

ELEGY AND MARSIIYA IN EASTERN AND WESTERN LITERARY TRADITIONS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE POETICS OF MOURNING

<https://doi.org/10.70728/phil.v05.i03.005>

Ahmadova O'g'iloy Ozodqul qizi
ahmadovaogiloy93@gmail.com
SamSU

Abstract: Genres associated with mourning rituals occupy an important place in both Eastern and Western literary traditions. Mourning genres are among the most ancient literary forms that artistically express humanity's perceptions and experiences of death, loss, separation, and suffering. However, the ritual roots and poetic genesis of such genres as marsiya and elegy have not been sufficiently studied from the perspective of comparative literary studies. This article aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the marsiya in Eastern literature and the elegy in Western literature based on their ritual foundations, poetic structure, and eschatological perspectives. The study employs comparative-typological analysis, genre theory, intertextual analysis, and a historical-literary approach. The results demonstrate that the marsiya genre was formed in connection with Islamic mourning rituals, particularly the events of Karbala. The elegy, on the other hand, developed on the basis of ancient Greek lament songs and the funeral traditions of Christianity. While collective grief and the concept of martyrdom dominate in the marsiya, individuality and philosophical consolation are more prominent in the elegy. Although these two genres emerged within different religious and cultural paradigms, they share a common archetype of mourning inherent to humanity. Both genres arose from a universal human need to express grief. The transformation from ritual practice to artistic form appears as a crucial factor shaping the poetic system of these genres.

Keywords: elegy, marsiya, mourning, ritual, eschatological, death

Introduction

In human thought, the phenomenon of death is not merely a biological event but also a fundamental experience that has influenced the formation of religious, mythological, and cultural systems. Initially, mourning rituals constituted an integral part of social traditions; over time, they moved into the sphere of artistic thought and became the basis for the emergence of independent literary genres. In Eastern literature, the marsiya, and in Western literature, the elegy, represent poetic expressions that emerged from the artistic interpretation of death. Although these two

genres have been studied separately within different literary traditions, their ritual origins and poetic transformations have not been systematically examined from a comparative-typological perspective. In particular, issues related to their compositional structure, the position of the lyrical subject, and their poetic distinctions have not been sufficiently explored.

Eschatological views-namely ideas concerning the afterlife, the hereafter, and eternity-constitute an important factor shaping the internal semantic system of these literary genres. In both marsiya and elegy, death becomes not only a source of grief but also a central point in the search for spiritual and existential meaning. Therefore, identifying the philosophical model of these genres is of particular importance in studying them within the framework of comparative poetics.

In Eastern marsiya, death is often interpreted in connection with divine will and the concept of salvation in the hereafter. In Western elegy, however, death is more frequently explained through individual loss, existential sorrow, and philosophical reflection. This difference produces noticeable distinctions in poetic structure, imagery, and the model of lyrical expression.

The aim of this article is to identify the common and distinctive features of the marsiya and elegy, to analyze their ritual foundations and poetic systems comparatively, and thereby highlight both the shared and differing aspects of Eastern and Western literary traditions.

Materials and Methods

In international literary scholarship, numerous studies have been devoted to the issue of literary genres. In particular, the works of François Villon, Nathalie Denizot, Pierre Loubier, Paul Claudel, Charles Baudelaire, P.M.Sacks, G.M.Pigman, and A.Kahn¹⁰ discuss the characteristics of genres such as the ode, rondeau, elegy, and ballad. Among world scholars, issues related to the elegy have been addressed in the works of Charles Kennedy, Christine Fell, Giacomo Valeri, and Nathaniel Mers¹¹. In

^{10 10} François Villon, Nathalie Denizot. Pierre Loubier Paul Claudel Charles Baudelaire. François Villon, Pésies complètes, éd. C. Thiry. –Paris, 1991. Le Livre de Poche, «Lettres gothiques» n 4530; The Lyrics and Melodies of Adam de la Halle (New York: Garland, 1985), Mark Everist's important study of the genre rondeau motet, "The Rondeau ... JohnL. Ns – 2017, 49 pages. Paul Claudel. Cinq grandes odes. Processionnal pour saluer le siècle nouveau. La Cantate à trois voix (Français) Broché. 29 avril, 1966, 17. Victor Hugo. Odes et ballades. France. Gallimard. 1980, 480 pages. Pierre Loubier Baudelaire et l'élégie. France. 2005. 103-122 58 pages Nathalie Denizot. Thèse de Doctorat genres littéraires et genres textuels en classe de français. Soutenue publiquement 2008. France Paris. –58 p. Sacks P. M. The English Elegy. Baltimore/ – London, 1987, Pigman G.W. Grief and English Renaissance Elegy. –London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney, 1985, Kahn A. Russian elegists and Latin lovers in the long eighteenth century // The Cambridge Companion to Latin Love Elegy / Ed. by Thea S.Thorsen. Cambridge University Press, 2013. –P. 336-347

¹⁰Nathaniel Myers. DEATH MATTERS: LYRIC, AFFECT, AND ETHICS IN BRITISH AND IRISH ELEGY 1960-2012. (A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy)1960-2012. Graduate Program in English Notre Dame, Indiana July 2015. – p.255.

¹¹Nathaniel Myers. DEATH MATTERS: LYRIC, AFFECT, AND ETHICS IN BRITISH AND IRISH ELEGY 1960-2012. (A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy)1960-2012. Graduate Program in English Notre Dame,

Russian literary scholarship, researchers such as L.G.Frizman, R.Vroon, M.L.Gasparov, V.E.Vatsuro, A.K.Fedotova, I.A.Pilshchikov, S.A.Matyash, and A.Z.Khabibullina¹² have studied the genre nature, genesis, and development of the elegy. In Uzbek literary studies, scholars such as N.Rahimjonov, N.Jabborov, D.O'rayeva, U.Hamdani, and A.Ulug'ov¹³ have investigated aspects of folk lyrics and certain poetic forms. In particular, D.O'rayeva's doctoral dissertation devoted to the folklore of mourning rituals examines the genre characteristics of mourning folklore, including lamentation songs. The marsiya genre in Uzbek literature has been thoroughly studied by M.Rahimjonov¹⁴, who analyzed its genesis, nature, and development. A comparative study of the marsiya and elegy genres was conducted by the researcher Z.Karamatova¹⁵. In studying these mourning genres, ritual theory serves as an important methodological foundation. The process of transition from ritual custom to artistic form is considered a key source in analyzing the genesis of the genre.

Results

The novelty and scientific significance of this article lie in the fact that the marsiya and elegy are analyzed for the first time through a comparative model based on eschatological poetics and ritual genesis. The study demonstrates the determining role of the concept of death in the formation of these genres.

Discussion

Indiana July 2015. – p.255.

¹² Фризмэн Л. Г. Русская элегия от Сумарокова до Некрасова. – М., 1973, Вроон Р. «Оды торжественныя» и «Елегии любовныя»: история создания, композиция сборников // Александр Сумароков. Оды торжественныя. Елегии Любовныя / Изд. подг. Р. Вроон. – М., 2009. – С. 387– 468. Гаспаров 1989: Гаспаров М. Л. Три типа русской романтической элегии (индивидуальный стиль в жанровом стиле) // Контекст - 1988. – М., 1989. С. 39-63 Вацуру В. Э. Французская элегия XVIII – XIX веков и русская лирика пушкинской поры // Французская элегия XVIII – XIX веков в переводах поэтов пушкинской поры. М., 1989. С. 27-48. Вацуру 1994: Вацуру В. Э. Лирика пушкинской поры. «Элегическая школа». – Санкт-Петербург: Наука, 1994. – С.16. Федотова А. К. Русская любовная элегия 1730-1770-х годов: диссертация кандидата филологических наук. СПб., 2018. Пильщиков И. А. Проблема межъязыковой интертекстуальности: на материале классической элегии: диссертация ... доктора филологических наук. – М., 2007. Мильчина В. А. Французская элегия конца XVIII – первой четверти XIX века // Французская элегия XVIII–XIX вв. в переводах поэтов пушкинской поры: Сборник. М., 1989. С. 8-26. Матяш С. А. История жанра русской элегии через призму стихотворного переноса // Нарративные традиции славянских литератур: от средневековья к новому времени: материалы Всерос. науч. конф., к юбилею чл.-кор. РАН Е. К. Ромодановской, –Новосибирск. 2014. –С. 295- 301. Хабибуллина А. З. Жанр элегии в русской и татарской литературах: сопоставительный аспект. //Филологические науки. Вопросы теории и практики. Тамбов: Грамота, 2018. № 9(87). Ч. 2. С. 304-310. ISSN 1997-2911.

¹³ Раҳимжонов Н. Истиқлол ва бугунги адабиёт. –Тошкент: О'qituvchi, 2012. –Б. 155-167. Жабборов Н. Замон. Мезон. Шеърят. –Тошкент: Ғ.Ғулом номидаги Адабиёт ва санъат нашриёти, 2015. –304 б. Ўраева Д.С. Ўзбек мотам маросими фольклорининг жанрий таркиби, генезиси ва бадиияти. Филол.фанл. докт. автореферати. –Тошкент, 2005. –36 б. Ҳамдамов У. Янги ўзбек шеърятини. Монография. – Тошкент: Адиб, 2012. – Б. 162. Улуғов А. Қалб қандили. –Тошкент, 2015.

¹⁴ Раҳимжонов М.Н. Ўзбек мумтоз лирикасида марсия жанри. Филол. фанл.бўйича фалс.докт. (PhD) автореферати. –Самарқанд, 2019. –50 б

¹⁵ Karamatova Z. F. Marsiya va elegiya janrining tipologik xususiyatlari. Fil. fanl. bo'yicha fals.dokt. (PhD) avtoreferati. - Buxoro, 2024.

As a lyrical genre, the elegy is believed to have originated in ancient Greek literature in the seventh century BCE. Although it initially appeared as a mournful poetic form, later it developed into various types of meditative lyric poetry. The earliest elegies belong to poets such as Tyrtaeus and Callinus, whose works encouraged soldiers to fight for their homeland.

In the twentieth century, scholars attempted to classify elegies into several types, although no single universally accepted classification was reached. Nevertheless, elegy is generally defined as a poetic form that expresses sorrow or separation.

Elegies are sometimes divided into heroic, non-heroic, and pastoral types. Non-heroic elegies focus on universal sorrow and social suffering, while heroic elegies are dedicated to the memory of a particular individual. Heroic elegies are semantically and functionally closest to the marsiya. Among the most famous examples are Walt Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!", W.H.Auden's "In Memory of W.B.Yeats", and Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Adonais." Scholars such as M. Johnson, J. Harris, and Charles Kennedy¹⁶ have explained the differences between ancient Anglo-Saxon elegies and modern English elegies. According to Kennedy, pastoral elegies are not always directly related to death. Works such as "Adonais" and "Lycidas" differ significantly from other types of elegy. Christine Fell notes that such elegies often reflect on the transience of life and the inevitability of decay. It is known that almost every culture possesses a distinct genre of mourning songs within its folklore. These songs were traditionally performed during funeral rituals. In Russian folklore, such songs held a special place. Emotional intensity occupies a central role in them. In ancient Russian folk tradition, lament songs known as "plachi" were performed during funeral ceremonies by professional mourners.¹⁷ Slavic cultures referred to such mourners as "voplenitsy". Similarly, in Uzbek folk tradition there were professional lamenters known as "voyxonlar" or mourners who performed lamentations during funeral rituals.

In modern literary interpretation, the elegy is often considered a form of mourning song. Researcher Giacomo Valeri¹⁸ discusses the linguistic characteristics of mourning in elegies and examines their forms in ancient and medieval literature. In Western literature, elegies have appeared in various thematic forms, including romantic elegies, funeral elegies, and war elegies. Among these, funeral elegies are functionally and semantically the closest to the marsiya. The term marsiya originates from Arabic and means "to mourn," "to lament," or "to grieve." It refers to a lyrical

¹⁶ Kennedy, Charles W. 1936. *Old English Elegies (Translated into Alliterative Verse)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

¹⁷ Хатамов Н., Саримсаков Б. Русско-узбекский толковый словарь литературоведческих терминов. – Ташкент:, 1979. – Б. 234.

¹⁸ Giacomo Valeri. *Elegy in Crisis: Experimental Forms and the Influence of the Cult of the Dead in Middle English Dream-Vision Elegies*. (PhD) University of York English September 2019.

poem written to commemorate the death of a person, expressing sorrow for their loss and praising their virtues¹⁹. In Eastern literature, marsiya poems were often performed during mourning ceremonies by professional lamenters known as giryandilar.

In classical literature, marsiyas were frequently dedicated to rulers, close relatives, or respected figures. Examples include the marsiya related to the death of Siyavush in Narshakhi's History of Bukhara, the lament for Alp Er Tunga in Mahmud Kashgari's Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk, Alisher Navoi's marsiya dedicated to his teacher Abdurahman Jami, and Khondamir's lament for the death of Navoiy.

Conclusion

The similarity between these two genres is closely related to their eschatological characteristics. The term eschatology, derived from the ancient Greek words eschatos (last) and logos (study), refers to doctrines concerning the afterlife, the end of the world, and ultimate destiny.

In the marsiya, eschatological ideas are expressed through clearly defined religious concepts. This is especially evident in marsiyas influenced by Islamic thought, where belief in the afterlife is central. The death of the deceased is interpreted not as eternal separation but as a transition to eternal life and reunion with God. Such interpretations are based on Islamic concepts of the Day of Judgment, Paradise, and eternal life.

Many marsiyas also emphasize the immortality of the soul and the possibility that the deceased may attain paradise due to their righteous deeds. Some works even refer to the divine judgment awaiting humanity on the Day of Resurrection. In Eastern literature, the marsiya often carries a strong religious tone. One of the earliest and most influential examples is the Karbala marsiya, associated with the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali.

Although eschatological motifs also appear in elegies, they tend to possess a more philosophical and universal character. Elegies often focus on the transience of human life and the inevitability of death, expressed through philosophical reflection. In some cases, elements of Christian eschatology also appear. For example, Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" contains profound philosophical and religious reflections on life and death.

Thus, the main difference between the marsiya and the elegy lies in their religious and philosophical interpretations: the marsiya represents mourning poetry grounded in religious-eschatological concepts, whereas the elegy expresses universal and philosophical reflections on grief and loss. Nevertheless, both genres perform an important aesthetic and spiritual function in literature by artistically interpreting

¹⁹ Курунов Д., Мамажонов З. ва бошқалар. Адабиётшунослик луғати. –Тошкент: Akademnashr, 2013. –Б.162.

human perspectives on life, death, and eternity. Consequently, the marsiya and elegy can be regarded as two significant poetic forms through which humanity comprehends and artistically reflects upon the phenomenon of death within cultural consciousness.

References

1. Kennedy, Charles W. 1936. Old English Elegies (Translated into Alliterative Verse). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
2. Хатамов Н., Саримсаков Б. Русско-узбекский толковый словарь литературоведческих терминов. - Ташкент:, 1979. - Б. 234.
3. Giacomo Valeri. Elegy in Crisis: Experimental Forms and the Influence of the Cult of the Dead in MiddleEnglish Dream-Vision Elegies. (PhD) University of York English September 2019.
4. Қуронов Д., Мамажонов З. ва бошқалар. Адабиётшунослик луғати. - Тошкент: Akademnashr, 2013. -Б.162.
5. Karamatova Z. F. Marsiya va elegiya janrining tipologik xususiyatlari. Fil. fanl. bo'yicha fals.dokt. (PhD) avtoreferati. - Buxoro, 2024.