



PSYCHOLOGICAL DEPICTION IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL NOVEL ‘THE ROAD’

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Abstract

Ulugbek Hamdam’s novel “The Road” belongs to the category of non-traditional narratives. In a number of works created after the independence of Uzbekistan, the use of the stream of consciousness technique, the interweaving of dream and reality, and the depiction of inner experiences have been directed toward portraying the fate of a person in search of self-identity. “The Road” is one of the prose works that introduced a new direction in Uzbek literature, where the artistic synthesis of Eastern and Western traditions is vividly manifested. As a philosophical novel, “The Road” foregrounds, already in its title, the central leitmotif of the author’s style—the interpretation of the relationship between the universe and humankind based on new principles. In Hamdam’s prose, the images of the traveler and the wayfarer, along with postmodern elements such as symbolism and intertextuality, are clearly represented. Although the main idea of postmodern literature is the perception of the world as “chaos,” in contrast to this notion, the novel reflects the author’s Eastern philosophical perspective as a solution to the meaning of human existence and the relationship between the universe and man. While the form of expression carries Western features, its essence is imbued with Eastern thought. Thus, humanity’s eternal problems find artistic resolution in the synthesis of Eastern and Western intellectual traditions.

Keywords: Postmodern, symbol, universalism, intertextuality, absurd, image, deconstruction, motif, modernism.



INTRODACTION

At the foundation of Ulugbek Hamdam's novel "The Road" lies the teaching of Jalal al-Din Rumi: "Though the paths may differ, the destination is one." Rumi, a free-thinking sage of his time, emphasized that while the world's religions are distinct, their ultimate purpose is unified. This idea is reflected in the novel through the sections entitled "Zoroaster the Elder," "The World Beyond the Wall or Buddha," "The Scroll of Moses," "The Scroll of Jesus," and "The Scroll of Muhammad." These passages reveal, for instance, that the essence of Zoroastrian teaching is the eternal struggle between good and evil and the primordial triumph of good over evil. The author also elaborates on the spiritual paths of Buddha, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, showing how the communities that followed them sought the meaning of existence in their chosen ways. Although the ways to salvation (religions) appear diverse, the novel asserts that for those who have attained self-awareness, the earth is but a single household. Through these texts, the author implicitly alludes to the parable in Rumi's "Within the Within": there are countless roads leading to the Kaaba—some approach from the east, others from the west, north, or south—but upon arrival, their goals converge into a shared purpose. Ultimately, the protagonist of the novel reaches a profound conclusion: "What matters in a human life is not on which path it is spent, but how it is lived; not the outward form, but the inner essence."

Literature Review and Methodology

According to Ulugbek Hamdam, "Postmodernism feeds on chaos and expresses it. The uncertainty of the future of the world, the bewilderment of the individual amid global transformations and technogenic crises, the anticipation of the apocalypse, and the rapid development of communication technologies all indicate that postmodernism is still continuing" [1, 58-59], - he asserts in his reflections.

Distinctive Features of Postmodernism and Their Reflection in Uzbek Literature
The scholar identifies the distinctive features of postmodernism as follows [1, 58-48]: 1. **The Death of the Author** – the text alone exists; the author is "dead" within the work, since what he writes is not entirely his own but reproductions and codes derived from the intertext. 2. **Intertextuality** – every text conveys the



meaning of a preceding text. 3. **Simulacrum** – false aesthetic works that replace genuine art. 4. **Deconstruction** – dismantling existing totality and creating something new from its fragments. 5. **Symbolism** – the belief that everything in the world carries a metaphorical meaning. 6. **Artifact** – an artistic work that emerges unexpectedly, almost as if by chance. 7. **Interactivity** – the emergence of a literary work through the collaboration between the author and the reader. 8. **Universalism** – the blending and popularization of all phenomena. 9. **The Hedonistic Function** – art is perceived as a means of pleasure for the reader.

Although Uzbek literature does not contain works that fully embody the postmodernist movement, several texts incorporate its elements, among which Isajon Sultan's Boqiy darbadar (The Eternal Wanderer) and Ulugbek Hamdam's Yo'l (The Road) stand out as symbolic-philosophical novels that embody postmodern features in expressive and formal aspects. Notably, The Road is considered a rare example in Uzbek literature, as it is based on the author's dreams.

In one of our interviews with the writer, when asked: "In most of your prose works the motif of dreams comes to the forefront. Do you deliberately choose reality in a planned manner, or are the dreams you see the actual basis of your works?" — he replied: "I have written many of my works in my dreams; in particular, The Road is constructed entirely from beginning to end on the foundation of dreams. The conclusion of Sabo va Samandar, as well as several short stories, were also based on my dreams. When I am intensely preoccupied with what I am writing or planning to write, it often migrates into my dreams."

As the author himself emphasizes, The Road is fundamentally constructed on the dream motif. The novel does not follow a traditional plot structure; rather, the stream of consciousness and the writer's inner reflections form the narrative line. In every passage, the philosophy of Rumian thought is palpable. The use of dual epigraphs represents the writer's unique artistic technique, as previously analyzed in several short stories. Likewise, in The Road, the epigraphs function as interpretative tools that guide the reader toward the essence of the novel. Alongside a Qur'anic verse, Jalal al-Din Rumi's statement "I am but a weak drop, yet within my heart lives the longing for the ocean" serves as a persistent leitmotif throughout the text.



The novel relies on postmodern techniques of **symbolism** and **intertextuality**. In his afterword to the work, literary scholar Islomjon Yoqubov states: "...standing at the half-century mark of life's journey, the protagonist of humankind's lineage — like a drop within the vast chain of Adam's children — turns to contemplation, reflection, debate, and meditation in the struggle to comprehend the essence of selfhood" [2, 118].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the novel, traditions of postmodernism are employed, particularly in the depiction of time and space as well as narratives of the creation of the universe. One of the central manifestations of its non-traditional style is the broad use of **intertextuality**. Specifically, texts such as "The Event Before the Dream," "The First Dream," "The Next Dream," "The Continuation of the Next Dream," "Flight from Earth to Heaven," "Point," "Slippers," "Tremor," "Market," "Parents," "Poet," "Echoes from a Drop," "Zoroaster," "The Scroll of Moses," and "The Scroll of Jesus" serve to articulate and deepen the novel's central idea.

The opening story, "The Event Before the Dream," begins with a mysterious "voice" heard in the protagonist's inner self. This voice, in our view, alludes to the call of Rumi, regarded as the writer's spiritual mentor, urging him to embark on the "journey." Through the gradation of this detail — voice, sound, echo — the artistic intent becomes increasingly clarified. The narrative then shifts to reflections on the creation of the world: the depiction of the "Big Bang" followed by the emergence of inanimate nature, flora, fauna, and humankind, captured in the Qur'anic echo: "Was it not commanded at the beginning: 'Be!'" [3, 11].

Throughout these episodes, the author cites verses from Jalal al-Din Rumi, committing himself first to searching for the path and, once it is found, to returning to the "True Homeland." With these Rumi-inspired reflections, the narrative suggests that when a person embarks on the quest for selfhood, he may be distracted by diverse roads and, without realizing it, lose the true path. In the intertext of "The Third Dream," the protagonist, still in search of selfhood, descends to Earth, where he joins his father at the ocean, and, after the overwhelming impression of the boundless sea, ascends from earth to heaven.



The fragmented “texts” in the novel are deliberately portrayed in a manner consistent with postmodern aesthetics. During the ascent from earth to heaven, the diminishing magnitude of the earth — its loss of grandeur — is emphasized. Behind these images lies, in our interpretation, an indication that the sorrows and anxieties of daily human existence pale into insignificance when measured against the divine omnipotence that created the universe.

CONCLUSION

The author substantiates his artistic purpose by drawing on the works of Rumi, Omar Khayyam, Navoi, and Mashrab. In particular, in the verses cited from Omar Khayyam, the prose writer skillfully employs the postmodern feature of **intertextuality**, whereby life and death are interpreted as nothing more than transient states of sorrow and anxiety.

Bizga falak ishi faqat tashvish, g‘am,

Birini tiklasa, boshqasi barham,

Hali kelmaganlar bundan bexabar,

Xabar topib qolsa, kelmas edi ham. [3, 49]

Before embarking on the journey, it becomes evident in the protagonist’s inner world that he had previously been oblivious to the state of existence, and only upon entering this world did he begin to experience its afflictions. In his imagination, it is revealed that knowledge offers one kind of instruction while practice delivers another. The depiction suggests that the world itself is absurd, and that there are many people living within it who fail to comprehend the essence of coming and going. The author underscores this through allusions to poetic lines that serve as intertextual references.

Men tug‘ildim, gardun ko‘rdimi foyda,

O‘lsam, martabasi oshmog‘i qayda?

Hech kim tushuntirib bera olmaydi,

Kelishim-ketishim ma’nosi qayda? [3, 48]

As emphasized, some individuals choose the path of bliss, seeking divine manifestation, others follow alternative prescribed ways, while still others suffer in the torment of pathlessness. The verses cited also allude to those who wander aimlessly in this world, unable to find the way to salvation. In the section entitled



“The Discovery” (Topilma), the protagonist comes across a manuscript entitled “Echoes from a Drop” (Tomchidan sadolar), within which is incorporated a text titled “The Dialogue of Two Friends.” Through dialogic form, the author presents a conversation in which one of the friends poses a polemical question: “What is the purpose of human creation?”—yet he fails to comprehend the ultimate aim of human existence and remains trapped in an endless whirlpool of questions. The second friend, however, stresses that embarking on the journey itself is essential for attaining self-awareness.

In the subsequent course of events, the protagonist encounters the figure of a qalandar (wandering dervish). He directs to him a series of inner, troubling questions, and upon learning that the qalandar too is a fellow traveler, he is urged to endure the hardships of the road. Yet the qalandar emphasizes that the true path lies not outside, but within the self. From these poetic references it becomes evident that the qalandar embodies the image of Boborahim Mashrab, whose chosen path and metaphysical non-place (lomakon) are illustrated through cited poetic lines. In the section “The Heedless” (G‘ofillar), the protagonist reflects upon the majority of people who remain engaged on this superficial path. Their conversations revolve around matters that are as plain as the palm of one’s hand—appearance, occupation, property, ancestry, social status. Such dialogues suffocate the protagonist, sharpening in his heart a torrent of uncontrolled reflections: “Who are these people, what kind of community is this, that they waste their energy, intellect, and time on heated debates about trivial, transient things? Why are they never tormented by the questions that seize my mind and memory Who are we? From where do we come, and where are we going? What is the essence of our being?” [3, 48]. In this way, issues of universal human concern are brought to the fore, raising existential questions of humankind as a whole.

In conclusion, the novel cannot be regarded as constructed entirely upon the foundations of postmodernism. Rather, it synthesizes both Eastern and Western ideas, employing certain postmodern elements to demonstrate that, while in Eastern thought the world may at times be perceived as absurd, such a designation applies only to the external reality. In essence, the inner path of bliss remains, and Eastern thinkers are inclined to seek and follow this true road of ultimate truth.



The author thus affirms that he too considers this path to be the most rightful one. Indeed, every human life is a journey, a road whose ultimate purpose is to guide one toward the Primordial Homeland (Asl Vatan).

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