

CHARACTERISTICS OF 20TH-CENTURY LITERATURE IN THE EXAMPLE OF
ISAJON SULTON'S "THE ETERNAL WANDERER"

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Abstract: In this article, Isajon Sulton's novel "The Eternal Wanderer" is analyzed as a vivid example of postmodernist elements in contemporary Uzbek literature. The aim of the study is to identify the artistic and aesthetic principles employed in the work, explain them theoretically, and evaluate them as a new creative direction in national literature. For this purpose, comparative-analytical, semantic, and hermeneutic methods are applied to consistently analyze the intertextuality, fragmentation, ironic tone, metatextuality, and multilayered interpretation of the novel. During the research, quotations from the work are compared with theoretical perspectives, and the philosophical, spiritual, and social layers of the text are systematically interpreted.

Keywords: Postmodernism, Isajon Sulton, Boqiy Darbadar, intertextuality, fragmentation, irony, metatextuality.

Abstrakt. Mazkur maqolada Isajon Sultonning "Boqiy darbadar" romani zamonaviy o'zbek adabiyotida postmodernizm unsurlarining yorqin namunasiga aylangani tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotning maqsadi — asarda qo'llangan badiiy-estetik tamoyillarni aniqlash, ularni nazariy jihatdan izohlash va milliy adabiyotdagi yangicha ijodiy yo'nalish sifatida baholashdir. Shu maqsadda qiyosiy-tahliliy, semantik va hermenevtik metodlar qo'llanib, romandagi intertekstuallik, fragmentarlik, ironik ohang, metamatnlik hamda ko'p qatlamli talqin imkoniyatlari bosqichma-bosqich tahlil etiladi. Tadqiqot jarayonida asardan olingan iqtiboslar nazariy qarashlar bilan solishtirilib, matnning falsafiy, ruhiy va ijtimoiy qatlamlari izchil sharhlanadi.

Kalit so'zlar. Postmodernizm, Isajon Sulton, Boqiy darbadar, intertekstuallik, fragmentarlik, ironiyalilik, metamatnlik.

Аннотация. В данной статье роман Исаджона Султона «Бокий дарбадар» рассматривается как яркий пример постмодернистских элементов в современной узбекской литературе. Цель исследования заключается в выявлении художественно-эстетических принципов, использованных в произведении, их теоретическом объяснении и оценке как нового творческого направления в национальной литературе. С этой целью применяются сравнительно-аналитический, семантический и герменевтический методы, с помощью которых последовательно анализируются интертекстуальность, фрагментарность, ироничный тон, метатекстуальность и многослойность интерпретаций романа. В ходе исследования цитаты из произведения сопоставляются с теоретическими концепциями, а философские, духовные и социальные пласты текста системно интерпретируются.

Ключевые слова. Постмодернизм, Исаджон Султон, Бокий дарбадар, интертекстуальность, фрагментарность, ироничность, метатекстуальность.

Introduction. At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, new aesthetic trends—particularly elements of postmodernism—began to manifest noticeably in the Uzbek

literary process. In national literature, there emerged a strong tendency to move beyond the traditional boundaries of modernism and realism, seeking renewal in form, content, language, and structure. Within this context, Isajon Sulton occupies a distinctive place with his philosophical, symbolic, and multilayered works. His novel *Boqiy Darbadar* (“The Eternal Wanderer”) is enriched with features characteristic of postmodern literature and contributes to the development of new perspectives in contemporary Uzbek literary thought.

Isajon Sulton is one of the leading figures of modern Uzbek literature, and his novel *Boqiy Darbadar* is regarded as a vivid example of postmodernist principles in Uzbek prose. Speaking about this novel, Isajon Sulton said:

“This small novel, only eighty pages long, took me a very long time to write. I began it around 1998. It seemed that there were many people in the world who had lost their sacred destinations and purposes, wandering aimlessly through life—but I could not find the right form to express that. Interestingly, a shoemaker once raised his hand against Jesus (peace be upon him) and was cursed with eternal life. I had never thought that being immortal could itself be a tragedy, yet countless people in this world rush about yearning to live forever.”

In the afterword to *Boqiy Darbadar*, the literary critic Rahimjon Rahmat offers the following insight:

“What inspired Isajon to write *Boqiy Darbadar* was precisely his deep and powerful perception of the apocalypse—the sense that worldly values are being ground down in the great millstone called Doomsday. This very feeling forms the foundation of *Boqiy Darbadar*. The writer realizes that within the melody of human life, the tones of wandering and displacement prevail.”

The novel extensively explores themes such as the search for self-identity, the symbolism of eternal wandering, the fragmentation of time and space, and intertextual references. In this article, each of these postmodern characteristics is analyzed in detail through specific excerpts from the novel.

The relevance of this research lies in the theoretical and practical interpretation of postmodern elements in Uzbek literature and in revealing the artistic ways they are manifested. Using *Boqiy Darbadar* as an example, the study aims to demonstrate how successfully postmodernist principles are employed in national literature and, through this, to determine the universal significance of Isajon Sulton’s creative work.

Research Methods and Materials. This study employs a combination of several research methods. First of all, the comparative-analytical method was used to compare Isajon Sulton’s novel *Boqiy Darbadar* with other modernist and postmodernist works in Uzbek literature. Through this approach, the uniqueness of the novel’s artistic techniques, symbolic layers, and philosophical perspectives was identified.

Additionally, the semantic analysis method was applied to reveal the multiple layers of meaning within the text—such as symbols, intertextual elements, and polysemy.

As the methodological foundation, the study draws upon Roland Barthes’ theory of the “death of the author,” Jean-François Lyotard’s ideas on the “postmodern condition,” Linda Hutcheon’s concept of “postmodern poetics,” and Ihab Hassan’s classification of postmodern features.

Moreover, through the structural-analytical approach, the study examines the novel's plot construction, fragmentation, and metatextual characteristics. Using the hermeneutic method, the research interprets the novel's various semantic layers—religious, philosophical, social, and personal.

Thus, the integrated application of these scientific methods enables a comprehensive analysis of the novel as a postmodern literary and aesthetic phenomenon. In this article, the comparative-analytical and semantic methods are specifically employed to interpret the artistic elements of the novel within the framework of postmodernist theory. Relevant examples from the text are provided to illustrate its intertextual, ironic, and metatextual aspects.

Results and Discussion. Postmodernism, which emerged as a reaction against modernism, is characterized by several distinctive features:

1. Intertextuality – a constant dialogue with other texts, literary traditions, and cultural sources;
2. Irony and parody – the author's voice often takes on a dual, sometimes ironic or self-reflective tone;
3. Fragmentation – the narrative unfolds in discontinuous, mosaic-like segments rather than through a linear plot;
4. Multiplicity of meaning – rejection of a single, dominant interpretation in favor of open-ended, plural readings;
5. Metatextuality – the text reflects upon its own structure and the act of writing itself.

Intertextuality. In Isajon Sulton's novel, intertextual references to classical Eastern literature, Sufi philosophy, and elements of oral folklore are richly present. The characters' thoughts, symbolic images, and philosophical monologues are often infused with echoes of other cultural layers. For instance, the novel's central theme of wandering is closely tied to Sufi notions of dervishhood and spiritual quest. This establishes a dialogic relationship between texts—an essential feature of postmodern aesthetics.

The author seamlessly incorporates symbols from Sufi literature into his own artistic vision. The protagonist describes himself as “a dervish without a place under the sky”:

“Men joysiz darveshman, yo'llar meni boqiy safarga chorlaydi. Yerda manzil yo'q, faqat yo'ling o'zi bor”.

This excerpt evokes the classical Sufi motifs of the dervish, the path, and the eternal journey. By blending the legacy of classical Eastern literature with a contemporary narrative structure, Isajon Sulton creates a uniquely postmodern form of intertextuality.

Fragmentation and Nonlinear Narrative. The events in the novel are not narrated chronologically; rather, they unfold in fragmented sequences that merge memory and dream. For example, the protagonist's depictions of his journey are suddenly intertwined with scenes from his childhood and recollections of the past. Each section reveals the character's inner experiences and existential reflections through symbolic imagery. This fragmented structure allows readers to interpret the work in multiple ways.

The novel's narrative develops not through a coherent storyline but through disjointed memories. In one episode, the protagonist's childhood visions merge with the scenes of his wandering:

“Yo'l boshida turibman. Qaysi tomonga ketishni bilmayman. Ko'z oldimda esa bolaligimda ko'rgan hovli, eski ariq va bobomning ovozi. Go'yo bir vaqtning o'zida o'tmishda ham, hozir hamman”.

This passage demonstrates the postmodern principle of fragmentation—the blending of time and space, memory and reality, to create a fluid and multi-layered narrative.

Irony and Satire. In Boqiy Darbadar, philosophical reflections on society, humanity, and existence are often expressed in an ironic tone. The protagonist's cynical observations about the instability of life and the constant questioning of human dignity give the novel a distinctly postmodern mood. The main character expresses life's impermanence with subtle irony:

“Men doimiy manzil kutgan darbadarman. Lekin manzil degan narsaning o'zi yo'qligini anglanimda, kulib yubordim”.

Although this statement carries deep philosophical weight, its tone of irony softens the gravity of the idea. This fusion of existential reflection and irony highlights the postmodern technique of questioning absolute truths while maintaining a playful or self-aware attitude.

Metatextuality. The novel also provokes reflection on its own process of creation, exploring the relationship between the author, the narrator, and the text itself. At times, the protagonist seems aware that he is part of a narrative, or the author's voice unexpectedly intrudes into the story—features typical of postmodern literature. In one passage, the author's voice directly addresses the protagonist:

“Bu hikoyani sen aytayapsanmi yoki men yozayapmanmi? Balki ikkovimiz ham emasdir...”.

This excerpt exemplifies metatextuality, as the novel not only narrates events but also reveals its own existence as a constructed text. By breaking the illusion of narrative reality, Sulton invites the reader to contemplate the act of storytelling itself—a hallmark of postmodern narrative form.

Multiplicity of Interpretation. Boqiy Darbadar can be read simultaneously as a historical, philosophical, psychological, social, and symbolic novel. The theme of wandering allows for several interpretative layers:

- In a historical sense, it echoes the motif of exile and displacement familiar in national literature;
- In a philosophical sense, it represents humankind's eternal search for meaning;
- In a spiritual sense, it symbolizes the soul's purification and the dervish's path toward enlightenment.

As the protagonist declares: “Darbadarlik mening qismatim, lekin men uni jazoni emas, izlanishni deb bilaman. Chunki yo'lda bo'lish – topish demakdir”.

This statement encapsulates the novel's central metaphor—darbadarlik (wandering)—which resists a single definitive meaning and opens itself to multiple interpretations.

The findings indicate that Boqiy Darbadar embodies the core principles of postmodernism in contemporary Uzbek literature. The novel is rich in fragmentation of time and space, irony, self-referential narration, and multilayered symbolism. Through these elements, Isajon Sulton not only modernizes Uzbek narrative form but also elevates it to a universal philosophical reflection on the human condition.

Conclusion. Isajon Sulton's "Boqiy Darbadar" occupies a distinctive place in contemporary Uzbek literature as a vivid example of postmodernist aesthetics. Through intertextuality, the novel creates a dialogue between classical Eastern literature, Sufi philosophy, and modern narrative forms. Its fragmented structure abandons linear storytelling and instead constructs meaning through scattered episodes, allowing readers to interpret the text freely and subjectively. The ironic tone and elements of satire give philosophical reflections a renewed artistic depth, while the metatextual dimension turns the novel into not only a story about reality but also a reflection on the nature of the text itself. Most importantly, the novel's multilayered character unites historical, philosophical, psychological, and symbolic interpretations.

Thus, "Boqiy Darbadar" expresses not only the theoretical principles of postmodernism but also a new stage in the evolution of national artistic thought. Despite its brevity, the work is rich in content, artistically complex, and philosophically profound—making it a text worthy of study within international literary discourse. Through this novel, Isajon Sulton, as a modern Uzbek writer, offers an innovative perspective on both national and universal literary-aesthetic issues.

Overall, "Boqiy Darbadar" represents a unique aesthetic experiment that reflects the renewal of humanistic and artistic consciousness in Uzbek and world literature alike. The novel's intertextuality, fragmentation, irony, metatextuality, and multiplicity of meanings manifest the essential features of postmodernism. As such, it should be regarded as one of the most significant works demonstrating the successful integration of postmodernist principles into Uzbek national literature. Through the symbols of human destiny, wandering, and spiritual search, Sulton portrays the complexities of existence using diverse artistic techniques, thereby bridging tradition and modernity in a deeply philosophical manner.

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