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RECONSIDERING HAMID OLIMJON'S LITERARY LEGACY: FOREIGN SCHOLARLY INTERPRETATIONS AND THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE OF HIS MANUSCRIPTS

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Abstract: This article reconsiders the international reception of Hamid Olimjon (1909–1944) through the methodological lens of textual scholarship and literary source studies. Taking Zulxumor Mirzaheva's survey of foreign interpretations as a historiographical point of departure, it distinguishes the claims of reception history from conclusions that can be established through manuscript witnesses. Particular attention is paid to the scholarship attributed to David C. Montgomery and Roberta Maria Micallef, the ideological and aesthetic readings of the narrative poem Zaynab va Omon, and the implications of autograph drafts, typewritten copies, editorial revisions, and later editions for interpreting the poet's work. The article proposes a source-sensitive model that combines the study of critical reception, bibliographical description, textual collation, and the reconstruction of compositional history. A documented variation in the opening word of O'rik gullaganda across published editions is used as a limited illustrative case rather than as evidence of a definitive authorial reading. The central argument is that foreign critical interpretations should be evaluated alongside, but not conflated with, the documentary history of the works they discuss. This approach clarifies the distinction between interpretation, transmission, and textual authority, and outlines priorities for future critical editions of Olimjon's writings.

Keywords: Hamid Olimjon; textual criticism; manuscript studies; foreign reception; David C. Montgomery; Zaynab va Omon; textual variants; literary source studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The literary heritage of Hamid Olimjon occupies an important position in twentieth-century Uzbek literary history. His lyric poems, narrative poems, dramatic works, translations and critical writings are frequently read in relation to the cultural transformations of the Soviet period. Yet the scholarly history of these texts presents two different kinds of evidence: interpretations produced by critics, and documentary witnesses through which the literary works have been transmitted. These two domains intersect, but they cannot be treated as identical. A persuasive interpretation of a poem does not, by itself, establish which textual version was read, how it originated, or whether its wording was subsequently revised.

In "Hamid Olimjon ijodi xorijiy olimlar talqinida," Zulxumor Mirzaheva surveys the reception of Olimjon by foreign scholars, particularly American researchers, and considers how lyricism, ideology, national identity, gender and folklore enter their assessments (Mirzaheva, 2020, pp. 90–93). The present study takes that discussion as a historiographical starting point while asking a different question: how might the conclusions of international scholarship be refined when the material history of Olimjon's texts is included in the analysis? The objective is not to reproduce Mirzaheva's survey, but to formulate a textological framework for testing the textual premises of interpretive claims.

2. SOURCES AND METHOD

The study applies a qualitative, source-critical method. Its first source group comprises the published reception survey by Mirzaheva and the foreign studies identified therein. Its second comprises the

documented types of materials associated with Olimjon's literary archive: autographs, draft manuscripts, typescripts, copies, and published editions. The surviving holdings at the Alisher Navoi State Museum of Literature offer a basis for future work-by-work collation; however, the present article does not claim to have established the complete stemma of any work or verified every reading directly against its original archival witness. Where an archive shelfmark, folio or edition page has not been independently checked, no precise archival citation is invented.

Three analytical levels are distinguished. Reception history establishes what particular scholars argued and in what intellectual circumstances. Textual history reconstructs the relationship among manuscript and printed witnesses, including revisions and editorial interventions. Interpretation addresses imagery, genre, voice, ideology and meaning in a specified textual state. Separating these levels prevents a later printed reading from being silently treated as the poet's final intention, or a critic's political interpretation from being presented as a manuscript fact. The methodological principle is simple: a claim about the text must identify its witness, whereas a claim about reception must identify its critic and publication.

3. FOREIGN RECEPTION AND THE PROBLEM OF INTERPRETIVE CONTEXT

Mirzaheva identifies Harold R. Battersby, David C. Montgomery and Roberta Maria Micallef among the foreign scholars whose work is relevant to Olimjon (2020, p. 90). These names do not represent one homogeneous school. Battersby's work is situated within broader inquiry into Uzbek literature and society, while Montgomery's studies engage the representation of love, women and Soviet ideological culture. Micallef's discussion places literary works within the construction of national identity. The difference matters because each research question selects a different body of textual evidence and assigns different explanatory weight to the historical context.

According to Mirzaheva's account, Montgomery interprets the lyric poems of 1937–1938 as expressions of intimate feeling, and his reading of Zaynab va Omon links romantic choice and female agency with social transformation (2020, pp. 90–92). Mirzaheva also records the objection of L. Qayumov, who considered an exclusively intimate reading insufficient to explain the poems' wider social and patriotic dimensions (2020, p. 91). This disagreement is not best resolved by simply choosing one interpretation. Rather, it exposes the need to distinguish the poem's rhetorical address, its historical circumstances, the critical assumptions of the interpreter, and the particular textual version on which the reading rests.

A love lyric may simultaneously use the language of private attachment and invoke a collective horizon; these are not necessarily mutually exclusive registers. Conversely, an ideological vocabulary in a published text cannot automatically prove that every phrase originated in the author's earliest draft. The issue becomes especially significant when texts circulated through multiple scripts, editorial stages and publication environments. Textual scholarship therefore supplies a useful control on claims about both "pure lyricism" and "political instrumentality": neither should be inferred without examining the verbal and documentary particulars of the work.

4. ZAYNAB VA OMON: CHARACTER, IDEOLOGY AND TEXTUAL WITNESSES

Zaynab va Omon is a productive case because it has attracted interpretation as a narrative of love, choice and changing social relations. In the discussion summarized by Mirzaheva, Montgomery relates the work to the emergence of a new female subject, whereas Uzbek critical responses emphasize the historical specificity and artistic complexity of its characters (2020, pp. 91–92). The poem's protagonists may be discussed as ideological figures, psychological individuals and narrative agents, but these dimensions should be anchored in the exact passages under examination.

For a textological study, the first task would be to identify every extant witness of the narrative poem, record its script and physical condition, and determine whether it is an autograph, a copy, or a typescript. A second task would be to compare scene order, character speeches, descriptive passages, omissions, and corrections with early printed versions. Only then could one assess whether a disputed characterization is stable across the transmission or depends on a particular editorial state. A third task would be to distinguish demonstrably authorial corrections from changes made by copyists, editors or publishers. Without this sequence, an interpretation may be sophisticated but remain uncertain about its textual foundation.

Such a procedure is particularly valuable for passages that appear to embody an ideological program. If a motif is present in the earliest verifiable witness and maintained in later authorized texts, that continuity strengthens an argument about its place in the work's composition. If its formulation varies, the variants may suggest a more complex history of artistic selection. Neither possibility can be assumed in advance. The archive is not a convenient means of confirming a preferred reading; it is an independent evidentiary domain capable of complicating that reading.

5. THE LYRIC TEXT AS A HISTORICAL OBJECT

The same methodological distinction applies to lyric poetry. The surviving autograph associated with O'rik gullaganda is dated 30 March 1937 and consists of thirty-two lines in the research record available for this study. Later editions demonstrate that the textual transmission of a familiar poem can include small but consequential differences. In the opening line, the word is reported as Derazamning in the 1940 Baxt collection and in the 1954 and 2019 editions, while Terazamning appears in the 1951, 1957, 1970, 1990, 2000 and 2009 editions. These readings should be treated as a preliminary collation of editions, subject to verification against the physical publications and the autograph.

The variation is instructive precisely because its interpretation must remain restrained. It may involve orthographic convention, lexical choice, copying practice or editorial normalization; the distribution of forms across editions alone does not prove the cause. Nor does chronological priority automatically establish authority: an early publication may contain editorial interventions, while a later edition may restore a reading from a manuscript. A critical apparatus should therefore reproduce the variants, identify each witness, explain editorial policy and keep conjecture distinct from documentary fact.

For foreign reception studies, this example raises a practical question: which edition did the interpreter consult? A thematic reading of "nature," "happiness," "homeland" or "love" may be unaffected by a single spelling variant, but arguments based on diction, rhythm, voice or imagery require a stable citation to the exact text. The requirement becomes more urgent where manuscript revisions affect an entire line, stanza or sequence. In this sense, textual criticism is not a rival to interpretation; it establishes the conditions under which interpretation becomes reproducible.

6. FOLKLORE, NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE ARCHIVAL FRAME

Mirzaheva reports that Micallef connects Olimjon's literary practice with folklore and the cultural formation of national identity, while also registering the historical pressures of Soviet ideological discourse (2020, p. 92). This approach suggests another area in which manuscript research can contribute. The relation between folkloric material and authored literary composition should not be described solely through thematic resemblance. Researchers must also ask whether the archive preserves working notes, collected narratives, preliminary versions, translations or reworkings that document how oral or inherited material entered a literary text.

Olimjon's archive includes materials associated with lyric, epic, dramatic, translational and scholarly activity. The range of genres cautions against reducing his creative practice to one political or aesthetic category. An epic narrative may transform folkloric motifs through literary composition; a dramatic work may survive in versions adapted for different performance contexts; a translation may preserve layers of correction that expose choices between source-language meaning and target-language expression. Each form requires a different description of textual authority. A performance copy, for example, need not have the same status as an authorial draft, even when both are historically important.

The distinction between documentary description and scholarly classification is also essential. A catalogue records an item and its identifiable attributes. Classification groups materials by genre, chronology, documentary form and thematic orientation; collation then tests relations among the witnesses of an individual work. These operations are complementary but not interchangeable. For reception studies, their combined value lies in connecting large interpretive categories—national identity, gender, ideology, folklore—with specific documents whose provenance and textual state can be examined.

7. TOWARD A SOURCE-SENSITIVE MODEL OF INTERNATIONAL RECEPTION

A more rigorous international reception history of Olimjon would proceed through linked records rather than isolated summaries of critical opinion. For each foreign study, researchers should record the work discussed, the edition or translation cited, the critical claim made and the historical assumptions on which it depends. For each literary work, they should separately record available manuscripts, typescripts, early editions and later editorial versions. The two records could then be connected at the level of specific passages. This model would show, for instance, whether divergent interpretations arise from theoretical premises, different translations, or genuinely different textual witnesses.

Translation deserves special attention. When Uzbek works are interpreted through Russian or English renderings, a critic may encounter a semantic structure shaped by translation choices. The translator's handling of culturally marked vocabulary, poetic rhythm, forms of address and ideological terminology may alter the force of a passage. An academically responsible comparison should therefore place the translation beside a precisely identified Uzbek source text and should avoid attributing every feature of the translation directly to Olimjon. Such procedures are especially relevant to international discussions of gender, collective identity and political vocabulary.

The proposed model also changes the meaning of disagreement between critics. Competing interpretations are not necessarily evidence of scholarly error; they may reflect different questions, archives, editions and languages. Textological analysis cannot settle every hermeneutic dispute, but it can specify the evidence to which each interpretation is accountable. It also enables new questions: which works entered international scholarship, which remained outside it, and whether the selection of translated or accessible texts shaped the image of Olimjon abroad.

CONCLUSION

Foreign scholarship has contributed significantly to the discussion of Hamid Olimjon's lyricism, narrative poetry, ideology, gender representations and national-cultural imagination. Mirzaheva's 2020 survey makes these strands of reception visible. The present study argues that the next stage of research should connect this reception history with the documentary transmission of the works themselves. Autographs, drafts, typescripts, translations and successive editions do not merely

preserve literary content; they preserve evidence about composition, circulation and editorial mediation.

The resulting methodological distinction is decisive: a critic's interpretation is a historically situated argument, while a manuscript or edition is a witness to a particular state of the text. Neither can replace the other. A source-sensitive approach permits international readings to be tested, refined and compared without reducing the poet either to private lyric sentiment or to a single ideological function. Future research should prioritize verified archival descriptions, systematic collation of major works, transparent citation of editions and multilingual comparison of translations. These tasks would provide a stronger foundation for critical editions and for the international study of Olimjon's literary legacy.

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