



The Preincarnated Romantic: The Concept of Redeemer Poet in the Works of William Blake and Nefî.

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Abstract

British Romanticism emerges as a reaction to the rationality and commonsense of the Age of Reason. In fact, it can be considered to be a product of American, French and Industrial Revolutions. Due to its revolutionary nature, Romanticism offers groundbreaking changes in the understanding of universe, nature and man. In literature, these changes can be seen both in the form and content of the works. In addition, inspired by these revolutionary ideas, British romantics such as William Blake redefined the new concept of the poet. To him, the Romantic poet is an inspired and gifted individual who has the ability to see in nature what others cannot. Thus, the poet has the responsibility of informing his fellow man with his prospects. For Blake, the Romantic poet is a redeemer in this sense. On the other hand, it is possible trace Blake's ideas on the poet, in the works of 17th century Ottoman poet Nefî. This study attempts to investigate the concept of redeemer poet in both Blake's and Nefî's works in a comparative manner.

Keywords: Romanticism, Redeemer Poet, William Blake, Nefî.

Introduction

Throughout the history of thought and literature, man has tended to compare prophets and poets in respect to their visions, insights, and sources of inspiration. Out of this comparison, the idea of poet as prophet emerged. For centuries, regardless of cultural and religious differences, it is thought that the "poet, like the prophet, may be inspired and somehow gains an insight into truth" (Denys, 1977, p.1).

It is possible to trace this idea back to the earliest religious, philosophical and literary texts. For example, although he excludes poets from his *Republic*, the ancient Greek philosopher Plato discusses the idea of poet as prophet in some of his other works, such as *Symposium*, *Ion* and *Phaedrus*. To him, "the poet is a divinely inspired person whose poetry, born from inspiration by truth, leads his listeners to share his insight" (Denys, 1977, p. 3). In *Ion* (1892), he defines the inspired poets as "light and winged and holy things... who compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed... Not by art does the poet sing, but the power divine"(p. 534). Likewise, in *Phaedrus* (1892) he argues that "he who, having no touch of the Muses' madness in his soul, comes to the door and thinks that he will get into the temple by the help of art—he, I say, and his poetry are not admitted" (p. 245).

It is quite clear from these expressions that, Plato praises creative poets over the poets who follow formulaic rules of art.

The role of the inspired poet as prophet has been a subject for debate in the millennia following Plato. 19th century British Romantic poet and artist William Blake discusses the qualities and role of the poet extensively in his works such as *Milton* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Blake's poet is a hero who seeks redemption for mankind through vision and imagination. This portrayal reminds one of the redemptive influences of the prophets over human beings. However, Blake's prophet is not a religious figure per se. Having lived more than a century before Blake, the late 16th and early 17th-century Turkish poet Nefî lays a similar burden on the shoulders of the poet in his works. Thus, this paper aims to define the redeemer poet or poet as prophet from Blakean perspective and explore this idea in Nefî's poems in comparison to those of Blake's.

Since Nefî has not theorized on poetry, his views on the matter will be followed by a close examination of his poetical works, particularly his Turkish *Diwan*.¹ He has another collection of poems written in Persian, and a satirical work named *Siham-ı Kaza*, however, his statements on the nature of the poetry and poet can densely be found in his Turkish *Diwan*. Nefî's *Diwan* consists of some 62 panegyric verses written to praise the political and religious figures, as well as more than 150 lyrics (*gazel*) written on various matters. At the beginning of most of his panegyrics, Nefî spares quite a space to praise his poetics and poesy at some length. This part of the verse is known as *tribute (fahriyye)* in Ottoman poetry and seen in the works of some other poets such as Baki and Fuzuli, who write panegyric verse. But what separates Nefî from others is the length and density of this self-tribute section. Since they provide a good deal of referential data, his tributes are important for the scope of this study. The language Nefî employs in his poems is a blend of Old Turkish, Persian and Arabic. Thus, it is highly difficult to read and understand his works even for those whose native language is modern Turkish. Even when one has the expertise, there is always something lost in translation. In this regard, due to these difficulties, the references to Nefî's works will be made in their original version with an explanation throughout the present study. Finally, since Nefî's verses were collected and printed posthumously, there exist several different versions of his Turkish *Diwan*. Among these, the most comprehensive version is the one compiled by Metin Akkuş in 1993. This study will benefit from Akkuş's version as the primary source of Nefî's poems.

Discussion

There has always been a complicated link between the poet and prophet, as well as poetry and prophesying. In the first part of his *The Age of Reason*, while discussing the biblical mythologies, Thomas Paine (2014) indicates that "the word prophet, to which later times have affixed a new idea, was the Bible word for poet, and the word prophesying meant the art of making poetry" (p. 14). From this perspective, the poet, like the prophet, is someone who carries the word of one to another; and poetry, like prophesying, provides information on the source and goal of life.

According to S. Denys, "concept of the poet as a prophet is developed by succeeding ages: (1) the poet's words arise from inspiration, and mere skill can never create poetry? (2) the poet is a mouthpiece for God; and (3) the beauty of the poet's words leads the listener/reader to ascend, the ladder of love and beauty to an insight into the transcendental realm" (Denys, 1977, p. 6). Here, it seems like Denys shares Plato's idea of the supremacy of the divinely inspired poet over the poet who follows the strict rules of art. However, his second postulation on the poet 'as a mouthpiece of God' is more important for the scope of this paper.

¹ A *Diwan* is a collection of the poems of a single poet as in selected works or the body of a whole work in Ottoman literature. It is generally written in Persian, Arabic or Old Turkish.

As stated above, being divinely inspired and having an insight into the truth, which is not visible to ordinary people, are considered to be the superior qualities of poets. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the rise of the Romantic movement paved the way for an elevated view of poet and poetry. The Romantic poetry replaced the strict rules of art and reason of the Age of Enlightenment with inspiration and imagination of the poet. Poetry was no longer a repetitive practice of a learned poet who tries to reach excellence in style. Instead, it was the “spontaneous overflow of the powerful feelings” (Wordsworth & Coleridge, 1991, p. 237). Wordsworth’s definition of this new kind of poetry opened new horizons for poets on both sides of the Atlantic. In the New World, in his well-known essay “The Poet”, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1940) defines the poets as “liberating gods” (p. 334). Their “inspired utterances strike off the chains of tradition and convention that bind men's minds and the seer whose prophetic vision carries them [men's minds] along the curves of the ascending spiral to the very heights of human imagination” (Anderson, 1971, p. 57) This idea of the poet as seer, free to perceive things anew and transcend to prophetic vision, is Emerson's quintessential, ideal poet (Beaver, 1994, p. 23).

In Britain, Romantic poetry flourished very quickly. In *The Prelude* (The book was completed in 1805, but published in 1850), Wordsworth declared himself and one of his contemporaries, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, as “Prophets of Nature,” (as cited in Bloom, 1967, p. 137) who feel themselves as mediators through a poem to bridge the gap between the given world of natural objects and the beautiful human mind through meditation. But even before *The Prelude*, poet, engraver, and artist William Blake had been theorizing poet/prophet in his works such as *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793), *America: A Prophecy* (1793), *England: A Prophecy* (1794) and *The First Book of Urizen* (1794).

As can be seen in most of his works, Blake sees himself as the creator of a new mythology. According to Northrop Frye (1974), “Blake’s poetry is all related to a central myth; ... the primary basis of this myth is the Bible” (p. 109). Thus, it would not be far-fetched to define him as the poet of the Bible. However, in his dissertation where he compares Blake’s visionary poetry with that of Kahlil Gibran, George Nicholas El-Hage (1980) argues that both poets “felt that the pillars of the temple were falling down, that the old systems needed to be changed” (p. 4). Moreover, he raises a question: “To what degree can the poet depend upon the common body of belief that is fading away?” (p. 4). The answer comes from William Blake himself:

I must Create a System, or be enslav’d by another Man’s.

I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create (Blake, 2002, p. 210).

In his mythology, there is a tyranny of sense, reason and the fallen nature of man. According to Steve Lynn Reeder (2001), “the innate selfishness of reason become one’s Satan, the deceiver of humanity. One must put off reason to overcome Satan” (p. 40). Thus, the poet is the one who transcends these barriers that limit human beings (Cowling, 1970, p. 3). Blake is against the reason and fallen sense. These are the notions that limit the poet to grasp eternity. He challenges these by putting inspiration and insight of the poet which allows him to see beyond the phenomenal world. According to William Hammill Cowling (1970),

while Experience is the material world with its laws of nature, and while it includes the world in which man suffers under a variety of social, political, and religious tyrannies, it is also, Blake insists, one of two “Contrary States of Human Soul.” And because it is a “state,” an individual may eventually pass beyond its apparent boundaries through the active and necessarily rebellious imagination (p. 4).

Thus, through imagination and inspiration, the Blakean poet transcends the limits of the tangible world, sees what ordinary man cannot see, and prescribes a redemption for the fallen man who is unable to find the ultimate truth by himself. In doing so, he becomes a redeemer and a prophet at the same time. In fact, Blake uses the words poet, prophet, redeemer or hero almost interchangeably. And in such works as *Milton* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he is both the author and the hero, attributing himself a role as a poet who has the power and the function of his own visionary imagination (Cowling, 1970, p. 7).

However, Blake's prophet is not a totally religious figure. Even though he revisits *Paradise Lost* in his *Milton*, or *The Book of Genesis* in his *The Book of Urizen*, he uses the religious narratives but to create his own mythology, by either altering or parodying them. Thus, his heroes are more of mythological in nature rather than religious. Moreover, these heroes are not prophets prophesying the future, but prophets revealing what Blake believed to be the ultimate truth through inspiration and imagination. So, the Blakean poet is gifted with such a vision and inspiration in order to redeem his fellow men.

Born into a family of moderate means in London, in 1757, Blake proved to be an unusual kid in his early years. He started to experience visions starting from his childhood. For this reason, he received his primary education at home and never attended to a proper school. Later he went to a drawing school, where he practiced and mastered in drawing and engraving. He studied Greek, Latin, and Hebrew under the patronage of William Hayley (Gilchrist, 1867, p. 167). He also learned French and Italian on his own. The second half of the 18th century was an age of political and social turmoil in Britain. There were political instability and drastic social changes due to the industrial revolution at home. In addition, Britain was engaged in wars against France in Europe, and American Colonies on the other side of the Atlantic. These political and social changes created an impact on Blake's life, since he witnessed American and French revolutions, both of which had effects on British society, philosophy, and political environment. Religious faith was also at stake, and modernization in Christianity has already started. Blake's own personality, as well as his poetic and artistic style, has developed under these circumstances.

Poet Nefî was born almost two centuries before Blake, into totally different geography, culture, and religion. He was born circa 1572 in Pasinler, a small town of Erzurum, which is in the eastern part of modern-day Turkey. In his day, Erzurum was a part of the Ottoman Empire. Even though his given name was Ömer, he wrote his poems under the pseudonym Nefî, which means "beneficial". Nefî received his primary education in Pasinler, then in Erzurum, and like Blake, was multilingual. Apart from his native tongue Ottoman Turkish, he was also fluent in Persian and Arabic. In fact, his Persian was good enough to write poems. Thus, one of his two Diwans is in Persian. Apart from these, Nefî has also written a collection of satirical poems named as *Siham-ı Kaza* (*Arrows of Destiny*). However, due to its obscene language, the work has been neglected in the critical circles for centuries. Even today, there is a very limited number of academic studies on this work. In one of small number of these studies, Nurettin Çalışkan (2014) criticizes the language of the work to be excessively problematic and away from being literary (p. 402). One of the most comprehensive critique written on the work is Metin Akkuş's *Nefî and the Arrows of Destiny* (Nefî ve Siham_ı Kaza), however, Akkuş censors a good deal of the poems due to their inappropriate language.

Nefî started writing poetry while he was a student in Erzurum. After completing his education in Erzurum, he moved to İstanbul, the capital city of the Empire. The exact date of his arrival is unknown, however, according to Abdulkadir Karahan (1983), it must be during the reign of Ottoman Sultan, Ahmet I, (p. 3) and possibly with the reference of Kuyucu Murat Pasha who was appointed as the Grand Vizier (Prime Minister for the Ottoman Sultan) in 1606.

It is known that Nefî was writing panegyric verses for praising both Ahmet I and Kuyucu Murat Pasha around 1609. Except for a short stay in Edirne, he had lived in İstanbul for about 30 years until his death and wrote a number of panegyric and satiric verses.

Like Blake's London, Nefî's İstanbul was also politically unstable. Throughout his life, Nefî wrote panegyric poems for four different Sultans, (Ahmet I, Mustafa I, Osman II and Murat IV) several Grand Viziers and other statesmen. He witnessed the murder of Sultan Osman II and the chaotic atmosphere following it in the court until Murat IV comes to the power and restores the peace again. Nefî held Grand Vizier Mehmet Pasha (a Georgian by birth) responsible from the catastrophe and blamed him in the following lines in *Siham-ı Kaza*:

Bu mahallerde ki Bağdadı al şah-ı Acem

Arz-ı rumı ide teshir Abaza hem a köpek

Pây-mâl eyledünüz saltanatın ırzını hep

Yok yire oldı telef ol kadar adem a köpek (Akkuş, 1998, p. 157).

In the couplets, Nefî says that due to the turmoil and the lack of authority, the Persian Shah invaded Baghdad, Abkhaz and Erzurum, and on the top of it, because of the improvidence of Mehmet Pasha, the sanctity of the royalty is dishonored and lots of innocents died. Out of his anger and hatred, Nefî resembles Mehmet Pasha to a dog and never hesitates to declare it openly at the end of each couplet in the poem. It can also be concluded from the above lines that, Nefî is not only the poet of panegyric verse but also a social and political critic of his time. Like Nefî, Blake, who was brought up in the center of British social resistance, was criticizing his contemporary society through art and poetry as well:

How the chimney-sweeper's cry

Every blackening church appals,

And the hapless soldier's sigh

Runs in blood down palace-walls (Blake, 2002, p. 76).

It is possible to trace his social, political, and even religious criticism in his "London." In the poem, Blake draws a horrible picture of the inhabitants of London struggling with poverty, pollution, religious oppression, and political improvidence. He accuses the Church of repressing the poorest class of the society; and of the government of not really caring about the soldiers who are serving it.

Religious criticism and satire take an important part in Blake's art and poetry. Even though he lived in a country in which the majority was Christian, his own religious belief was controversial. According to J. G. Davies (1948), he was "the first Christian atheist" (p. 187). It can be said that he believed in Jesus as a person, however, rebelled against the Christian Christ (El-Hage, 1980, p. 227). It is known that, at some point in his life, Blake was influenced by the religious doctrines of Emmanuel Swedenborg and became more of a theist than a Christian. Moreover, Blake lived in an era of religious modernism and always felt free to make his religious criticism. Unlike Blake, Nefî lived in an era and culture, in which strict Islamic doctrines were shaping both public and private life. In addition, it is possible to observe in his poems that he was a devout Muslim; and either out of his fate or out of his fear of authority, he has not written any religious satire. On the other hand, he occasionally writes about other religions or prophets in appreciation:

Sözüm hulâşa-imazmün-ı mucciz-i Îsâ

Dilim mükâşif-i sırr-ı kelâm-ı vahy-ı Kelim (Akkuş, 1993, p. 157)

Suhanım sihr-imübin ü kalemim çüp-ı Kelim

Nefesim mağz-ı dem-i nutk-ı Mesih-i Meryem (ibid, p. 183)

In the first one of the above couplets, Nefî states that his words are like the miracles of Jesus, and his tongue reveals the secrets of the divine orders given to Moses. In the latter, he likens his pen to the Wand of Moses, and his breath to the miraculous revitalizing breath of Jesus, the son of the Virgin Mary. Nefî is a devout Muslim, however, he never avoids writing about the miracles and testimonies of other prophets and religions in his poetry. In fact, he acknowledges and legitimizes them in the expense of justifying his own poetic genius. Even though he does not satirize the monotheistic religions including the one he believes, Nefî does not hesitate to satirize, even criticize the religious figures of his own time. Once, he was harshly criticized and accused of being a heretic by Yahya Efendi, the Şeyhülislam² (or Sheikh al-Islam) of his age. In response to his accusation, Nefî wrote:

Bize kâfir demiş Müftî Efendi,

Tutayım ben ana diyem Müselmân,

Vardıkda yarın R^üz-i Cezâ'ya,

İkimiz de çıkarız anda yalan! (Çalışkan, 2015, pp. 113-123)

In this short but brilliant satirical poem, Nefî says, he had been learned that Yahya Efendi called him infidel, but in return, he would call the Sheikh Muslim. However, on Judgement Day, both would be proven to be liars in their preconceptions about each other. As it is seen, Nefî does not satirize religious faith or institutions, in fact, the arrows of his satire are mostly directed to the political and religious figures of his time. He wrote panegyrics for the Sultans of his lifetime and gained their appreciation, however, he continued to write satirical verses for those who are around them. As a result of this, he lost the favor and protection of the Ottoman Sultan who was manipulated by these people and sentenced to death circa 1635 (Akkuş, 1993, p. 7). It can be said that Nefî was struck by the arrows of his own satire.

Poet's vision and inspiration play a very important part in both Blake's and Nefî's poetry. Like other romantic poets, to Blake,

there was a radical difference between the world as it appeared to the ordinary man, and in the way it revealed itself to the man of imagination. The ordinary man, deprived of "vision" judged the values of Nature and of Man by his egoistic standards, and by their usefulness for his personal aims... The Romantic poet on the other hand, endowed with innate vision, refused to accept this world of corruption and sin, and believed that only through his "redemptive imagination" ... could man and nature be redeemed (El-Hage, 1980, p. 10).

Thus, For Blake, the poet who possesses the gifts of insight and inspiration reaches beyond the realities of the tangible world and grasp the eternal reality, while the ordinary man struggles to understand nature and existence of the phenomenal world from his limited perspective. Thus, Blake believes that one's reason is his Satan, (Blake, 1966, p. 785) and the only way for his redemption is the art created by such a prophetic figure who is gifted with the vision of eternal truth:

Hear the voice of the Bard!

² In the Ottoman period, Sheikh al-Islam was a state official with the highest authority in religious matters. He holds the authority to publish fatwas for expressing his own views on religious issues. Fatwas generally carried legal character.

Who Present, Past, & Future, sees;

Whose ears have heard

The Holy Word

That walked among the ancient trees, (Blake, 1966, p. 778)

Like Blake, Nefî sees art, especially poetry as a divine creation. To him, a true poet is the one who is gifted with insight and inspiration by God himself. “Bu lehçe-i pâkîze bana dâd-ı Hudâ’dır” (Akkuş, 1993, p. 160). Here Nefî states that he is endowed by God himself with a talent for writing poetry. So, he sees poets, including himself, as privileged and superior to ordinary people. In addition, in most of his poems he is both the author and the persona, thus while he praises the creative power, inspiration of the prophesying poet, he is, in fact, praising himself:

Bir güherdir kim nazirin görmemiştir rûzgâr

Rûzgâra âlem-i gayb armağanıdır sözüm (Akkuş, 1993, p. 45).

Here Nefî resembles the poet’s word (his own word) to a jewel or essence that does not exist in this world. It is only descended to him from the divine realm as a gift to human beings. Thus, it would not be wrong to conclude from his lines that Nefî resembles himself to a prophet who is gifted with divine inspiration. In another verse, Nefî claims the poet’s (his own) soul is so pure that the visions of both material and divine world is imprinted in it:

Zamir-i pâkim ol levh-i celîdir ki kenârında,

Sevâd-ı her dü âlem bir hafî nakş-ı kalemkârî (Akkuş, 1993, p. 89).

To him, all qualities and facts, no matter they are visible in the material world or not, are present in the poet’s soul. So, his poetry is the essence of the universe and thus, the mirror of all existence.

Both Blake and Nefî believe that an inspired poet functions as a bridge between the divine realm and the ordinary man, who is unable to see the reality behind the appearances. As they become prophets, their poetry becomes prophecy. But in their understanding, prophecy does not mean to predict future, nor is a prophet a fortune teller. To them, a prophet is the one who shows others the eternal or the ultimate truth. However, in the following lines, Nefî goes on to claim that his poetry is the prophecy in the religious sense of the word:

Her ne söylersem kazâ mazmûnunun isbât ider

Anı bilmez ki hitâb-ı imtihanîdür sözüm (Akkuş, 1993, p. 46).

Here Nefî claims that whatever he says is proven to be true by destiny. So, he knows things even before they happen.

In addition to insight and inspiration, for both Blake and Nefî, a poet should possess the power of imagination. To both poets, imagination is the pillar on which creation rises. According to the Romantic faith of Blake, reasoned comprehension is the enemy of imagination, and thus creation (Blake, 1975, p. xxi). So, once again, by the power of imagination, the Romantic poet reaches beyond the world we can perceive with our five senses, and thus, appearances never deceive him. To Blake, “imagination is reality, and the world of visions is the world of absolute truth. Blake writes that we must not dwell on the external forms of things, or delight in these, but should look at them with other eyes than those of the senses” (El-Hage, 1980, p. 13) when we do that, we will:

See a world in a grain of sand,

and a Heaven in a wild flower,
hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
and Eternity in an hour (Powell, 1926, p. 53).

Accordingly, Nefî sees the imagination as the true source, even the birthplace of poetry. To him, poetry resides in the abstract realm of the poet's imagination until he organizes it within a seamless harmony and put it into words. To him, first, the poet observes the objects in the material world and pictures it in his realm of thought. Secondly, he employs his imagination, to rise and transcend into a spiritual realm. There, through his poetic imagination again, he discovers the metaphysical realities and returns to the material world. Then he interprets and defines his discoveries with his words (Çalışkan, 2015, p. 80). This process cannot be explained as pushing the limits of the reason, on the contrary, it is the conversion of the poet's imagination into poetry.

Muhassal âdeme manâ gerektir yoksa n 'eylerler

Esîr-i kayd u sûret bir alay bî-hûde hayvânı (Akkuş, 1993, p. 83).

According to Nefî, through imagination, a true poet should distinguish the eternal realities from appearances, otherwise, he would be no different than a bunch of beasts. It can also be read from these lines that; he glorifies the imagination in the process of creation as well as comprehension. What I will argue here is that Nefî's poetry is not for the untrained eye of the ordinary men. Because, in his poems, he promises his reader a transcendental meaning and pleasure; in return, he expects from his reader the ability to comprehend his poetry and to get pleasure from it. Blake's expectations from his readers are also similar. As he creates new mythologies by rejecting the old ones, he demands an audience who can see the world in his own terms. Since his poetry is revolutionary, the "conventional reader is an enemy" (El-Hage, 1980, p. 4) to Blake.

Conclusion

It would not be wrong to argue that poetry has always been a special genre in the history of literature. Since it even predates the written text, it is generally considered to be the oldest form of literature. The first known examples of poetry are epics of various cultures over the globe. Within the course of time, it flourished and diversified within different cultures and traditions, under the influence of social, political, philosophical and literary movements; sung, written or read as a means of storytelling, recording oral history, instruction, law, genealogy or mere pleasure. Yet, one thing about it has never changed: that it is a creation (the ancient Greek word for poetry, ποιεω means 'I create'). Thus, the poet becomes 'the creator', or as widely used in the English language, 'the maker'. Regardless of culture and age, the poets have always considered to be privileged, for they are gifted with the talent of creating artistic 'monuments'—both in form and content— by arranging the words in a way no other man can do. Possibly, among the literary movements, which glorifies the poet and the process of creation most is Romanticism. Because, as a literary movement, Romanticism glorified the imagination of an inspired poet over the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Even though the pioneers of English Romantic poetry wrote on various subject matters in various styles and techniques, when it comes to the poet, almost all of them shared the idea that poet is an extraordinary figure.

Among the British Romantic poets, this study mainly focuses on the views of William Blake as regards to the poet. To him, the true poet is the one who is capable of seeing beyond the tangible world and reach the eternal truth beneath it through inspiration and imagination. As a reaction to the realities of the fallen world, in the metaphysical universe of his imagination, he creates a new mythology and declares it in his poetry. In doing so, he has a moral purpose. This moral purpose is to inform his fellow beings, who are unable to grasp the eternal truth,

about the higher deeds of their existence, thus redeem them. The Blakean poet then becomes both a redeemer and a prophet. In the sense I use the word, the prophet does not mean a religious figure regarded as an inspired teacher or proclaimer of the will of God, nor it means a foreteller who makes predictions about the future. From a Blakean perspective, the prophet is the poet who guides his fellow human beings to a world of higher innocence where imagination is the ultimate truth.

It is possible to trace the artistic qualities of Blakean poet in the works of late 16th and early 17th-century Turkish poet Nefî, who lived almost two centuries before Blake. Moreover, he wrote poetry long before the Romantic movement, yet his poetry carries Romantic qualities. According to Vasfi Mahir Kocatürk (2004), "since it broke itself loose from the reason and material reality in some particular modes, the Eastern art discovered the pure and abstract poetry long before the Western canon did" (p. 124). So, the notions of inspiration and freedom of imagination which was employed by the Romantic poets in British literature were already been adopted by Nefî centuries ago.

Blake and Nefî lived in different time periods with different social and cultural codes, however, the similarities between their poetics are significant. First, both poets believe the Romantic notion that a poem must possess the seamless harmony of and meaning, which makes it an organic whole. In Aristotelian terms, a poem is a complete whole, and to Romantics, such organic whole cannot be imposed by adherence to mechanical rules but must derive from the poet's imagination. Nefî occasionally declares in his poems that he is the master of the words and glorifies his works for their form as well as the content.

Secondly, for Romantic poetry, the feelings and emotions of the poet carry the utmost importance. So, a Romantic poem is a subjective and individualistic response of the poet to the external world. Most of Nefî's poems, including his panegyrics in his *Turkish Diwan*, and satirical verses in *Siham-ı Kaza*, are written from his personal standpoint, emphasizing his own feelings and emotions on the social and political matters of his day. Such an attitude makes his poems highly subjective and individualistic. As an esteemed Romantic, Blake often lays stress on the individuality on his own poetry as well. In this respect, both Blake and Nefî trust their feelings rather than their rational conclusions or judgments.

Another important Romantic feature which can be observed in the works of both poets is their glorifying insight and inspiration. For Blake, inspiration derived from imagination is the mere source of his poetry. Similarly, Nefî stresses in his poems that he is an inspired poet; moreover, he claims that he is gifted with such inspiration by God himself. In his works, Blake uses the words poet, prophet, redeemer almost as synonyms. For him, these are the qualities of Blakean poet. Correspondingly, in his works, Nefî uses the word *inspiration (vahy)* for several times in order to emphasize the divine source of his poetry.

In conclusion, British Romantic poet William Blake draws a portrait of his true poet in his works. Due to his insight, imagination, and inspiration, his poet is also a prophet and a redeemer for his fellow men who are stuck in the illusions of the material existence. It would not be wrong to approach such a poet from a Blakean perspective.

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