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THE SYNTHESIS OF MEMORY AND PSYCHE IN THE LITERARY UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN WORLD (based on the finales of O‘tkir Hoshimov’s novels)

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Abstract. The paper examines how memory and the inner life of the protagonist merge in the finales of three novels by O‘tkir Hoshimov: “Nur borki, soya bor” (1977), “Ikki eshik orasi” (1982–1985) and “Tushda kechgan umrlar” (1991–1992). Drawing on P. Ricœur’s concept of narrative identity and A. B. Esin’s typology of psychological representation, the study shows that each finale brings memory and psyche together in a different way. In the first novel memory turns into the impulse to write; in the second it turns into a grief that cannot be forgotten and widens into an appeal to all humanity; in the third it turns into an open question about the meaning of a life. It is also shown that all three finales are set at or around dawn, and that the image of morning light carries a different meaning in each of them.

Keywords: memory, psyche, finale, narrative identity, psychologism, dawn motif, O‘tkir Hoshimov, Uzbek novel.

The ending of a novel is the point at which the experience accumulated by the protagonist receives its final form. In novels built on memory, the finale usually answers a question that the whole text has been preparing: what does remembering the past do to a person? O‘tkir Hoshimov’s three major novels are particularly suitable for examining this question. Each of them is constructed around the recollection of the past, yet they belong to different stages of the writer’s career and use different narrative forms. The first novel was published in 1977, and the second and third end with the years of their writing, indicated by the author himself. This allows us to read the three finales as three successive answers to the same problem.

The aim of this paper is to identify how memory and psyche are synthesized in the finales of the three novels and to compare the results of this synthesis. Two theoretical approaches are used. According to P. Ricœur, personal identity is not a fixed substance but is formed through the story that people tell about their own lives, which is what Ricœur calls narrative identity[1]. This concept allows us to treat memory not only as a record of the past but also as a means by which a character understands who he or she is. A. B. Esin’s distinction between direct, indirect and summary-designating forms of psychological representation[2] helps to describe how the inner state of the protagonist is conveyed in each finale.

[1]See: Ricœur P. Oneself as Another / transl. by K. Blamey. – Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

[2]See: Esin A. B. Psikhologizm russkoi klassicheskoi literatury [Psychologism of Russian Classical Literature]. – Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1988.

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In “Nur borki, soya bor” (“Where There Is Light, There Is Shadow”) the protagonist Sherzod, a young journalist, begins the novel as a hospital patient and gradually comes to understand the people around him. In the finale he returns to the hospital, now as the one keeping watch: he spends the night at the bedside of his friend Abduvohid, who was riding his own motorcycle, the one Sherzod often borrowed, when Sirojiddin ran him down, mistaking him for Sherzod. Before dawn the friend regains consciousness, and Sherzod then goes out into the hospital grounds. Watching the sunrise, Sherzod sees how the light spreads across the sky and how the shadows retreat, which directly realizes the image contained in the title of the novel. At this moment he feels again the desire to write, and his recent past returns to him: “The events of the last three months, everything that had happened since he himself had been taken to hospital, came alive again in all their detail, with all their excitement and their philosophy”[3]. The novel closes with the words that Sherzod “began to burn with the wish to write all of it down”.

In this finale memory and psyche are synthesized as an act of creation. The recollection of the past does not torment the protagonist; on the contrary, it inspires him and becomes the material for a future text. The inner state is conveyed directly, in the form of a named feeling, and the landscape confirms it: light defeats shadow. One may read this ending as a hint that the novel itself is the book Sherzod is about to write, although the text does not say so explicitly. In Ricœur’s terms, the protagonist completes his narrative identity by deciding to tell his own story.

The meaning of this ending becomes clearer when it is compared with the opening of the novel. On its first page, Sherzod, sitting on his hospital bed, reflects that a person’s understanding always comes too late: people learn the value of things, and even of one another, only after they have lost them. The finale answers this reflection. This time understanding does not come too late: Sherzod’s friend survives, and the hero grasps the value of what he has lived through while it is still with him. The novel thus moves from belated understanding to timely understanding, and memory becomes the bridge between the two.

The finale of “Ikki eshik orasi” (“Between Two Doors”) is constructed quite differently. The epilogue returns to the situation of the prologue: twelve years after the tragic events, Muzaffar, now the head of a construction team, is travelling by bus to Qo‘qon for the funeral of his birth mother. The sun rises behind the mountains, and Muzaffar imagines it addressing people with a silent appeal to live in peace during their short lives. This appeal is followed by a series of bitter sentences built on the same pattern: people go on waging wars as if the war had not taken away his aunt’s son, as if the village elder, now almost a hundred, and his aged aunt were not still grieving for their children. The series then turns to Muzaffar’s own memory: “As if I could forget Munavvar’s eyes, in which the astonished cry ‘What harm have I done to you?’ had frozen, her jet-black, innocent eyes…”[4].

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[3]Hoshimov O‘. Nur borki, soya bor [Where There Is Light, There Is Shadow] [novel]. – Tashkent: G‘afur G‘ulom nomidagi Adabiyot va san’at nashriyoti, 1977. – P. 239. Here and below, quotations from Hoshimov’s novels are given in our translation.

[4]Hoshimov O‘. Ikki eshik orasi [Between Two Doors] [novel]. – Tashkent: Yangi asr avlodi, 2016. – P. 745.

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The epilogue also closes the ring opened by the prologue. At the beginning of the novel, the telegram announcing his mother's death makes Muzaffar compare human memory to a storehouse with its door shut, which a chance wind suddenly blows open, so that everything kept inside comes to life at once. The forty-seven chapters that follow can be read as the contents of that storehouse. In the epilogue the bus journey that began in the prologue comes to an end, and it becomes clear that the door cannot be closed again. What has been remembered can no longer be put back into oblivion, and this impossibility defines the hero's inner state at the end of the book.

Here memory and psyche are synthesized as grief that cannot be overcome. Muzaffar says that he has not been able to free himself from his torment for twelve years and will not be able to do so in the future. At the same time, his private memory does not remain enclosed within itself. It joins the memory of the whole community, which lost its sons in the war, and then grows into an appeal addressed to all people. On the last page Muzaffar recalls the parable once told by the old man known as Oqsoqol ("the elder"): some people lay at least one brick in the building of life, while others try to steal a brick from it. The personal story is thus included in a moral picture of the world. The inner state of the protagonist is conveyed both directly, through his confession, and indirectly, through the image of the sun, which speaks the words he himself cannot say aloud.

In "Tushda kechgan umrlar" ("Lives Passed in a Dream") the synthesis takes the form of a question. The protagonist Rustam, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, writes the last entry of his diary at night by the light of a dying candle, after a quarrel with his wife and a fit of rage. His consciousness becomes confused; he no longer knows how old he is and wonders whether he is twenty-two, seventy-two or perhaps eighty-two. Near the end of the entry he asks himself: "Who has benefited from your existence in this world, and who is harmed by your absence?"[5]. The cause of Rustam's death remains deliberately unclear, and the novel does not answer his question.

Rustam's last entry also repeats, almost word for word, the lyrical passage about autumn with which the novel opens: autumn is compared to a sick man lying on his deathbed, mist covers the earth like a shroud, and crows cry overhead. At the beginning of the novel this passage, headed "From Rustam's last diary", is read as a separate fragment whose context remains unclear; only at the end does the reader learn the circumstances in which it was written, in the last hours of the hero's life. Memory here takes the form of a loop. The text returns to its own beginning, and the reader, having learnt the whole story, rereads the opening image as a farewell.

Although the novel gives no direct answer, it has prepared the ground for the reader's own answer. In a letter from the labour camp, Rustam's father writes that, looking back, his whole past life seems to him not a life but a dream. This sentence explains the title of the novel and links two generations: the father realizes that he has gone through life as if someone had drugged him, dreaming and following wherever that "someone" led him, while the son dies without having found a place in the world.

[5]Hoshimov O'. Tushda kechgan umrlar [Lives Passed in a Dream] [novel]. – Tashkent: G'. G'ulom nomidagi Adabiyot va san'at nashriyoti, 2002. – P. 141. The page is given according to the electronic version (www.ziyouz.com).

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After Rustam's last entry, two short sections follow. In the first, his young widow clears the snow from his grave and asks whether he died because he was a good man. In the second, the novel returns to its opening scene: at dawn, the old woman Qurbonoy sweeps the street, and the former interrogator known as the Commissar tells her that he will never die. Morning comes again, but nothing in human relations has changed. Memory and psyche are synthesized here not in an act of understanding but in an unanswered question, which the novel passes on to the reader.

The results of the comparison are presented in the table.

Table 1

Memory and psyche in the finales of O'tkir Hoshimov's novels

Novel	Situation of the finale	What memory turns into	Meaning of the dawn
"Nur borki, soya bor" (1977)	Hospital: night watch at a wounded friend's bedside, sunrise outside	The impulse to write	Light defeats shadow; the beginning of creation
"Ikki eshik orasi" (1982–1985)	Bus journey to a funeral twelve years later	Unforgettable grief and a moral appeal to humanity	The sun calls people to peace, but they do not hear it
"Tushda kechgan umrlar" (1991–1992)	Last diary entry; the grave; the street at dawn	An open question about the meaning of life	Nature is renewed, while human relations remain the same

The table reveals a feature common to all three finales: each of them is set at dawn or immediately before it. The meaning of this motif, however, changes from novel to novel. In the first novel the morning light confirms the protagonist's inner renewal. In the second the rising sun becomes a voice of conscience that people refuse to hear. In the third the dawn simply begins another ordinary day, in which the victim and the persecutor greet each other as neighbours. The same image thus reflects a gradual change in the writer's view of the relationship between memory and the human world: from confidence that memory renews a person, through the recognition that it imposes lasting moral responsibility, to the doubt as to whether memory can change anything at all.

A comparison of the three finales in terms of Esin's typology shows that the form of psychological representation also changes. In the first novel the hero's inner state is named directly and confirmed by the landscape. In the second, direct confession is combined with an indirect form: the personified sun speaks for the hero and turns his private grief into a general moral statement. In the third, the direct form itself breaks down: the inner state is conveyed through fragmented inner speech, in which questions and broken sentences replace any coherent account of feeling. The gradual breakdown of the form corresponds to the content: as memory becomes heavier, it becomes harder to express it in an orderly way.

From the point of view of Ricœur's concept, the three finales can be described as three outcomes of narrative identity. Sherzod completes his identity by deciding to turn his experience into a story. Muzaffar's identity is complete as well, but it is fixed around the memory of guilt and loss, which he will carry for the rest of his life. Rustam's identity, by contrast, falls apart: in his last moments he cannot even say how old he is, and the story of his life is finished not by him but by others: his widow, the gravedigger and the narrator. The synthesis of memory and psyche thus does not always lead to self-understanding. In the last of the three novels it reveals the limits of such understanding.

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This observation has certain limitations. The analysis is based on three novels by one author, and its conclusions cannot be extended to Uzbek prose as a whole without further comparative research. In addition, the page numbers of "Tushda kechgan umrlar" are given according to the electronic version of the 2002 edition and may differ from the printed text.

In conclusion, the finales of O'tkir Hoshimov's novels present three forms of the synthesis of memory and psyche: memory as the source of creation, memory as unforgettable grief that grows into moral responsibility, and memory as an open question about the value of a human life. The novelty of the study is that the three finales are considered as a single sequence, the dawn motif common to all of them is identified, and the change in its meaning is linked to the changing role of memory in the writer's work. A promising direction for further research is to compare these finales with the endings of other Uzbek novels of the same period.

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