



## " EXISTENTIAL ETHICS OF RESISTANCE IN THE STORY OF NAZAR ESHONQUL "THE UNTIMELY BELL"

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**Annotation:** *The article is devoted to the existential problematics of Nazar Eshonqul's story "The Untimely Ringing Bell", in which the conflict between man and power, personal memory and violence, ethical choice and historical guilt is revealed through the figure of the humiliated watchman and the symbol of the untimely ringing bell. The analysis is based on the concepts of M. Bakhtin, E. Levinas, and G. Markuze, as well as modern research on Uzbek prose. It is shown that Eshonqul constructs the chronotope of power as a space of alienation and creates a hero who goes from submission to an inner "conscience call." The story is interpreted as an artistic model of ethical awakening in the context of dehumanized social reality.*

**Keywords:** *Nazar Eshonkul, existentialism, ethics of responsibility, chronotope, memory, power, humiliation, modern Uzbek prose.*

### INTRODUCTION

Nazar Eshonqul's story "The Untimely Bell" occupies a special place in the corpus of modern Uzbek prose: its compositional conciseness, focus on one extremely humiliated character, and the almost symbolic image of the bell create a powerful existential tension. At the center of the story is a small person, a guard-gatherer, whom the authorities use as a service mechanism. However, at the moment of absolute humiliation - when he is forced to serve a banquet of high-ranking employees, humiliated, manipulated, and subordinated - his memory "rings" for the first time, restoring lost feelings and the ability for volitional action. A bell that rings "untimely" becomes the impulse that triggers an internal awakening process in the hero.

Eshonqul's story stems from a dramatic conflict: a person deprived of dignity by a social machine suddenly encounters an ethical requirement - to remember, realize, and make a decision. This conflict fits into the existential tradition of the 20th century, where the choice is made not at the moment of strength, but at the moment of extreme disintegration (Camus, Sartre). However, the author places this situation in the local cultural context of post-Soviet Uzbek society, where the memory of violence - state, domestic, historical



- remained suppressed for a long time, and the "bell" of inner awakening was often perceived as a violation of established order.

The interpretation of the story is based on M. Bakhtin's chronotopic approach, which considers space and time as expressions of the work's ideological structure. In "The Untimely Bell", the hotel where the hero is delivered becomes not a living room, but a "space of power," a functional analogue of what Foucault defined as heterotopia - a place where power reveals its hidden, uncivilized essence. The chronotope here is intentionally closed and pressing tight: rooms are "primitive," the color is "enemy," the air is "like standing water."

In the ethical aspect, the story can be read through the concept of Levinas, for whom the event of "meeting with the Other's face" becomes a source of responsibility. The hero himself remains in a state of "facelessness" for a long time: he is a subject-ten, deprived of his own name and will, mechanically fulfilling the secretary's instructions. But at the moment of the ringing call - a symbol of awakened memory - he encounters the impossibility of remaining the same: the action becomes inevitable.

Finally, the structure of suppression in the story corresponds to Marcuzzi's critique of a one-dimensional person. The power - the scribe, officials, banquet ritual - strives to suppress any inactivity, to turn the hero into an element of the serving system. The murder committed by the hero is not a gesture of restoring justice - it is a gesture of rupture, a gesture of refusal to be part of a heartless machine.

The hotel space in the story is not a temporary dwelling place, but an allegory of the entire social system. Here everything is structured vertically: above - power, below - a person-function, a person-carriage, a person-inventory. The hero's meeting with the scribe shows that power is exercised not only through administrative resources, but also through language, gestures, and body. The secretary doesn't just order, he "manages," "forces himself to accept," speaks honey-like and at the same time snobbishly. His behavior resembles the mechanism of ritual humiliation, described in detail in the works of Marcuse, where "dominance is reinforced through the inner consent of the oppressed" [4].

The turning point of the story is the very "bevakt chalingan bong," the bell not at the right time. It can be read as a vivid memory of childhood, the trauma of a mother humiliated before the authorities. At this moment, the hero for the first time ceases to be a "function" and begins to be a "face," which corresponds to Levinas's "ethical birth of man." In the text, this is emphasized by a sharp change in corporeality: instead of abruptness and detachment, burning, trembling, and crying arise in the hero's body.



Eshonqul shows that an existential choice is not a heroic act, but a response to internal pressure generated by memory. The hero does not seek revenge; he is not at all a subject of action in the classical sense, but rather a mediator of pain. His actions do not change the world, but change the nature and density of his own existence: the world remains dirty, narrow, and cruel, but the hero ceases to be a thing.

It is important to note that Eshonqul builds the psychology of his character directly in connection with the historical trauma of Uzbek society. Researchers have repeatedly written about his ability to "demonstrate the inner world of a hero against the backdrop of socio-historical shifts" [8]. Here, traumatic memory becomes figurative: the sound is not a household sound, but a response to the past, a reminder of generations broken by power.

In the finale, the hero remains alone: the government will take revenge, the world around has not changed, the bell has died down. But internally, the hero no longer belongs to the system; he emerged from it, not to freedom, but to emptiness, which, according to Camus, is the true space of human freedom.

### **CONCLUSION**

Nazar Eshonqul's story "The Untimely Bell" is revealed as an extremely tense existential drama, centered not on social protest or crime, but on a microscopic, yet decisive shift in the human soul. The hero, deprived of dignity and accustomed to submission, unexpectedly encounters a memory that makes him human again. A bell that rings "untimely" becomes a symbol of ethical awakening - that inner "call" that allows an individual to go beyond the framework of the social mechanism. Eshonqul creates a complex artistic model in this story: power as a ritual of humiliation, man as a bearer of memory, action as an attempt to break the circle of oppression.

In this sense, the story continues the line of 20th-century existential literature, where freedom doesn't always come at the right time, and a person becomes themselves only at the moment when they stop being afraid to hear their own inner voice.

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