



Article

The Role of Elegiac Motifs in Revealing the Hero's Psychology

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Abstract. This article is devoted to an analysis of Togay Murad's novella "The Stars Burn Forever." In the work, wrestling values serve as a means of examining socio-ethical problems, and the character of Buri Polvon is interpreted as a symbol of honesty, honor, and spiritual resolve. The article shows that the author, in presenting his conceptual judgment of existing reality, generalizes the dishonesty and baseness of certain characters to the level of a social type. It is demonstrated that, in the plot of the novella, scenes of external struggle are harmonized with inner psychological turmoil, revealing the process of overcoming an elegiac mood. The study employs comparative-typological, psychological, and sociological methods of analysis. The research findings are summarized, and general conclusions are drawn.

Keywords: wrestling values, elegiac mood, artistic concept, social type, aesthetic ideal, dualistic views.

INTRODUCTION

Togay Murad's novella *The Stars Burn Forever* is recognized in Uzbek literature as a work that analyzes human psychology, socio-ethical problems, and the mood of its era at a conceptual level through the values of wrestling (polvonlik). The plot of the novella is formed through the harmony of external scenes of struggle and inner psychological torment, and dualistic views such as honesty and foul play (g'irromlik), love and betrayal, and valor and cowardice are given artistic expression. Buri Polvon is interpreted as a symbol of honesty, self-respect (oriyat), and spiritual resolve, whereas the image of Nasim generalizes the social type of the era that is inclined toward dishonesty. The author's conceptual judgment is expressed through the fates of the characters, and the attainment of genuine wrestling virtue is elevated to the level of an aesthetic ideal. The novella is significant not only as a depiction of artistic reality but also as a scholarly and theoretical source that allows a critical analysis of values, society, and individual spirituality in the literature of its period.

Togay Murad's novella *The Stars Burn Forever* [1], [2] stands out in Uzbek literature for its profound treatment of the national spirit, character, and spiritual-moral problems. The author notes that almost all of the wrestlers in the work had prototypes in real life, and the vitality of the characters' personalities and actions is clearly reflected in the text [3].

After *The Stars Burn Forever* was awarded the "Best Novella of the Year" prize, the articles and notes written about the author by fellow writers and critics became an important source for the analysis of the novella [4]. An artistic analysis of the work shows that wrestling is interpreted in it as a measure of human valor, honesty, and the spirituality of society. In the analysis of Murad's works, the articles of literary scholars serve as the principal source [5].

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The editions of the work from 1980, 1987, and 1994 show that the writer's conceptual position deepened over time. The episodes concerning the village chairman and the mother's grave, introduced in the edition of the independence years, served to expose openly the spiritual decline, ostentation, and devaluation of humanity under the Soviet system. In addition, research on topical issues of literary studies and articles in periodicals are also regarded as necessary sources for revealing the distinctive features of the writer's works [6], [7].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the artistic and conceptual features of the novella *The Stars Burn Forever* are examined using the historical-comparative, typological, biographical, and, in part, textual methods of literary-studies methodology. The editions of the novella published in different years are studied comparatively, which reveals the changes that occurred in the text and plot structure of the work under the influence of the dominant ideology, as well as the effect of these changes on its artistic content. Taking the images of Buri Polvon and Nasim as examples, the internal and external plot events, the elegiac transformations in the hero's psyche, and his moral and spiritual torments are compared. The conflict among valor, betrayal, and national values in the characters' dispositions is classified typologically. The spiritual and moral affinity between the author's personality and his experience as a wrestler, on the one hand, and the aesthetic ideal and the characters of the heroes in the work, on the other, is substantiated on a scholarly basis. The conclusions of the study serve to define the conceptual essence of the work.

Results and Discussion

In the novella *The Stars Burn Forever*, a distinctive division can be observed between the hero's external world and his psyche. Buri Polvon, who has pinned many an opponent to the ground in wrestling circles and whose name is on everyone's lips, lives inwardly as a recluse. The reason is that the loss of his first love, Momoqiz, owing to the lie of his bosom friend Nasim, and his subsequent turning away from that friend because of the betrayal, lead the hero to an elegiac attitude toward life and being alive: "The heavy stone in my heart flows away with these drops... Something lodges in my throat. I try to swallow, but I cannot, I cannot! A man like Buri Polvon has no strength left to swallow!" [8].

In accordance with this division in the hero's external and internal worlds, the plot events are likewise organized into two kinds. The system of external events unfolds in the wrestling scene at the circumcision feast hosted by Zulfiqor Polvon and is enriched by the narrator's details about the wrestlers in the circle and by brief explanations of some of the techniques used in the bouts (in such places one senses that the author himself was a wrestler of the circle – M.I.). The system of internal events consists, conditionally, of events from Buri Polvon's life that are passed through his thoughts and reveries: the narrator steps back from the plot time and recounts past events that correspond or relate to the situation in which the hero finds himself on the stage [9]. Although these narratives gradually shape the hero's elegy, his full elegiac position emerges only at the end of the work, in the analysis of Buri Polvon's inner spiritual torments: "Every heart has things to say to a girl's heart. A young man who does not have these words in his heart is no young man at all... One says these words in a single word, another in many words. Yet another cannot say them at all. Nasim, my friend, I could not say my words to Momoqiz. But I give thanks for my life, my friend. I tell myself: Buri Polvon, you were a real man — look, there is your first love" [10]. The systems of external and internal events (those passed through the hero's reverie) converge in the wrestling scene at the feast, in the event of Buri Polvon's son, Tilovberdi, being defeated by the son of Nasim, who caused Buri Polvon to live in anguish all his life. Immediately after this event, harmony is observed between the positions of the hero and the author. That is, the wrestling scene at the feast is interrupted time and again, and the narratives from Buri Polvon's life, fitting the situation that has

arisen, are now linked to the author's philosophical reflections on the search for meaning in human existence [11].

Separation, death, and loss, as elegiac motifs, are a means by which the hero manifests his own "self" and a vehicle for the formation of wrestling values. In the novella, the interpretation of these motifs occurs in direct connection with Buri Polvon's life philosophy as a wrestler. Tilovberdi's being thrown by Nasim's son at the end of the bout impels the hero to change his position and to overcome his elegiac mood. Because Buri Polvon failed in his time to fight for his love (He involuntarily went slack and lowered his hands. Waving his hand: "Pay him his due, he is strong!" he said, and walked out of the circle), and consequently has lived all his life in anxiety and torment over the fate of the woman he loved ("...did you not hurt her heart? Did you not humiliate her?"), the elegiac, depressive mood in his psyche deepens. The final bout, however, shows that Buri Polvon can no longer content himself with merely maintaining an elegiac attitude toward his life: "Nasim, my friend, you showed yourself before my eyes and reopened my wound. As if that were not enough, look, you have thrown my son too... No, my friend, the stars burn! Our circles go on. They have no end. Wherever there is a circle, I will follow your every step... My star will burn forever!" [12]. Buri Polvon is freed from the elegiac mood within him by perceiving his fate and his tomorrow, owing to the defeat of his son as well by the friend who once trampled his dignity (for Buri Polvon regarded this bout as a spiritual and moral struggle between Nasim and himself), and by choosing, in this process, the path that he considers acceptable for himself. Yet emerging from a mood that has lasted a lifetime is now laid not only on the hero himself but also on his descendants: "I will have Tilovberdi wrestle your son for up to three rounds. Listen well: God willing, I will have my grandson wrestle your grandson" [13].

The change in the hero's elegiac mood toward his own life also clarifies the author's elegiac position, which is seen in his hope for a generation that "does not spare even its own father when the truth is at stake": "When I threw him, he called it foul play. Look at the result! Our father has got his wish! As long as we have a father like ours, we need no enemy!" [14]. As the son speaks these words, weeping outside the circle, attention is drawn to the fact that his intolerance toward what he considers unjust, and his sense of rebelliousness, are stronger than his father's.

At this point a question arises: to what extent is it consistent with the criteria of wrestling that, in the bout scene, Tilovberdi throws Abray Polvon, Nasim's son, onto the spectators, yet this throw is not judged "fair" (halol) by Buri Polvon, who presides over the circle? The reader, who at the beginning of the bout received Buri Polvon's promise ("As the Buri Polvon of the circle, I give my word: I will tolerate no partiality, foul play, or cronyism!"), also agrees with his decision. Why, then, does the "unthrown opponent" (in Buri Polvon's view), Abray, remain silent? Why does the "opposing side," the people of Shorchchi, who intend to restore the reputation they lost in the previous circle, remain silent? Moreover, the elder wrestlers watching the bout raise no objection; the people of Khojasoat applaud Tilovberdi and shout "fa-a-a-air!"; and, despite the facts cited by the narrator (1. Abray Polvon was afraid, so it was necessary to attack; 2. Tilovberdi Polvon seized Abray's collar with his right hand and applied an inside trip (chil), then pushed him back with force; 3. and, finally, what the crowd said: "Thank goodness he fell on people; had he hit the ground with such force, his guts would have burst!"), Buri Polvon's refusal to acknowledge his own son's victory (the bout is also a struggle between Nasim's son, whose father betrayed him and deprived him of happiness, and his own one and only son – M.I.) creates an interesting situation [15]. The fact that the crowd called it "fair" when Abray Polvon was thrown onto the people, and that even the people of Shorchchi did not object, shows that such situations commonly occur in wrestling circles. What aim does the author pursue by setting Buri Polvon against the whole crowd and, at the same time, against his own son? Let us consider the reasons:

1. It once again confirms the logic of Buri Polvon's character, which has been forming since the beginning of the events ("Even if a wrestler hurls a wrestler to the blue of the sky, it is worthless! If you are a wrestler, throw him on the ground!").

2. He regarded Abray Polvon not as Nasim's son but as the child of his first love, Momoqiz ("Had I won Momoqiz, Abray Polvon would have been my son..."). It is precisely for this reason that Buri Polvon's heart "softened" toward Abray.

3. Through Tilovberdi's defeat in the bout, the author aims to free the hero's psyche from the elegiac mood, and he hits the target squarely with the sentence "As long as we have a father like ours, we need no enemy!" Buri Polvon, whose life's path has been wrestling and who has lived within the circle, is compelled to renounce the path along which he did not fight for his own happiness; the younger generations do not accept such a path, a path devoid of struggle: "Buri Polvon stopped, wanting to say something. But he had no strength to speak. He walked slowly into the darkness" [1, p. 85]. At precisely this point the positions of the hero and the author come into harmony: "Buri Polvon turned onto his road: 'Say farewell, Nasim, my friend, say farewell...'" [16].

The novella *The Stars Burn Forever* is not merely an artistic interpretation of Uzbek *kurash* and the life of its wrestlers; it also gives broad space to human spirituality and to questions of morality in society. Through a bout in the small wedding scene of a remote village, the author sets values against the times, honesty against foul play, betrayal against valor, and the feelings of love against those of separation. In evaluating them through Buri Polvon's gaze, he strives to create his aesthetic ideal in the hero's image and to reveal the most attractive facets of the personality of Uzbek wrestlers. Such torments as the inability to dare to answer the betrayal of his bosom friend ("...there is a girl yonder on the hillside [17]. She was my heart. My bosom friend clawed at my heart. Ugh, what a misfortune!"), helplessness at their encounter ("...their eyes met... these meaningless, blank eyes were as dear to Buri Polvon as they were loathsome!"), trampled hope and love ("...in front of him your face is bright... Buri Polvon expected these words from Nasim... Unexpectedly, Nasim sent a go-between to Momoqiz... The bread was broken [i.e., the betrothal was sealed!]"), a painful longing endured throughout life ("By the way, Nasim, my friend... Is our Momoqiz well? ... Nasim, my friend, Momoqiz still lives in the very depths of my heart"), and tenderness and pride colliding in a single heart ("Warmth and compassion stirred in his psyche. He wanted to embrace Nasim Polvon and rub his forehead against his beard. He took a step and stopped. 'No, never, never! I was born Buri Polvon, and I shall leave this world as Buri Polvon!'" form the basis of the process of analysis taking place in the hero's psyche. The expression, through this process, of the author's philosophy and his reflections on society, values, and the human being constitutes an originality of content for the literature of the period, and, by virtue of being interpreted as an exponent of values, the image of Buri Polvon acquired a distinctive individuality within the system of images of the literature of this period [18].

It is worth noting that a spiritual and moral closeness can be perceived between Buri Polvon's character traits and the author's personality. Togay Murad's contemporaries repeatedly emphasize in their memoirs a certain coarseness and bluntness in his disposition, together with, correspondingly, his honesty and truthfulness. Khurshid Dostmuhammad, who worked alongside the writer at the editorial office, recalls him thus: "He knew no middle path in anything, did not step onto the street of compromise, and lived with himself. Because he could not fit into just any environment, he did not go against his nature..." [19]. Togay Murad himself was among the wrestlers of the Surkhan oasis, which is corroborated by his words in a conversation published in the newspaper *Ma'rifat*: "I am in the work, too. I too wrestled in the circles to the best of my ability" [20]. For this reason, the influence of the wrestler's qualities in the creator can be felt in the author's attitude toward events and in the creation of the characters' personalities, for example, in the characters' slight coarseness and bluntness (as in the author's own disposition). It may

be said that the honesty, valor, and magnanimous disposition of the oasis wrestlers, which served as the basis for Buri Polvon's character traits, also functioned as an aesthetic analogue for the heroes of the author's later works.

Dualistic views about good and evil are expressed in the conflict between Buri Polvon and Nasim in the novella. The reason is that this philosophy's age-old judgment, that no evil goes unpunished, was creatively used in shaping the fate of the Nasim figure, that is, in his finding a destiny worthy of his deeds. Although the life material underlying the artistic reality of the novella appears to be the love triangle of Buri Polvon, Momoqiz, and Nasim, the author's artistic intention was not to interpret love conflicts but to analyze artistically the spirituality of society and the individual on the basis of wrestling values. For this reason, the love line is not fully developed in the plot, and neither dialogues nor depictions of mental states that reveal the characters of Nasim and Momoqiz are given broad space [21].

The image of Nasim is one of the leading characters in shaping the conflict between the characters and in expressing the author's artistic and conceptual judgment. For this character, who, like Buri Polvon, held the status of a wrestler among the people, wrestling is not a spiritual value. For this reason, his actions are carried out only within the bounds of his own interests. The fact that, although he holds a leading position in the expression of the work's conceptual judgment, his inner world is nowhere depicted and his process of inner reflection is nowhere illuminated also expresses the author's attitude toward dishonest wrestling [22]. That is, resorting to foul play caused a wrestler to fall out of favor with the people and sometimes caused people to regard him with hatred. It is precisely the attitude that formed among the people toward the dishonest wrestler that led the author to refrain from analyzing the character's actions anywhere, leaving him out of consideration. Likewise, in Nasim's character traits the author creates a generalized image of people produced by the existing socio-cultural conditions. As a generalized image, standing in contradiction to the author's ideals, the character now serves to interpret the wrestling values expressed through the image of Buri Polvon: "As Buri Polvon went around the circle, he heard Nasim egging Abil Polvon on: 'Go at him boldly, he has no heart. One year he challenged me and, out of fear, conceded...'" [23]. The character's trait is revealed in two respects: words and phrases connected with Nasim's speech, such as *gijgijlamoq* ("to egg on") and *qo'rqanidan qoyil bo'lib edi* ("conceded out of fear"), show that he is a morally base person, and at the same time this act is regarded as impermissible and is condemned in terms of the principles of wrestling as well. The author negates the image of Nasim and the social "generalization" created by the conditions of the era in his figure. This negation can be seen in the resolution of the character's fate, that is, in the expression of the dualistic view that no evil goes unpunished: "...facing the qibla I say: if I lie, may I go blind". Nasim's falling from a horse and going blind comes about as the result of the betrayal and deceit in his actions.

Through Nasim's story, the motifs of the treacherous friend and of *qilmish-qidirmish* (retribution for the liar; "one reaps what one sows") from folk tales are absorbed into the plot of the novella. Whereas in the folk tale this motif is interpreted in connection with the fate of a single individual, in the novella it acquires a distinctive new content by expressing the changes in the psyche of the era and its representatives. Likewise, the names chosen for the characters carry symbolic meanings. For example, *buri* ("wolf") denotes "...the continuer of the Turkic clan lineage... the totemic wolf image is depicted as a person's savior and protector". The character traits and the position in the work of Buri Polvon also grew out of the meaning of the chosen name. *Nasim* means "a gentle breeze, zephyr". The fact that this character leads himself and his family, Momoqiz, to wander from village to village, and spends his life blaming others ("...all this is Buri's doing! He has told everyone: wherever Nasim goes, give him no peace!"), shows that the name "given" to the image was chosen in keeping with its expression in the artistic conception of the work. Momoqiz is a name that combines meanings such as the wisdom of old age and the beauty of youth.

She holds an important place as the cause of the hero's fate and of the torments in his inner world, yet this character does not take an active part in the plot events; she appears only once, in a small scene. The role of this image in the artistry of the work is symbolic: she (in fact, his love for her and the anguish and unfulfilled longing arising from his failure to attain that love) becomes a personal ideal, a distinctive value, in Buri Polvon's spiritual and psychological world: "A person has many pure, undying feelings, each in its own way. But the first love... Nasim, my friend, I have seen nothing more chaste and undying than the first love!... Nasim, my friend, I have seen nothing greater than Momoqiz...". For the hero, Momoqiz has become an embodiment of love and of life, and her not becoming active in the work as a person moving according to the logic of her own character is connected with her being an image that serves as a spiritual symbol. The fact that Momoqiz was won not by Buri Polvon but by Nasim through betrayal, however, is linked to the creator's two different aims in the work. The first is that the conflict between the friends arising because of Momoqiz became the knot of the plot and found its resolution in the heroes' renewed encounter at the end, but this is visible only in the transformations within Buri Polvon's inner world. The second is that the most important thing in the hero's life remained in the hands of a representative of a morally and ethically degraded stratum such as Nasim (the generalized image of people produced by socio-cultural conditions), which serves to intensify the author's elegiac attitude toward the existing era. Thus, the first aim pertains to the poetic expression of the work and formed its distinctive plot system, while the second solidified the author's conceptual judgment, which arises from his artistic perception of existing reality.

After the novella *The Stars Burn Forever* was published in the journal *Sharq yulduzi* in 1976, it was first issued in book form in 1980. However, the versions revised by the author in 1987 and 1994 differ somewhat from the first book edition of 1980. In 1987 the novella was included in the collection *Qo'shiq* (Song) under the title *Davra* (The Circle), and the text of the work underwent various lexical and semantic changes: expressions such as *duo qilmoq* ("to pray") and *fotiha bermoq* ("to give a blessing"), as well as certain passages aimed at conveying the people's national identity, were removed. It is also perfectly clear that the stripping of the work's title of its national meaning and of the writer's hope and confidence directed at the future (the belief that the stars of the generations will burn forever) occurred as "an echo of the brazen demands of that time" (O'. Hoshimov). In the very first years of independence, the writer revised the work and included it, under its original, old title (*The Stars Burn Forever*), in the collection *Ot kishnagan oqshom* (The Evening When a Horse Neighed, 1994). Because of the need for a deeper understanding of the tragedies that colonial policy brought upon peoples, above all its aim of making people irreligious and faithless, and of the moral and spiritual degradation of society, the work was enriched with new scenes.

Events connected with the death of Buri Polvon's mother were added to the novella. The "episode of the chairman of loose morals" (*oyog'i buzuq rais*), which had not been fully developed in the first and second editions, was reworked, and the "episode of Nasim, who came under the pretext of offering condolences to share with Buri Polvon, as glad tidings, a report in the newspaper" was also introduced. In the previous two editions, Buri Polvon knew of the village chairman's misdeeds ("According to rumors, the chairman was of loose morals...") only at second hand; now the events connected with the chairman actively enter his life. It should be noted that depictions of the official who has fallen into moral corruption because of his position are frequently encountered in the literature of this period, and in all of them the aim of artistically comprehending the socio-political conditions of the era takes precedence. The image of the old chairman in the novella can also be accepted as one such depiction. However, in line with the author's artistic intent, the treatment of this image has been developed further in the work. The chairman, who destroyed the family of the village water-distributor (*mirob*), is disgracefully punished in the district center, and Buri Polvon is appointed chairman in his place; in many

interpretations, the fate of adulterous officials ends there, and they remain out of the people's sight. The development of this typical image in the work lies in the fact that his excessive resourcefulness (extreme for his own time, and unforgivable with respect to the universal beliefs of humanity – M.I.) consists in exploiting human death and tragedy in order to restore his own interests and position.

In the society of the 1970s, vices such as ostentation, rapacity, bribery, and sycophancy flourished, in many cases, in the lives of leaders and representatives of the leadership, which further worsened the poor living conditions of ordinary people. Out of Buri Polvon's sense of propriety before the people and his reluctance, as one in office, to expose himself to various rumors, he, although he has the means, lends his mother's grave no splendor after her death and does not adorn it with a headstone or a mausoleum-like monument (*sag'ana*). The hero's way of life and reflections, at the same time, express the author's aesthetic analogue directed at the existing socio-political conditions and the officials within them. The old village chairman, however, who was disgracefully removed from office, secretly installs a marble monument on the grave of Buri Polvon's mother and hopes to obtain from the new chairman, that is, from Buri Polvon, the post of manager of a farm or warehouse. In the novella, the image of the village's former chairman expresses the ominous visage created by the system and the moral tragedy of a person severed from his own self, honor, and dignity: "One evening he took a hoe and set out for the cemetery. He meant to pry up the marble monument and hurl it away. Oh, heaven forbid! Can one lay a hand on a cemetery? Can one wreck a grave?" [2, p. 69]. The hero's helplessness and spiritual anguish before his mother's grave is a scene close to the state of socio-psychological crisis experienced by peoples in the last decades of the Soviet system.

The later events added to the novella *The Stars Burn Forever* are aimed at a deeper artistic comprehension of the conflict between the wrestler's personality and his environment. The socio-moral degradation that emerges from the clash of the writer's ideal with the reality of his time is sharply contrasted with the wrestler's creed. At the same time, it expresses the creator's elegy arising from the devaluation of values and the disappearance of the notions of honor, dignity, and conscience in the lives of the chairmen who, standing at the head of the people, make pleasure their profession, and of the "Nasims" who applaud human tragedy. In the events involving Nasim and the old village chairman, their character traits are analyzed in parallel; that is, the images of Nasim and the chairman are social types created by the existing conditions, who trample Buri Polvon's dream and values for the sake of their own interests. The wrestling values expressed through Buri Polvon negate their moral and spiritual image, and the absence in the hero of any retaliatory action against the injustices done to him is connected with those very values that underlie his character traits: "Tell no one, my dear, there is a girl yonder on the hillside. She was my heart. My bosom friend clawed at my heart. Ugh, what a misfortune!" [1, p. 32]. The torment caused by betrayal constantly influences the processes taking place in Buri Polvon's psyche, as well as his attitude toward, and evaluation of, the events around him, and causes him to live all his life in inner anguish. As noted above, Nasim's fate was created out of his spiritual tragedy. That is, the events of his wandering life or of his going blind after falling from a horse are viewed as the response to his betrayal of, and his deeds against, the people around him. No spiritual solace or balance arising from the fate of the treacherous friend is observed in Buri Polvon. For example, even on learning that Nasim is blind, he expresses no reaction to it, either by any state of mind or by any action. Had the hero's psyche experienced inner satisfaction, or a feeling approaching contentment, at Nasim's plight, the hero's wrestling creed would not have been perfect, and he would have remained a person who had not attained the status of a true wrestler. Compared with the fate of Nasim or the old chairman, Buri Polvon's contentment with his own life and his faith in tomorrow ("My grandsons will keep wrestling in the circles, crying out 'Oh, my grandfather's patron saint!' My star will burn forever!") show that wrestling values are, above all, capable of preserving a person's moral and spiritual image

in society and, at the same time, stand above any personal interest and above the vices brought about by existing socio-political conditions.

CONCLUSIONS

Togay Murad's novella *The Stars Burn Forever* is not only an artistic expression of the life of the oasis wrestlers but also a work in which individual spirituality and the moral problems of the age are deeply explored. Through the conflict between Buri Polvon and Nasim, as well as the social episodes enriched in later editions, the author sets in sharp contrast such concepts as valor and betrayal, honesty and dishonesty, and pure love and moral degradation. In the novella, the hero's external world (his actions in the circle) and his inner torments (his psychological experiences) are harmonized, and the supremacy of values over socio-political pressures and the notion of personal interest is revealed. The elegiac quality in the protagonist's psyche is transformed, at the end of the work, into a firm belief in the future and in the continuity of generations. In the image of Buri Polvon, the writer succeeds in creating not a defeated individual who has withdrawn into seclusion but a national aesthetic ideal who has entered the struggle for his honor and conscience and has preserved his spiritual world.

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