic-dervish, but concord with the slogans of Akhis. They lived in the same era as Nizami, and carried on active work among the broad masses of the people. They consisted mainly of townsfolk and craftsmen who defended the rights of the people and in favourable conditions fought against the oppressors with weapons in their hands. Sources and studies point to the relations of Nizami with the Union of Akhi. It is impossible that the poet ignored the programme of such a man organization which had lot of members living in his native town of Ganja. Spiritually he was close to them. His lines calling for action against tyranny and ignorance are evidence of it.

Nizami's life is an example of man's fortitude, pride, wisdom and will, the grandeur of his inexhaustible talent. Objective reality and the laws of its cognition, rationalist teaching about the omnipotence of cognition, spiritual richness of the «ego» and his creative capacities are the main themes of Nizami's world of ideas. The poet considered the absurd views of theologians about «Hell and Heaven» to be mere fictions, and doubted the existence of another world which was invisible, which kept its secrets from human beings and was beyond cognition.

Nizami concluded his views like this: «There is no place for anything unreal in human cognition». Thus, he urged a distinction between logical and religious views, and discovery of the natural root-causes of events. In the preface to the second book («Iqbalnama») of his last poem («Iskandarnama») which is traditionally called «Munajat», the poet addresses God in this way:

If the world is so beautifully adorned,
Why ask for another world?

If it is possible for us to live here,
Why move to another world?
If that is the last place for us to settle,
Why do we live (stay) here then? (Ig., 87)

The irony of the last lines is clear. Doesn't the Aesopian language strengthen the logical meaning of the previous lines?

The poet was always searching, he read a lot of, analyzed, studied the sciences of ancient Greece and India, the works of Ibn Sina, Al-Farabi, Al-Biruni and other philosophers.

Of course, Nizami appropriated many things from the progressive world science and philosophy, but being in fear of persecution he made his characters convey to the readers his own views. But it is doubtful, that these characters represented the poet himself, his world of ideas, and his views on life and reality. From this point of view, the conversation of the Indian philosopher with Iskandar in «Iqbalnama» is of great interest:

If this world endows Man with joys and beauties
Why is eternity given to paradise?
Nowhere is as good as this world.
If you say that that world (paradise) is better, and if
it is so
Make a place for us in that beautiful Garden of Eden.
And let us be free from unpleasant thought. (Ig., 51)

The defenders of the ruling religious ideology obviously did not like such questions, and it stands to reason that they accused the poet and denounced his brilliant ideas and conclusions based on progressive philosophical views:

My tongue honeys the mouths of people,
But in my mouth it is like a deadly poison.

(Kh. Sh., 780)

So it happened that the sober and philosophical treatment of natural and social phenomena by the poet could not please a handful
of feudal-theologian rulers. The poet repeatedly mentions in his works the hostile attitude of his opponents and their constant pressure. Nevertheless, the attacks of the reactionaries could not deter the poet.

* * *

Humanism is the meaning and the content of Nizami’s poetry. Man and his destiny are the central problems in his creative activity. The individual as a socio-psychological phenomenon, his spiritual world, and his position in life are the problems which make Nizami think.

The ideas of humanism found deep expression in Nizami’s poetry in the 12th century, acquired new philosophical overtones and became a leading force in literature.

Each work of Nizami taken separately is a literary-sociological and literary-psychological system about man’s ego; the tasks and duties of ego in life, his constructive, emotive and mental activities. The man who creates, who thinks, who loves and is loved, who is excited and who struggles takes the foreground in Nizami. In this poetry man is promoted to the level of personality despite his class affiliation, and he is ‘the master of his own actions and will. Even the secondary small heroes of Nizami are the autonomous men having their own independent world view and understanding. The farmer who waters his field with his own sweat in the thirsty desert is grandeur in comparison with great Suleiman, the shah, by his honourable toil. Can’t we see the old Zahid as a personality who is not afraid of death, comes to the palace in ceremony and charges the despotic shah? The maidservant Fitna teaches morals to shah Bahram, while the old shepherd gives him lessons on how to rule over the country.

Nizami’s humanism is closely connected with his democratic views. Without hesitation, it is possible to say that Nizami was the only poet who was, for the most part, close to the people and labourers in the 12th century. It is true, that the heroes of his big epic works are mainly shahs, princes and princesses, and those who belong to the nobility. The literary traditions of the Middle Ages, be it in the East or the West, demanded from men-of-letters the depiction of only the lives and activities of the representatives of the nobility in their works. But it is also true that a literary work needs secondary characters in addition to main characters for the dynamic development of the plot. One can cite an endless list of portraits of these secondary characters—the representatives of the ordinary people and labourers. Gardeners, bakers, macons, teachers, shop-keepers, architects, painters, musicians, arrowsmiths, and many others fill the gallery of portraits created by the poet. Some of them are necessary in order to convey to the readers the main plot of the work more vividly. The third group of characters participates in the subsidiary episodes connected with the main plot. Sometimes the poet mentions a detail or a feature of these characters. The character is described from only one angle. But the whole work is enlivened. Here the writer’s purpose, his great love for the representatives of the common people makes itself distinctly felt.

There are works by Nizami the main heroes of which are representatives of common folk. The stories which form his Storehouse of Mysteries are of this type (Sultan Sanjar and the Old Woman, The Story of the Old Brickmaker, The Story of the Fruit-seller and the Fox, The Story of Two Doctors Who Bet, The Story of a Wounded Child and others). The majority of the poet’s characters from common folk are distinguished by their wisdom, spiritual purity and will, and in most cases they surpass the shahs, the rulers, in these qualities. Khosrov’s nature, his debased feelings are revealed when he is compared to Farhad, an ordinary man from the folk, who embodies the spiritual and physical power of the people. In order to complete the portrayal of Khosrov as a character the poet needs Farhad who directs the poet from the point of the idea inherent in it, and helps to clarify the main purpose of the writer. Here the democratism of Nizami’s poetry is conspicuously revealed. Nizami repeatedly speaks of the role of the representatives of the people—
labourers in the improvement of the welfare and development of society. Labour embellishes life. The unity of wisdom and power may create marvels. Didn't the precipitous rocks surrender to Farhad's pick? Designs and patterns carved on hard stones and rocks by Farhad give the impression of something enchanting. Sky-scrapers built by Simnar and Sheyda are magnificent. But what is the lot of the men—the labourers who embellish life? Farhad became the victim of a fatal lie. Toil-hardened Simnar was thrown down from the roof of a high building he had constructed. In this way Nizami reveals his hatred towards despotism, cruelty, the idea of protest and struggle against those who shed innocent blood.

As a popular poet, Nizami embodies in his poems the «voices of orphans whose ears are always pulled», «babies thirsty for their mother's milk», «sick strangers» and «sorrowful old folk». His word turns into a weapon against the world of exploitation founded on injustice. Nizami's pen is unique when he criticizes the vices of society or exposes the evils of feudal life. He could not but see deprivations around him. The country was being torn by internal strife. Handful of people lived in palaces in luxury and governed the country, while another group toiled and suffered in misery and poverty. Why, Nizami thought, had the people — the creators of all earthly blessings, the horn-handed masses — to live in starvation and to suffer? On what grounds does a group of spongers live in luxury, rob and exploit the labourers? Oppression of the unfortunate surpasses all boundaries. Wise, generous men are humiliated. Is it possible to speak of humanity if owl's hoots are heard from the gardens instead of nightingale's songs, if thanks to the «mercy» of the shah, sheriffs and tax-collectors humiliate white-haired old women, if eyes are blinded because they see everything in their true dimensions, if tongues are cut out because they utter the truth?

Nothing humane is left in the human being
Because the essence of humanity has diminished.
If you learn what humanity is
Its meaning will surprise you.

The pupils of the eyes mourn today
Because the real humanity is dead. (Sh., 190)

One must correctly interpret the meanings of the lines where such concepts as «man», «humanity» are mentioned in Nizami's poems. The poet is perturbed because «man» is a sacred concept for him. It is a great honour to have the name of «man». «Man» must be virtuous and generous by nature. Because of those qualities «man» is said to be the personification of God on Earth. But thirst for money, wealth and property has deprived many a man of humane qualities. «The pearl of humanity is lost». «Humanity has alighted on the wings of the legendary bird Phoenix». Nothing humane is left, especially in the men who rule the country. The horrible scenes of the deeds of the so-called monstrous men who have lost the «pearl» of humanity are terrifying.

Nizami's art is a mirror of his era. Like a poet-citizen he whipped all the social and spiritual evils of feudal society either by lyrical or literary strokes or by the plot of his works, directly reproducing the events of the historical past or with the help of his imagination. And in this struggle Nizami made wisdom and thinking his banner. The poet criticized the drawbacks of feudal life and condemned the murders and robbery that prevailed there, the avidity, corruption, ambition, boastfulness in a vivid satirical manner.

One of the main features that linked Nizami with ideas of the Eastern Renaissance was his criticism of the feudal state structure and the autocratic system of government and his exposure of social contradictions14. But the poet did not only expose the evils. He searches for ways of how to do away with these evils and propagates his Utopian ideas: spiritual and moral evolution.

Not only an individual, but also a whole society may become perfect by spiritual and moral evolution. Spiritual and moral evolution

is the triumph of Virtue and Light, and promotion of man to the
circle of God.

During the whole period of his creative activity the poet thought
of sensible, purposeful human life, of the perfect personality and
the perfect society and he hoped at least a part of his ideal would
be realized through the teaching of spiritual-moral purification.

In the epoch of Nizami and for a long time after the objectives
of literature did not include the aspirations and the struggle for a
better life which proceeded from laws of historical development. In
the Middle Ages, eastern as well as Azerbaijan, poetry mainly con-

sisted of romantic verse and this poetry is characterized by the theo-
y of moral purification and spiritual evolution. Nizami was the first
great man of letters who enriched this teaching with the achieve-
ments of image-bearing thought. Against the contradictory, compli-
cated background of Azerbaijan in the time of the Renaissance, Ni-

zami gave this teaching a new sense, a new spirit and direction,
turned it into a perfect poetic and philosophical system and made
it serve the democratic and social ideas of his creative work.

The problem of social justice is more complete and prominent in
Nizami's interpretation of the teaching of spiritual-moral evolution.
This is also connected with the national and humane character of
the poet's ideals. An appeal for justice is the internal content of
Nizami's poetry. The poet turns to this problem repeatedly in all his
poems directly or circumstantially, and with the help of his poetic
imagination creates a gallery of literary images of unforgettable just
rulers:

A shah must regulate the affairs of the country,
And be fair towards his subjects
Only then would the people respect his instructions,
And be his bosom-friends. (S. M., 113)

Thanks to the justice of Ormazd «grief had disappeared from
eyes» «the country had turned into a flower garden». Shah heralded
that in the whole country «the hands of yoke be tied».

In the years of Shirin's reign taxes were not collected from
townsmen and the peasantry. There was such an abundance that «a
grain of wheat produced a hundred grains». There had come such
a time that «partridges had made friends with eagles» «the sheep
and the wolf had become companions». Nizami derived the following
conclusion:

If a shah is of good will and intentions,
The grass would grow pearls instead of flowers.
(Kh. Sh., 314)

Under Nushaba's reign the ancient Barda had turned into the
most prosperous and beautiful corner of the world, thanks to the
ruler's justice and skill. The inhabitants of the country did not expe-
rience grief and anxiety. «You will see here nothing but mirth and
delight». «You may even find pigeon's milk in this country if you
want».

Such is the first stage of the social Utopia created by Nizami's
poetic imagination. The problem of a just shah is important at this
stage, but not the only condition. His poem «Seven Beauties» is
very interesting from this point of view. So what if Bahram-shah
is fair and generous? Who does things in his name? Men like Rash-
Rovshan. Bahram is lost in his own reveries. He lives a comfortable
and selfish life, spends much of his time in the company of beauti-
ful ladies and hunting. Seizing the opportunity, the hypocritical,
treachery and brutal vizier sacrificed the country and the people for
his sordid interests and aims. The country which once had been tur-

n into an ideal land lived her deplorable days and made Nizami
conclude: the material abundance and welfare of the society does
not depend on the ruler's fairness or justice alone. His environment—
his companions, the nobility, viziers, emirs and kozis—must have the
same quality and follow the ruler's example. The Shah — the ruler,
must be aware of how his men rule over the country and the subjects
and prevent them from wrong-doing. The whole state apparatus must
serve Virtue and be free from spiritual and moral maladies. Greedi-
ness, envy, treachery, arrogance, lying and egoism are spiritual deformities which bring harm and damage society. Spiritual purity and morale are the reverse sides of material abundance and prosperity. Socio-economic deformities cause spiritual ugliness or vice versa. Not only the ruler and his environment, but each member of society must strive to acquire the highest spiritual and moral qualities. Only then can we speak of a happy society. The story of Rast-Rovshan, the vizier, and subsidiary tales of the seven princesses, which are symbolic in essence, are all necessary for the poet to stress the above-mentioned idea.

However, Nizami’s artistic presentation of the problem of the perfect man and the ideal society does not confirm the possibility of rooting out evil through spiritual evolution. According to the poet, it is possible to drive darkness out of man’s soul if a shimmer is left in him from «the pearl of manhood». Then a sparkle may be ignited. But if evil is deeply rooted in the nature of an individual or in the life of society and there is not a single ray of hope, then it is doomed, there is no need for reform.

In Bahram’s nature there were only elements of gloom and shades of darkness. His morals were still governed by light and virtue. Therefore, he easily did away with his faults and imperfections. Rast-Rovshan completely embodied worthlessness and that is why, according to Nizami’s ethical views he is desperate, and men like him deserve a fitting punishment, and they were punished too. A parallel to Rast-Rovshan — the symbol of evil — is Evil, the hero of the sixth story («Virtue and Evil») of the poem «Seven Beauties». The poet describes Evil in great depth as a typical image of a man of impure morals, and as a symbol of evil he was killed by the old kurd.

During the reign of Dara gloom and darkness dominated over light in the country and «injustice rose his banner high», therefore the ancient crown of Kayan passed to the hands of the king of Macedonia.

Even in his early poem «Storehouse of Mysteries» Nizami had the same conviction: a young and progressive prince is influenced by the evil forces in the country. The prince seeks a way out of the situation and finds it in a vision which is symbolic. A sage, a patriarch of the people tells the prince to take decisive measures against evil:

You, early moon, destroy the old constellation! You, budding flower, cut the old branch! (S. M., 198)

The prince does as he was told. Evil forces are annihilated, the country is saved and the people begin a peaceful life. The poet concludes his thought thus:

A man who encroaches on others’ property must be beheaded.

An army who betrays better be dismissed. (S. M., 199)

The following extract from «Leili and Majnun» arouses interest from this point of view:

If an adder bites a finger
It is necessary to cut it off completely (in order not to let it poison the body completely). (L. M., 266)

Gold and man, property and personality. In Nizami’s teaching of spiritual evolution these two concepts and their interrelation are the centre of attention. In the whole period of his creative activity Nizami thinks over the role of gold in the life of man and society and in the process of their purification from spiritual evils. This also must be appreciated as the reproduction of feudal reality in the work of art. The wealth of the country earned by the majority of people flows into the coffers of a handful of rulers and those who are strong and enables them to live in abundance and luxury. Moreover, gold flows into the chests and is left locked in the rooms unused, and turns into a pile of useless objects. With the help of his marvellous poetry Nizami wanted to influence his contemporaries: What is the
use of this external lustre? To live at the cost of the blood of one's countrymen is not a humane quality. Trumpery never does anything good to men. If you are able, feed an orphan, help a beggar.

How does Nizami make use of legend about Harun and his treasure in order to hold back the rich of his time who robbed the people by accumulating wealth? The legend says that Harun was swallowed up by the earth with his 40 rooms full of gold.

Harun made a cap out of gold for himself, And therefore was swallowed up by the earth. (S. M., 178)

Observe the fate of a man of such great wealth! Was he not blotted out with all his contemptible wealth which turned friends and brothers into enemies and destroyed families? Remember it, ruler, you are blinded today by the lustre of jewelry and the deceptive brilliance of gold. Don't believe it, but take a moral from this story — do not neglect the homeless, distribute your wealth among your poor subjects, make the miserable happy for a while, wipe away the tears of the strangers who long for their native land. This is the intention and purpose of the poet based on a folk legend, which he wants to transfer to his readers.

This internal content is stressed repeatedly, directly or indirectly, symbolically or with the help of sketches in all the poems of Nizami.

The last pages of 'Igbalnama', the second part of 'Iskandarnama', Iskandar, the ideal sovereign and man, finishes his long marches home. He is fully confident of returning home. He falls mortally ill on his way home. The problem of death and life! Neither wealth, nor his imperial power, nor medicine is able to save the sovereign from the clutches of death. Death as a law of nature is inescapable,—what is born must perish. Iskandar dies. But the real meaning of the story is much deeper than his thoughts on mortality. The deep meaning of the poem reveals the humane ideas of the poet which are national in character. The problem of 'death and life' in the poem must be looked at only from this point of view. The world is not
eternal even for men such as Iskandar! The poet wants his contemporaries, first of all the rulers, not to forget this. He reminds of this to those who have the imperial power and law in their hands, those who fill their coffer's with gold and jewelry by torturing and tormenting people, those who live in tall buildings and palaces but are unaware of those who dwell in dark cellars. When dying a man does not take anything with him to the other world. Eternity is in generosity. Make justice and generosity your watchwords, lead the people to abundance and peace, and only then will your name be included in the list of immortals.

Another example which throws light on the problem of the perfect man and the temptation of gold is taken again from 'Iskandarnama'. After his visit to Nushaba, the sovereign of Barda, Iskandar (in the first book — 'Sharafnama') sets off for Darband and comes to Sarir, a fortress where Key-Khosrov's throne and his famous gold bowl are found. Iskandar is sorrowful for he does not see the owner of the throne. The gold bowl is left unused. Where is the majestic, grand sovereign of the land of Kayan? What is the use of this gold and ostentation deprived of its owner? What about the inferences after Iskandar's visit to the sepulchre of legendary Shaddad? Gold trees, gold apples. A crystal sepulchre ornamented with agate and sapphire. But everywhere is empty, silent and breathless. There is no man. Wealth and property are left, man has disappeared.

Both episodes here shed light upon the poet's humane views and thoughts on the perfect man, rays proceeding from the content of the poem are focused on the problem of gold and man. The aim is that the poet wants to teach a lesson to his contemporary feudal rulers by quoting the history and reminding them of the events of the past. The idea is to make them use the untapped reserves of gold in the coffers for the needs of the starving poor. Here again we see the artistic presentation of democratic views which the poems of Nizami embody.

The ideal man, the position and duties of man in society, and eternal life and death are the philosophical problems which always
made Nizami think and all these found great expression and solution in his «Iskandarnama».

As it is known, for many centuries beginning from his lifetime the personality of the Macedonian conqueror evoked great interest both in the West and East. In a short time many legends, biographical and chronical works, various stories appeared about this historical conqueror of countries and continents. It is doubtless that Nizami was aware of the innumerable, time-worn, ancient manuscripts in many languages. Nizami's poem bears the sign of them. Nizami studied the historical materials, literary works and legends and created a unique, eternal literary monument to Iskandar. As a product of long creative researches, the image of Iskandar is a key to all Nizami's poems. Nizami lighted this traditional image from the un-conquered peaks and created a new hero which embodied his socio-political and literary views and aims.

In «Iskandarnama», the great man-of-letters from Ganja lighted the highway of his philosophy of life. In this poem Nizami sparkled as a scientist and thinker, a well-known representative of the Renaissance in the East who was aware of scientific achievements and a connoisseur of ancient Greek and Indian culture. At the end of the poem, the poet not vainly shifts the stress from the problem of the ideal sovereign of which he is fond of, to the problem of ideal society composed of ideal personalities and ideal individuals. The Utopian land which Nizami's hero visits is the last triumphant accord of the poet, the last convergence of his social, moral and literary aspirations.

What Iskandar didn't do for the restoration of justice and truth! He gave freedom to many peoples, and created favourable conditions for spiritual and economic development in the countries under his reign. But what are all these compared with the conditions of life in the Utopian country? It is the union of men built on honesty, confidence and spiritual and moral purity. Here is the absolute truth for which Iskandar, or more exactly Nizami, was searching for throughout all his creative work. Ideal man Iskandar dominates over the ideal sovereign Iskandar. For there is no need the ideal sovereign Iskandar in the ideal society. Here ideal man Iskandar is respected. In reality, the members of this ideal society are on the point of becoming ideal men. In the depth of the lines and the text we hear the voice of the poet: an ideal man considers labour his hobby, labour is the jewel of man's life, and he is honest and free from envy, egotism, greediness. Such a man is ideal and the union of such men makes the ideal society, so, in this case there is no need for an ideal sovereign to rule over the country. The country must be ruled by the people at large.

Nizami directed all his creative activity to the artistic solution of this great aim. As a great achievement of Azerbaijan poetry of the 13th century, Utopia was not only a new, but also a courageous step for that epoch. Nizami's Utopia is the most progressive and democratic among the socio-literary Utopias before him (Al-Farabi, «The Inhabitants of the Happy Town», 9th century) and after him (16th century — «Utopia» of Thomas More; «The City of Sun» of Campu nella) which also witnesses large scales of the national and social ideas in Nizami's humanism.

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Nizami is known as a great master of psychological images in the poetry of the Near East. All the images of «Quintuple»—be they incidental or dominant, secondary or primary,—all the heroes of Nizami rise to the level of psychological characters. Man's spiritual world and his morals are the problems which made Nizami think most of all. The narration of any episode here is directed through the penetration into the psychological world of the heroes. Nizami's attempt to create complicated, involved, varied characters is the result of this psychological penetration. The poet reveals the inner world of his heroes, shares his thoughts and excitements. The most remote, the smallest sketches in his literary descriptions very often combine with the general characters of the heroes and harmonize with them. Penetration into the internal world, the thoughts and emotions of
the character enables the poet to study man more deeply and to reproduce him in his works. For a better and true comprehension of the ideas and the poetic character of Nizami’s art one must feel the depth of the internal world of the images and regard each of them as a separately taken psychological whole. Only then one can understand Nizami’s Majnun, a martyr and a sacrifice to love who considers his beloved Leili the goal, the highest aim and happiness of his life. In a world of ignorance and obscurantism Majnun is like Venus which sparkles in the dark sky for a while and then disappears. Hundreds and thousands of men — the captives of repressive norms of ethics, old customs and traditions — are too feeble to understand his pure and highest feelings. The poet does not link the tragedy of his hero with mere chance, rather he looks for its sociopsychological roots and finds out that the tragedy is the result of the spiritual and moral contradictions between the individual and historical environment. There is a sharp contrast between the ruling traditions of the epoch and Majnun. And here is the root of the conflict of the poem. To reveal the conflict is possible only by penetrating into the spiritual world of the heroes and by opposing their moral qualities. Majnun’s dreams of happiness and the absolute laws of the morals of the time are irreconcilable. The vital ideals of the hero do not suit objective reality. To shun society emerges as a necessity for the hero. The struggle waged here is quite unusual, for it is a psychological one. Majnun revolts alone against the whole of society and its morals. Do the morals of society triumph? No. The victors are Leili and Majnun. But this is not a physical victory, but a spiritual one. The misshapen customs and traditions of the epoch have blinded all the members of the society and poisoned their minds.

Turned into meek executors of the abnormal laws of contemporary morality, though unable to understand the real cause of all these, each of them feel a kind of emotional and spiritual depression peculiar only to one of them. They are perplexed by the sincere and noble love of two young people, and begin to suspect the righteousness of the morals left by their ancestors.

In reality the poet depict the tragedy of the epoch against the background of the misadventure of his heroes. Have a look at the life story of the characters who may be related to unlucky Majnun. None of them is happy. Leili’s depressing fate made her parents suffer greatly. Ibn-Salam died very young, Salam from Baghdad also suffers in the «flood of misfortunes». What about Majnun’s miserable parents? The poet depicts the life story of each of them so convincingly. Throughout the poem we see them in anxiety and trouble together with the main characters. Who is guilty? Ignorance which has permeated the heart of society, obscurantism and anti-humanistic ethical views hostile to spiritual goodness.

Nizami glorifies love and introduces it as the peak of spiritual condition, the form of spiritual evolution, a concept higher than it is used in everyday life. Nizami’s poetry is real art of the Renaissance when he interprets artistically the everchanging spiritual conditions of man and from this point of view he may be compared to Shakespeare:

I asked; don’t pierce my heart.
Let me have a kiss, don’t let my heart bleed.
What can be better than this, my beloved agreed and
blushing,
Brought her lips close to me and said; don’t kiss18.

We witness a lyrical miniature which has not lost its attraction even nowadays. The poet seems to lighten the psychological world of the heroes. These four lines describe a moment of the two lovers’ meeting where the poet masterfully and visually reveals the feelings and emotions which reign over their hearts.

Christian-parish postulates regard love as a «sin», but Islam considered it as something worth condemning. We see duality in

15 نظام قنجه، قصائد و غزلات با مقاومة و اخواشت و بیکوشته
2سطاد سعید فیسی، تبریز، 1348، ص 69
regard to these natural human emotions in the works of the early representatives of the European Renaissance. The lyrical hero of Petrarch’s famous poem «Consolena» («Love Song») (experiences deep emotional crisis. On one hand, he loves Laura as a woman of the world and enjoys greatly the sufferings and pleasures of this love, while, on the other hand, he is anxious and worries about his love, and considers the «earthly passions» temporary and begs the Virgin Mary to absolve his sins. This duality is absent in Nizami, the 12th century Azerbaijani poet. When men of his tribe take Majnun to Kaaba in order to cure him of the disease of love, while kissing hajar (the sacred black stone) he begs the god to rouse up his love for Leili. Nizami’s gazals and rubaiyats on the theme of love, his poems «Leili and Majnun», «Khosrov and Shirin» sound like a symphony about the grandeur of supreme, pure and humane love. The poet is greatly interested in the varied forms of man’s emotions, the joys and sufferings of his soul. In Nizami’s creative work love acquires a broader content — a social-ethical and sociological content. It is the source of heroism and self-sacrifice, it gives man initiative and strength (like Farhad’s love). In Nizami’s poems love emerges as a philosophical conception. Love makes man immortal and idolizes him. Nizami identifies love and humanism, a study of man. Such a grandeur is peculiar only to a poet of the Renaissance.

The problem of women in Nizami’s poems attracts attention by its Renaissance character. In the Middle Ages woman was considered as a living thing, a source of profit. She was an obedient slave, first of her parents, then of her husband. We do not yet mention the innumerable maid-servants and concubines acquired through wars and invasions. Women were sent as gifts to anybody and anywhere, from town to town, from country to country. Such were the conditions of life for women long before Nizami and after him when in the East half of the population consisted of women. The tragic fate of mothers and sisters could not but move and disturb the humanist poet and thinker. The life story of Leili who was not in control of her own feelings, who faded like a bud before her full bloom as a sacrifice to old traditions and morals, was the heroic life story of thousands of innocent women who died very early. Were there few women disappointed in life like Leili? Majnun was brave enough, at least to speak to everyone about his pure love, therefore he got the nickname of Majnun (Insane), though his name was Gheis. Leili could not even do it. She hid her sacred love, she had her love internally, her love tore her soul and heart, and she could talk about her love only to narcissuses and poppies, watering them by her tears.

She would make oceans of pearls,
And float them (tears) like ships.
She would grieve behind the veils.
And swallow griefs one after another. (L. M., 179)

Nizami deplores it. He regrets that time and its traditions have made this fair creature humble and unfortunate. He wants to influence the reactionary thoughts of his contemporaries with the magic power of his art. He repeatedly questioned himself. Why is the fate of woman in the Islamic world so miserable? «A lion is a lion, be it male or female», says the proverb. The poet turns to pre-Islamic times and compares the principles of Islam with those of his ancestors — the Turkic tribes. In this way he created the image of Nushaba, a woman sovereign of Barda, a city of ancient history, a fascinating corner of the native land. Wasn’t Iskandar thunderstruck by the will of this courageous woman? But Nushaba is not alone, she is surrounded by thousands of heroic, wise women like herself. And they rule over the country. This is how Nizami wanted to see women — wise and brave. If necessary, the woman may become a knight and fight on the battlefields shoulder to shoulder with lion-hearted men. It is of great interest that the «Turkic spirit» is more distinct in Nizami’s images of women. In his verses he expresses the attitude to woman of his ancestors — Azerbaijanians, a nation composed of Turkic speaking tribes, before they adopted Islam. Don’t the women images of Nizami remind us of the women characters like Burla-Khatun, Banuchichak, Seljan from the folk epos «Dada Gorgud», the roots of which are
very ancient? As if the staunch wife of Dali Domrul, ready to sacrifice herself for her beloved husband, assumes new spiritual qualities and is transformed into the image of Leili, an immortal image in the gallery of the images of world literature. The heroine of the story that Bahram-shah heard in the red palace—a Slav—seems to be the sister of Seljan, Banuchichak. Do you remember Nistandarjahan, a Turkish female, an incomparable heroine, slender, noble, whose voice is more pleasant than the sound of music, a gift from the Chinese emperor? What about Filna, Mariya, a woman of profound knowledge? What about Shirin, an Azerbaijani beauty, a good horsewoman, and player of chovkan (a game played on horseback), fascinating and a woman of a rich spiritual world! The readers admire the perfection of Nizami's female images. They are characterized by resoluteness, nobility, bravery. In Shirin's character these qualities enable her to re-educate the capricious, spoilt young prince Khosrov and foster supreme humane qualities in him? Nistandarjahan played a decisive role in the victory of Irkandar's army over the enemy. Filna astonished Bahram-shah by her courage. Mariya was a favourite student of the great Aristotle. Woman can create miracles, she is a creature of great powers. Woman is the mother of geniuses; she gave birth to heroes and heroines, she fosters noble ideas and feelings in everybody. Mankind owes much to this sacred creature. Nizami regards woman as the most honest person, a citizen of equal rights, and does his best to give a good portrayal of woman's talents and abilities. The immortal woman images which have been so masterfully portrayed by the Azerbaijani poet Nizami are the achievements in the history of the classical verse of the Near East, Nizami's humanism triumphed in the solution of this problem too. Socio-literary thoughts of the East in the person of Nizami forestalled the humane ideas of the progressive men-of-letters of the European Renaissance for several centuries. The European Renaissance responded to the Azerbaijan poet only in the 15th—16th centuries.

Nizami is also unique and enthralling when he reveals the psychological nuances and the contrasts of the internal world of the character. By relating to each other many characters with different spiritual qualities, by psychological conflicts the poet seems to travel in the world of emotions. The images are high lighted from different angles, contradictions, contrasts and identities fill and complete each other. Farhad's pure love must, as it seems, harmonize with emotions which reign over Shirin's heart. But she cannot respond to Farhad's love though she respects and sympathizes with him, for she is fully devoted to her first love, or more exactly, to the ideal of her love. Parallels (Farhad—Shirin) remain as parallels. Though strangely enough, Shirin yearns for Khosrov, who is spiritually alien to both Farhad and Shirin.

The poetic aim of Nizami here is to reveal the educative content of pure love and feelings. In reality, Shirin's ideal love absolves Khosrov his sins and raises him to the level of a positive ideal. As a result of spiritual evolution Khosrov becomes a man of high ethical and moral qualities. The process of evolution and purification, the changes that take place in Khosrov are described by Nizami convincingly and with great skill. Farhad was as hot as the sun. His love was the ideal degree of love. Sun and light attract everybody. Valorous is the man when he seeks light in darkness. To cast light on darkness requires bravery. In «Khosrov and Shirin» Nizami wanted to solve this artistic problem and did it with the talent of a genius. This was Nizami's poetic discovery. Few attempts to create such varied, psychological characters came later, even long after Nizami, in the poetic history of the East, presentation of an image in literary process being carried out in one plane. Only in the works of the famous representatives of the European Renaissance the poetic discovery of Nizami continued and developed to the highest degree.

It is doubtless that when interpreting the psychological emotions of heroes, the poet does not limit himself to the study of contradic-
lory features of the characters. For instance, in his poem «Leili and Majnun» the emotional parallels are more vivid and in the foreground. The love described here is different from that of «Khosrov and Shirin» by its content; the heroes in «Leili and Majnun» are identical by the content of their spiritual qualities right from the beginning. But as the conflict and collision of the poem are built on quite different principles, the heroes who strive to unite do not reach the aim.

* * *

Nuances, strokes, sketches. These are of great importance in the literary solution of the problem of the «inner worlds» of the character in Nizami's creative work. The poet pays a good deal of attention to details. This is also one of the qualities of Nizami's mastery which enriched medieval poetry, especially epic poetry. Here very often a small psychological scene is enough to characterize the hero. Do you remember the dialogue of Khosrov and Farhad, an episode from the poem «Khosrov and Shirin»? Brief and laconic answers consisting of only two or three words. They are like bullets which hit the target. But behind them, there is a deep meaning and a wide poetic world. These laconic, as if greedily used, broken, fragmented sentences sound like thunder and reveal Farhad's internal essence, intellect, spiritual world and the might of his love as a poetic image.

There is a small story — a literary sketch consisting of only six lines in «Iskandarnama». But these few lines play an important psychological role to determine and understand the poet's purpose and the main principles of his world outlook:

I heard that a man with a rope around his neck went to the gallows
With his face as beautiful and fresh as early spring.
One of his friends asked him:
Why are you looking so cheerful, you know that you are living your last hours?
He answered: It is a short life given to me,
I can not end it in grief. (Sh., 283)

This small detail — a miniature — fully witnesses the dominance of buoyancy over the philosophy of despair and hopelessness in all Nizami's creative work.

Laconism — is one of the marvellous features of Nizami's art. For an artistic expression of an idea Nizami searches and finds such a word, which later on wholly discloses to the readers the purpose of the poet and the deep meaning of the text. Look at this couplet from «Leili and Majnun»:

Sighing in grief and lamentation
He came to the bride of earth (L. M., 548)

«عروس حاكي» — «bride of earth» is a laconic expression. It is not only laconic and brief, but also embodies a broad content and a deep meaning. Leili is dead. Her unfortunate mother tearing her hair mourns her only daughter and buries her. Majnun comes to contemplate with Leili. But, alas... only an inch of earth is left of Leili. An inch of earth. Now Majnun spends all his time by the «bride of earth» and is waiting for the moment when he is united with his beloved, the bride of earth. The effect of the expression is great and striking.

In Nizami's poetry sometimes even a word is enough to reveal the essence of an event, characterize an image. Depicting the hero Nizami very often appeals to the image of the sea in «Iskandarnama».

The precious mother-of-pearl was handed to the sea.  
(An episode from the wedding party of Iskandar with Rovshanak)

Who has seen the sea board on a ship. (Ig., 164)
(An episode of how Iskandar sails to the continent from the China Sea).

Iskandar and the sea! Man and nature! Do you see the unbreakable internal relation and harmony of the poetic image and the subject? Aren't they identical — Iskandar — with his grandeur, pride, spiritual and internal energy, and the sea — with her wild and stormy
nature, with her roaring waves and vastness? This is the might of Nizami's laconism.

When revealing the spiritual world of his heroes Nizami's use of images taken from nature, that is visual images, as a literary device is unique and incomparable. In him we do not see only a mere description of nature. Nature is brought to his verse as a substantial example of earthly beauties. The earth—mountains, valleys, sky, twinkling stars, the sun, the moon, black and grey clouds, dawn, darkness of the night, the morning breeze—all become the object of a special poetic description. Using varied means and innumerous nuances of the art of the word, the poet portrays many landscape sketches and descriptions of nature. Slender and miraculous ornaments in word revive the spring — the innocent daughter of nature, the pages and the lines are scented with the odour of spring flowers, the gentle purl and murmur of the springs are heard. The description of the process of withering of flowers and trees in autumn evokes a gloomy mood and a state of sadness in the reader. We hear the rustle of the falling red-golden leaves caused by autumn. We grieve because the musical and heart-piercing song of the nightingale, a faithful lover of spring and flowers, is not heard.

But Nizami does not use the description of nature as an external background. He personifies nature, description of any natural phenomenon serves a special literary and social aim, and is directly or indirectly linked with the main characters, with their lives and dispositions. With the help of personification the poet portrays original and capacious images of nature. The life of nature harmonizes with the life of man. Nature becomes a bosom-friend of man. Able to listen to his heart-throbs and the hidden storms of his soul, man begins an intimate conversation with the descriptions of nature of varied colours. The image of nature shares the thoughts and passions of man and helps the readers to reveal the internal «ego» of man who undergoes a complicated process of psychological evolution.

...Gheis' love has gained wide recognition and the lover world fame. Ignoramuses call him «Majnun» (Insane, mad). Leili is not allowed to attend school. Agonising days of living apart from his mistress begin for the lover who is completely devoted to her. He feels bitterness of separation from his beloved and sends his entreaties to her: You, blowing breeze, that passes by Leili's door! Stop for a while, hear this unfortunate lover out! Be aware of the sorrow, grief and woe that pierce my heart, and tell my mistress about them. Tell her that her love has exhausted the poor man. No, no, she has not yet lost all hope—you, blowing light breeze, the ground that has been trodden by her delicate and tender feet are her messengers, bring some of that soil like good news of her to her poor lover:

Morning breeze, awake early morning
Hung on the edge of Leili's hair,
Tell her that her lover whose life is already lost
(is no more than a breeze)

Has fallen on the roads,
Is seeking for your breath in the morning breeze,
Telling the earth of the woes you have caused.
What if you send me a breath of air you breathe,
And some soil that you walked on as a memory of you.

(L. M., 123)

And what about Majnun's conversation with an ahu and a gazelle, his appeals to the stars? Each of this episodes displays the state of image's spiritual depression more vividly, and they must be regarded as visual-psychological supplements which are necessary to make a poem more interesting, and which also serve as proof of the poet's great mastery.

We always observe the interrelation of man and nature in Nizami's poems. Sometimes they complete each other and form an indivisible whole and sometimes the poet reveals unique and interesting paradoxes in them.

...Driven to despair by grief, Leili cannot find succour even for a part of an hour. In order to convey all the depth of Leili's internal wranglings and woes, the poet skillfully uses the image of night. The peculiarities of night and Leili's grief become identical and harmonize;
Departure of night brings comfort to one's soul,
Night is like a mountain under the sky.
The night that I am spending now, is not a night,
But is my blood-sucker.
For such a long, dark night.
I became helpless in search of a remedy to get rid of it.
As if its heat has frozen,
Or its day is like doomsday.
Let us assume that the bird of morning (morning) has been beheaded,
What has happened to the dawn, its breath has not been stopped?
Let us assume that the cock of the old woman is dead,
Or the night guard had taken away the muezin.
But what has happened to the drummer of morning?
Why has he forgotten to beat his drum? (L. M., 477–478)

Leili's grief and gloomy state of mind seem deeper against
the background of such a dark night!

We find similar use of the images of nature and man contradicting each other in Nizami's poems. If the representatives of the Italian school of painting of the 15th and 16th centuries Rafael Santi,
Leonardo da Vinci, Titian Vesséllo, Michelangelo used the harmony
of white and black colours in order to convey the internal world and
external appearance on wood and canvas, the 12th century Azer-
baijan poet Nizami did the same masterly and skilfully by means of
literary language and achieved success.

Creating scenes where man stands in opposition to nature, Nizami sometimes focuses attention on contrasting details inherent in both of them. Proof of it is the meeting of the hero with a crow in the
meadow in spring in «Leili and Majnun». In reality, spring and crow
are images contrary to each other. Spring may harmonize with
nightingale, and crow—with winter. The poet uses these two oppo-
sing concepts together intentionally. Chances cause necessity in life. In
his early spring Majnun experiences winter. Doesn't the crow recall
the snow-storms of winter against the background of fresh, early
spring? Spring and crow—early youth of Majnun's life and his depre-
ced state of mind and emotional crises. The lover's fate (dark lot) and
crow (dark bird) form a unity as something identical, acquire a
poetic content and intensify the psychological tunes.

Sometimes Nizami uses the images from nature directly, in their
true sense, and he attempts to discover the essence of a number of
natural phenomena. One can get a lot of information concerning na-
tural sciences from his literary heritage which have not lost their
value and importance.

In the 10th—11th centuries sciences flourished as never be-
fore in the countries of the Middle East. The establishment of an
organization named «Darul-hukama» (The House of Scholars) in
Baghdad created favourable conditions for creative work for many
scientists and thinkers in the Islamic East as well as in Azerbaijan.
«Darul-hukama» had its own observatory and an enormous library.
Manuscripts on various sciences from many countries and in diffe-
rent languages (especially in Latin) arrived here and were translated
into Arabic by a special group of translators. During a short period
of time, the most valuable monumental works of the ancient Hellenic
culture—such as the works of Aristotle, Euclid's geometry, Archimedes'
physics, the astronomies of Ptolemy and Aristarch, Hipparchus and
Galen's discoveries in nature, mathematical theories of the Pythag-
orian school and many others — were translated into Arabic. Men
who came from many countries of the Middle East to «Darul-hukama»
to get education made great use of this rich treasury of scientific
knowledge. Translated copies of the rare works were sent to diffe-
rent cities of the caliphate which were very important from the stra-
gegical point of view and because of trade. In these favourable con-
ditions of the 10th—11th centuries outstanding naturalists
like Al-Farab (—950), Abu Reyhan Biruni (973—1048), Abu Ali
Ibn Sina (980—1037), Omar Khayam (1048—1181) lived and worked
in the East. The natural sciences developed with a speed as never
Before and there appeared many discoveries, hypotheses and theories opposing the orthodox Islamic ideology.\(^{16}\)

The Renaissance poet of the epoch, Nizami was doubtlessly interested in the works of the ancient Hellenic culture and the achievements of the natural sciences of the 9th — 11th centuries. The poet was aware of such discoveries of Biruni as the roundness of the earth, the earth's revolving around the sun, the law of gravity, the theory of the solar nature of moon light and so on. He was also well-informed about the logical hypothesis of Ibn Sina on geology, the origin of mountains, ravines and precipices, the cause of earthquakes, etc. and he mentioned them in his works wherever it was possible and necessary for the readers to know about them:

Let's pay attention and learn the mysteries.
The essence of everything may be revealed only by knowledge.
Let us view the earth and heaven.
Study them in turn. (L. M., 27)

Regardless of religious ideology, the poet knew very well that the secrets of natural phenomena had to be investigated by science, and he glorified the might of wisdom.

It is true that sometimes being afraid of persecution by the regime, Nizami didn't express his progressive scientific ideas directly, but if possible used the Aesopian language, made his negative characters utter them. From this point of view, the dialogue of Bishr and Maliha in «Seven Beauties» is especially characteristic. At first sight, the poet seems to support Bishr, a religious Moslem who relates all natural phenomena, changes in nature and development to divinity, but opposes Maliha who wants to give a scientific interpretation of these phenomena. Only superficial logic may take it as it is expressed. During the whole period of his creative activity, Nizami sym-pathized with progressive scientific theories, and added his voice to those of such scientists and philosophers of the East as Biruni and Ibn Sina:

Not only is this earth spherical,
Any line if it rotates is spherical. (L. M., 35)

In nature the main thing is the attraction of gravity.
Philosophers call this gravity love. (Kh. Sh., 65)

I heard that a star is a world,
Each of them has its own earth and sky. (Kh. Sh., 692)

It was Nizami's protest, first of all, against trite, hardened reactionary philosophical dogmas. For such judgements Jordano Bruno was burned alive in the 16th century.

There are a lot of thoughts and opinions contradicting religious dogmas and conceptions in Nizami's poems about the correlation of the galaxy, the sun and other planets, the earth, its surface changes and so on.

...The Earth from beginning to end
Consists of layers of soil.
There is either earthquake, or flood,
The former destroys the earth, the latter washes it out.
As soon as there is earthquake or flood,
There appears a new seam on the map of earth.

(L. M., 34—35)

Each of the innumerable substances in nature
Moves towards its centre.
If the underground heat doesn't find a way to shoot up,
It will destroy earth and rise to its surface.
If water remains a long time in the air,
It will turn back to earth as its nature requires.

(Kh. Sh., 64)

There are many examples of this kind in Nizami's poems. Here Nizami, the scholar, takes the place of Nizami, the poet; here the
images from nature are introduced to the readers directly, in their true sense. The poet demonstrates his encyclopaedic knowledge and informs his contemporaries of many scientific phenomena, both known and unknown.

* * *

Classical Azerbaijani epic poetry reached its highest peaks in the creative activity of Nizami. But lyrics dominate in the epic poems of Nizami. One must have a sensitive soul to depict the joy and grief of life, an iron will to unveil the deformities and evils. The poet must have also severe, exposing satire, subtle humour, versatility. The lyrical paths which includes all these above-mentioned elements, is predominant in Nizami’s poetry, and must be regarded as one of the main qualities of the poet’s creative work. «Quintuple» – a collection of his five big poems—is the unity of epic and lyrical works, if we do not take into account the few lyrics of his divan that have reached us. Lyricism attaches plainness and beauty to the plots of Nizami’s poems, and sometimes successfully substitutes epic perception. The plot and composition of the poems are presented to the readers either by making use of narration or by means of the potentials of lyrics.

Monologues, dialogues, appeals which are widely used in Nizami’s plots, are mainly lyrical verses helping the poet to impress the readers more deeply with what he is saying. Lyrical capacity enables the poet to reveal the internal thoughts of the characters, their depressed state of mind, their troubles and sufferings more vividly and more conspicuously. One can say without hesitation that the whole poetry of Nizami, especially his «Leili and Majnun», is full of lyricism.

Majnun’s monologue in front of the door of sacred hajar in Kaaba! Complaints of the martyr of love to the image of his beloved! His lyrical letters to Leili, his heart-burning songs and gazals. Nizami’s Majnun is also a talented poet. And Leili is no less talented. Consider her appeals in verse, messages sent to her lover through friends and acquaintances. Remember her last will before her death. Or consider Majnun’s soliloquy on his father’s grave, or the poor lover’s elegy and mourning for his faithful Leili, his untimely faded star of happiness, who left the world with her dreams unrealized...

Great is the influence of Nizami’s lyricism. He does not use lyrical elements only in the process of narration or in connection with stories where the heroes occur. Very often whole parts, even several successive interrelated parts may be characterized as lyrical and sound like the best examples of musical, ethical-moral and socio-philosophical poetry. In these cases lyricism dominates over narrative which becomes an incidental element of lyricism. It also must be regarded as a speciality of the poet that the intrusion of the lyrical element into the narrative does not affect the plot of the poem, does not affect the evolution of the events as a whole, or the structure of the work. It is neither accidental nor unintentional, but on the contrary, enriches it in content and colours.

In these parts of «Quintuple», the lyrical hero and the narrator merge into one person. This is one of the best and original features of Nizami’s style. If in epic works the author plays the role of an observer, that is of a narrator, in Nizami’s poems the poet is within the world of narrative and is a participant in the stories.

The poet’s voice is distinctly heard, especially in lyrical digressions, which intensify the lyricism of Nizami’s poems, and enriches them. Very often the poet reveals his desires, his attitude to the events of the epoch and the story he is narrating through lyrical digressions and in this way he makes his readers grief, worry and cheer.

Lyrical and literary digressions are one of the indispensable constituents of Nizami’s poems. He expresses his socio-philosophical, ethical and aesthetical thoughts about nature and society through literary artistic digressions. The use of these literary devices fills Nizami’s art with a spirit of progressiveness and enables him to touch on the burning problems of the day, and to express his views on the problems that worry and puzzle him as a citizen. The social and
literary purpose of Nizami’s poetry, its satirical spirit and subtle humour find their final and distinct expression in lyrical digressions. A pleasant musical lyricism which is characteristic of Nizami’s style acquires here an exposing and threatening character. Sometimes directly in the text, or in the depth of the text we hear the poet’s voice which condemns the evils of the epoch.

...Neman-shah orders the architect Simnar to build a castle for Bahram, the prince. The grandiose castle is ready. But when the shah learns that the architect is able to build a more beautiful building, he cannot tolerate the idea. Mean and base feelings possess his soul, and Simnar is murdered. Here narrative is proceeded by a lyrical digression which has a special generalizing power, and through it Nizami links a story of the past with his own epoch, actualizes and vitalizes it:

Padishah is such a flame
That will light the way of man though he is far away.
His flame is like a flower shining with pearly rays.
It is a flower when afar, but in your arms it is a thorn.
Padishah is like a vine.
He who is afar would not get tangled in it.

Nizami was a true citizen of his epoch. He could not ignore and be a mere observer of innumerable acts of violence. He could not keep silent. Here lyrical and literary digressions as main poetic devices help him greatly to reveal the social criticism of his poetry more vividly. Evils and injustices of the epoch which are portrayed by Nizami in deep dark forms through lyrical digressions turn into the poet’s own voice and sound like the criticism of the morals of his time, but not like isolated stories of the past.

Nizami’s poetry is also interesting from the point of view of genre. It may be said that the poet wrote in all basic types of classical Eastern verse, but his use of them was of a creative nature, and enriching them in content and form, he added to them many new qualities. Nizami created the best examples of gazal, rubaiyat and qasida. His poem ‘Storehouse of Mysteries’ being a literary-philosophical and deductive treatise, is composed of a number of short stories. According to their plots and contents ‘Khosrov and Shirin’, ‘Leili and Majnun’, ‘Seven Beauties’, ‘Iskandarnama’ may be characterized as novels in verse. The poet restricts the development of events around the main heroes of the poems in time and space. Narrative is led in the frames of the plot and the latter in its turn is divided into many component parts. The parts of the main plot are logically interconnected and succeed each other and serve the literary solution of the whole. The successive parts are built on the principle of either from cause to effect, or from effect to cause. The relations of time and space here are correlated. Alongside with the main heroes here we also observe the adventures of a number of incidental characters. The poet speaks of the fate of different men, reveals their interrelation and interconnection. For instance, in the poem ‘Khosrov and Shirin’, alongside with the main line of the plot — Khosrov and Shirin, we also trace the development of such collisions as Farhad — Shirin, Khosrov — Shirin — Farhad, Farhad — Khosrov, Shirin — Mahinbanu, Khosrov — Mariyam, Khosrov — Shirin— Shapur, Khosrov — Shakar and others as being parallel, crossing or intruding into the main plot. Or in the poem ‘Leili and Majnun’ the events develop around Leili and Majnun and their interrelation. But this main plot also unites additional collisions such as Majnun and his relatives, Majnun’s family and Leili’s family, Nophal and Majnun, Ibn Salam and Leili, Majnun and Salam from Baghdad and others.

In his epic poems Nizami very often makes use of subsidiary narrative. Such additions and subsidiary narrative help the poet tell
the readers of a theme or the problems that puzzle him throughout his creative activity. This never disrupts the composition and structure of the main plot, but completes and polishes it.

After the romantic scene where the hero talks to wild beasts the poet tells such a story. Long, long ago there lived a shah. He was very wicked and cruel. He kept in his palace several dogs as strong as monsters, and if he was angry with anybody he set the dogs on him. A friend who knew the perfidy of the shah made friends with the keeper of the hounds, and every time he came there he would feed the dogs. At last came the most horrible day for which he was waiting. The shah got angry with this young man for some trifle and ordered him to be thrown to the dogs, but the savage dogs didn't touch a friend. They were more faithful than the shah, they recognized the youth and didn't tear him to pieces.

This story seems to be complete externally and has nothing to do with the main plot and it may even be excluded from «Leili and Majnun» as being independent. But according to the idea of the story, it is one of the leading themes which serves the aim of the development of the artistic goal of the poem and enriches and completes it. Or if we exclude the story of the poor hermit again from «Leili and Majnun» neither the content, nor the structure of the poem will suffer. The story of the poor hermit does not only enrich the content of the poem, but also serves the socio-literary ideals of Nizami's art, glorifies its spiritual grandeur and highness. The poor hermit lives in the ruins and feeds himself with grass and weeds and prefers his independence and freedom to the service of the shah and delicious food in his palace. His pride and resolution sound like a challenge not only to the palace nobility, but also to the shah himself. To be frugal and to live spiritually independent is better than to live on the fat of the land and be a servant. This thought is repeated many times in various forms and runs through all Nizami's poems.

Sometimes Nizami's plots are divided into component parts, and very often these component parts form independent stories with their own plots as in «Seven Beauties». But such complication of the plot does not divert from the main idea. These seemingly complete stories are assembled around the main plot and serve the aim of the leading idea, images and characters.

By the interpretation of images and characters, internal features, socio-ethical aims and aesthetic content Nizami's epic novels vary greatly both from the courtly novels of Western literature of the 12th—15th centuries and the epic novels of Eastern literature before Nizami, such as «Shahnama» by Firdousi, «Vamig and Azra» by Unsuri, «Varga and Gulsha» by Ayyuhi, «Veys and Ramin» by Fakhraddin Gurgani, and in many aspects rise to the level of the best novels of world literature of the 18th—19th centuries.

Nizami's fantasy embellishes his plots. His artistic imagination serves a practical aim and aesthetic ideal which is based on reality. We do not find any incidental elements or characters in Nizami's poems which are abstract and unreal. He uses conventional devices less than his predecessors, though it was widespread both in Western and Eastern poetry. The features and the traces of mythological and lyrical stories are few in his poetry. For comparison we may turn to the poetry of Firdousi, a well-known predecessor of Nizami, whose verse is wholly conventional. This quality which is characterized by the genre of the poem is distinctly seen in two large parts of «Shahnama» depicting the events of the pre-shah period, for Firdousi's poem is a heroic epopee; here men live for 300—500 or even 1000 years and they fight with three-headed, or seven-headed monsters. Magic and miracle play an important role here; Zal, son of Sam—father of legendary Rustam—was brought up by Phoenix; serpents have settled on the shoulders of Zohak, son of Dene and so on.

Nizami's narrative is rapid and tense which also may be regarded as a component of the novel genre. Stories and characters are not static, but rather dynamic, they are presented in their evolution. Analysis of the characters is carried through probing into their internal and spiritual world. The vital problems and desires of the time find their artistic setting in Nizami's creative work. The plots of Nizami embody lyrical, dramatical, philosophical, aesthetic and ethical generaliza-
tions. Lyrical digressions, emotional excitement, caused in connection
with the fate of the heroes or by the events beautify Nizami's poetry
and enrich it in content. Sometimes the poet's own thoughts and
views, emotions and concerns become so interwoven with the events
described, that it presents great difficulty to distinguish them or to
find out the beginning and the end of the epic and lyrical elements.
These stylistic properties make Nizami's poems close to the genre of
novel. Nizami does not merely display conflicts and contradictions,
but also illustrates the process of their development. And the literary
devices involved by the poet serve this aim. Here the poet regards
a character as presenting the life story of a man, psychology — in
the meaning of psychological process.

The poetry of human feelings and soul emerges fully and in
all its tenderness in Nizami's poems («Khosrov and Shirin», «Leil
and Majnun»). To reveal the social essence of the life experience
of the image by a psychological process is one of the best achievements
of the novel as a genre.

* * *

Nizami's creative work leads not only medieval Azerbaijan poe-
try, but the poetry of the whole Middle East as well. He ingeniously
applied to his art aesthetic principles of beauty and heroism, and
created a number of eternal images of ideal heroism, ideal love. Be it
his lyrics or his «Quintuple», both are hymns to man's internal,
external, spiritual, physical, social grandeur and charms. Everything
in man — his appearance, his thinking, his heart, his behaviour must
be beautiful. This is the real essence of Nizami's art, the art of
Renaissance by its content! To sing of earthly beauties is the theme
of Nizami's poetry, its main starting-point. Originating from here are
stories, relationships, contradictions, conflicting and united ideas,
human grief and joy, spiritual-emotional victories, deprivations and
failures which succeed each other, directly or indirectly interconnected
in Nizami's plots. They return again to their starting-point, assemble
around this aesthetic concept and serve it.

Beginning from the lifetime of the poet, Nizami's heritage gained
the recognition of art lovers and spread to many countries. Today
many scientific and educational institutions of the world, archives of
Moscow, Baku, Berlin, London, New York, Leningrad, Oxford, Istabul,
Tashkent, Paris and many others deposit Nizami's poems copied
in different centuries by different scribes.

Beginning from the 12th century the poetry of the Near and
Middle East felt the influence of Nizami's art, many well-known men-
of-letters of the East studied the poet's works and created the best
pages of world literature in verse, The 13th century Indian poet Amir
Khosrov Dahlavi, and the 15th century Uzbek poet and social figure
Alisher Navoi proudly called themselves Nizami's pupils. To create
«Quintuples», or even «Seventuples» became traditional. Hundreds of
literary works on the theme of Nizami's poems appeared in Turkish,
Persian, Indian, Uzbek and the languages of other Eastern peoples.

Nizami's genius did not influence only the socio-literary thought
of the East, but also Western literature to a certain degree and in
different ways. The researchers find many features in the heritage of
such world-famous men-of-letters of Western literature as Dante, Boc-
caccio, Voltaire, Goethe, Schiller, Gotsy, and Heine inherent to Niza-
mi's poems16.

At the end of the 18th century the first attempts were made in
Europe to study and publish Nizami. But the real scientific rese-
arch, translation and publication date from the 19th century, both in
the West and the East. Beginning from that time right up to nowa-
days Nizami's heritage, wholly or partially, has been translated into
English, German and other European languages by such orientalists
as Hammer Purgsthal, Wilhelm Bacher, Fridrick Reuchert, G. Ritter,

16 Э. Аргеев. Низами во дуня адебийяты. Азербайжан Довлет
Нашрийяты, Бакы, 1964, се. 141—159.
K. Wilson. Much has been done also to research Nizami's heritage during this period in Western countries. If we disregard a number of incorrect, obscure ideas, especially by W. Bachr, the research of the 19th century scholars A. Russo, Hammer Purgshnal, H. Housley, Barbier de Meindard, I. Pizzi, H. Ette, P. Horn, Houtsma and others may be appreciated as a good beginning worthy of attention in learning about Nizami's life and creative activity.  

Nizami is studied in various European countries and America even nowadays. In this regard, the researches of such orientalists as Antonino Pagliaro, Alessandro Bausani, A. Arberry, H. Masse, J. Kritzeck and M. Donald are worthy of attention. It is also true, that though less, but still there are pernicious views in modern European oriental studies which date back the investigation of Nizami for a century, repeat the incorrect, groundless judgements that were refuted long ago by progressive world science, and present him in isolation from his people and his literary environment, distort his world outlook and misinterpret the sense and the content of his poetry. The progressive wing of modern European orientalism attempts to study Nizami in detail, examine his work from a true historico-social and methodological position, summarises and sees in proper perspective the achievements of world orientalism in this field.

The English scientist K. M. Meredith Wens, the German researcher W. Finger's works of Nizami, and especially works by


J. Rypka, the well-known Czech orientalist and the best compiler of the critical text of «Seven Beauties>, are of great importance.  

Nizami is studied and published widely on the level of the requirements of modern science in the Eastern countries, especially in Iran in the last 50 years. Notable are the works of such scholars as Vahid Dastgerdi, Said Nafisi, Rozzada Shafag and Ali Akbar Shabahi, although some of their conclusions must be excluded as being incorrect.  

Remarkable are Vahid Dastgerdi's studies on Nizami being a step forward in world orientalism. He prepared the most correct texts of Nizami's works by comparing various manuscripts of different scribes and times, commentaries on difficult couplets, lines and allusions, and compiled a dictionary of words which were not easily understood, and not least of all, did an honourable job by researching into the poet's life and creative activity.

In the same period Nizami was studied and translated in other Eastern countries such as India, Egypt and Turkey. For instance, by means of historico-literary comparisons, for the first time an Urdu-Hindi scholar and writer Shibly Ne'mani analyzed his mastery from different angles through a direct reference to his works. His judgments on Nizami's style literary descriptions and other problems have


22 كتاب حكایت نظامی گنجوی از روزی نزد مصحیح شده استاد سخن وحید دستگردی، تهران، 1318؛ نسخی گنجوی انتصیح استاد سخن وحید دستگردی، تهران، 1350؛ سید نفیسی، احوال و آثار قصائده و غزلیات نظامی گنجوی، تهران، 1337؛ رضا ذاکر، تاریخ ادبیات ایران، تهران، 1345، ص. 526—374؛ علی اکبر شهابی، نظامی شاعر دستیان سرا، تهران، 1338.
not lost their significance in literary criticism even nowadays. The Arabic scholars Mohammed Hasaneyn made interesting observations on the humane content of Nizami's love, on ethical, social and other problems in the poet's works.

If several fragmentary reviews are disregarded, the study of Nizami in Russia is closely connected with the name of A. Krimsky who, for the first time, made translations from the poet, brought to light some facts of his life and creative activity and dealt with the history of studies of Nizami in the world.

But the real scientific research into Nizami in our country belongs to the period after the Great October Socialist revolution. Working constantly on the varied problems of Nizami's heritage Soviet scholars made interesting observations on his life, creative activity, his literary environment and aesthetic-artistic views.

Particular attention must be paid to the work of Y. E. Bertels who, beginning from the last years of the 1920s, studied Nizami's poetry as a system. For the first time in world literary criticism Y. E. Bertels studied the essence of his literary heritage in close and organic relation with its progressive humane content, and revealed the deep meaning under the surface of the poetic lines as well as their philosophical content.

During the years 1930—1960, in the Soviet Union, especially in Azerbaijan, a large group of scholars began to study the art of Nizami from different angles. Such well-known Soviet critics as H. Arasly, A. Mubariz, M. Rafilli, A. Makovelsky, M. Arif, M. Shaghinyan,

23 Shibli Nüméni, Şimalı Ulusları, Tarih Şıarım ve Ahd-ec-i-İran, Jāb-dow, Tahrir, 1325 H., 1376 C.;

24 А. Крных, История Персии, ее литературы и лерницкой школы, т. 2, М., 1912, стр. 161—240.

25 Е. Бертельс, Большой альбрейдский поэт Низамин. Баку, изд-во ААФАН, 1940; и т. же. Низами и Физули, М., изд-во восточной литературы, 1962.

M. Jafar, M. Guluzada, Mir Jalal and others studied the relation of the poet's heritage with folklore, the national and historical characters of his poetry, artistic and scientific points, his views on creative work, the philosophical essence of his art, labour and the images of labourers in his poems, the content and essence of these images, his conception of love, his democratic and social views and many other problems referring to Nizami.

The contribution of II. Arasly is notable in studying the literary heritage of Nizami. Proceeding directly from originals of Nizami's poems, for the first time II. Arasly proved that Nizami thought it Azerbaijani although he wrote in Persian in accordance with the socio-political and aesthetic requirements of the epoch. He also revealed the influence of Azerbaijan folklore on his poetry, and Azerbaijani words and expressions used in them and studied their meaning. All these are of great importance in Nizami studies.

From 1940 to 1970 for the first time in the Soviet Union the
scientific-critical texts of Nizami’s literary heritage appeared, edited by Y. E. Bertels.8

The Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR completed the philological translation of Nizami’s works into Russian in 1940. On the basis of this philological translation, later there appeared poetic translations of Nizami into Russian by well-known translators, such as A. A. Romankevich, R. Ivnev, B. Derzhavin, S. Sherovskiy and P. Antokolsky.

In the years of Soviet power Nizami was read completely in his native tongue and for the first time Azerbaijan Soviet poets S. Vurgun, S. Rustam, R. Rza, A. Shaig and M. Razaguluzada translated Nizami’s «Quintuple» in 1940. Examples of his lyrics that have reached us, have been translated by various translators during these years and published several times.

Nizami is studied and read by many fraternal Soviet peoples in their own languages nowadays. His translations and publications in Ukrainian, Georgian, Armenian, Turkmen, Tartar, Tadjik, Byelorussian, Kirghiz and other languages are evidence of this.

Nizami and the problems of his verse have been fundamentally studied in the last 20 years in the USSR especially in Azerbaijan. Notable are the works of such Azerbaijan scholars as M. Jafar, J. Mustafayev, A. Agayev, G. Begdeli, Kh. Yusifov, A. Abbasov, Ch. Sasani, Kh. Huseinov, G. Jahani, and R. Azada.29

But Nizami Ganjavi is such a unique gem in the treasury of world poetry that the study, publication and understanding of his works must always be at the centre of art and science. The resolution of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party (January 21, 1979) «On further improvement, publication and dissemination of the literary heritage of the great Azerbaijan poet and thinker Nizami Ganjavi, which demonstrates the deep concern of the Party and Government for our classical cultural heritage as a whole, is notable in this respect.»

Further fundamental and noteworthy research of the creative activity of the great poet and the publication of more precise and poetic translations of his literary heritage are the most important and honourable tasks facing our Azerbaijan literature and literary criticism.

перевод с русского

редактор и корректор издательства Н. Иваннесси
художественный редактор Ф. Согаров
технический редактор Т. Агиев

ИБ № 494

формат бумаги 70 x 108 1/32. Бумага типографская № 1.
гарнитура шрифта академ. печать высокая. печ. лист 2,8.
уч. изд. лист 3,44. тираж 3000. заказ 392. цена 20 коп.

издательство "эдмс"
г. баку, 144, проспект пириманова, 31, академгородок,
Главное издание
типография АП Азербайджанской ССР, баку, проспект пири
манова, 31.

азаде рустамова
низами гянджеви
(на английском языке)