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THE ROLE OF PORTRAITURE AND LANDSCAPE IN CREATING ARTISTIC IMAGES IN ULUGBEK HAMDAM'S SHORT STORIES

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A work of fiction is not merely a sequence of events; it is a living world. Portraiture and landscape play an important role in bringing this world to life. In a literary work, a portrait is not simply a depiction of any individual; in literary criticism, it refers to a genre concerned with figures associated with literature, illuminating their biography, creative or scholarly-creative activity, position in society, spiritual character, inner world, and conduct. "In creating a portrait, the writer does not confine himself or herself to depicting such physical features as the face, eyes, eyebrows, lips, and nose, but also pays considerable attention to activities associated with the human psyche, including bodily movements, the manner of moving the hands and head, the tone and pace of speech, laughter, crying, and facial expressions accompanying these states."¹

The term "portrait" is derived from the French "portrait," ultimately related to the Old French "portraire," meaning "to depict accurately" or "to represent faithfully."

In literature, a landscape is not depicted merely for its own sake; underlying it are the creator's destiny, emotional world, and socio-aesthetic views. By studying landscape, it is possible to determine how people of different periods related to the world around them. An artist who suffers from imperfections in society seeks to return to the embrace of nature and wishes to share with nature the pain that society has neither understood nor wished to hear. Thus, the principal principles that define the essence of landscape lyricism emerge: an artistic apprehension of the world; seeking solace for one's suffering in nature; searching for poetic form in the sounds and rhythms of nature; comparing one's creative talent with nature's power of creation; calling for the preservation of nature; and the poetic interpretation of the desire to become one with nature. All of this demonstrates that, in order to undertake a profound philosophical and aesthetic analysis of nature, one must first be able to perceive it with refined sensibility and a pure heart. "Magnificent natural landscapes exert a positive influence on the individual and play an important role in the development of society."²



In Ulugbek Hamdam's "To'lin oy qissasi" ("The Full Moon"), landscape and portrait descriptions occupy a central place in revealing the symbolic and philosophical essence of the work. In this work, the Moon is not merely a natural phenomenon but a living image, that is, a figurative reflection of the human soul. The landscape is primarily constructed through the relationship between the night sky and the earth. These descriptions convey the Moon's spiritual journey. The similes "as attractive as bread taken from a tandoor" and "golden-colored hair" possess a distinctly national coloring and create a portrait of the Moon as warm, affectionate, and captivating. They express her outward completeness.

In conclusion, landscape and portraiture are closely interconnected in "To'lin oy qissasi." While the portrait of the Moon reflects her inner feelings, the surrounding landscape demonstrates how she perceives the world. Through portrait details, the author brings the traditional image of the Moon to life and transforms it into a human figure in search of truth. In Ulugbek Hamdam's short story "Lola," landscape and portrait descriptions serve to express a person's striving toward lofty goals, the hardships encountered along this path, and the accompanying psychological experiences. In the story, depictions of nature change in accordance with the protagonist's inner state.

In Ulugbek Hamdam's "Lola," the landscape—the steep cliff and the variegated sky—is both a field of trial and a source of inspiration for the protagonist. Portrait descriptions, meanwhile, demonstrate how powerless a human being may appear before majestic nature while remaining spiritually powerful. All the visual images in the work culminate in the protagonist's becoming a "winner" and awakening before new passes. The landscape of the work is constructed around its central image, Lola, and the Cliff leading to her. These descriptions serve as metaphorical expressions of life's trials and unattainable dreams.

In Ulugbek Hamdam's short story "Na'matak," landscape and portraiture are not merely descriptive devices; they are principal elements that reveal the characters' psychological states, the differences between generations, and the philosophical idea of the work.²

In the story, Ulugbek Hamdam transforms the landscape into the "stage" on which events unfold and portraiture into the "psychological map" of the characters on that stage. In the first



generation, the landscape and portraiture are rendered in pale pink and pinkish-white tones; in the second generation, they darken with blood and the blow of an axe. In the third generation, they once again harmonize with the green colors of spring.

In one of his interviews, Ulugbek Hamdam responded to a question about the story “Na’matak” as follows: “I wrote a small experimental work entitled ‘Na’matak’ and conditionally called it a novel. Proceeding from the concept of TIME, which is gradually diminishing within our possession, I attempted to contain the content of a novel within the volume of a single short story. It was merely an experiment. I make no claim to anything greater. Naturally, the work has been viewed differently, and it continues to be so. I accept this as natural. I would simply ask the readers to reflect once on the fact that this work did not arise as a game or a whim, and that there is a substantial reason for its having been written in such a compact form, as explained above. If you ask me further, after reading it, I would much prefer a tiny short story that leaves in one’s memory the substance of a novel to a large novel that leaves behind no more content than a pillow carries as a burden.”³

Through this reflection, the writer reveals the central idea in its entirety, demonstrating immense truths of life through a small-scale work. In the short story “Binafsha,” the writer takes his laptop and sets out toward the hills and uplands “untouched by the feet of the city and civilization.” Here, nature is not merely a background but a symbol of freedom and liberty, much like the protagonist’s soul. On the hills, the writer senses the fragrance emanating from the “first grasses of tender spring” and encounters a violet flower. The image of “the immense spring resting upon the delicate shoulders” of this tiny flower is one of the most beautiful landscape details in the story; it awakens a new life and a sense of wonder that had “opened its sleepy eyes” deep within the writer’s heart. Through this depiction of the flower, the protagonist’s grand claims about transforming the universe dissolve, giving way to sincere silence and gratitude. Subsequently, this natural landscape becomes intertwined with the human portrait.³

On the day his homeland becomes free, the writer encounters a girl named Binafsha. (The story also bears the title “Ko‘ngil va yurt ozod bo‘lgan kun” [“The Soul and the Day the Homeland



Became Free”].) The girl’s portrait is drawn through her voice and laughter: in the writer’s perception, her laughter is a wondrous phenomenon “shimmering like a rainbow, with its colors manifested solely in the form of sound.”⁴

Throughout the story, portrait details become the greatest discovery in the protagonist’s inner world. The writer sees “moonlike beauty” shining in the girl’s eyes, and this beauty becomes the meaning of life for him. He no longer writes on paper; instead, looking into Binafsha’s eyes, he articulates his pain and his entire inner world.

At the end of the work, landscape and portrait merge in the protagonist’s face: as he leaves the house and walks lightly along “a road filled with the fragrance of various flowers,” his “face gradually brightens in a remarkable manner.” This radiance signifies the union of the inner beauty of the soul (portraiture) and the spring fragrance of nature (landscape), which frees the writer from the mire of “desire” and “fame” and leads him toward the bridge of eternity. In Ulugbek Hamdam’s “Binafsha,” landscape and portrait descriptions serve to express the protagonist’s inner world, creative crisis, and spiritual awakening. The violet flower functions in the story both as a real plant and as a symbol of the divine beauty toward which the protagonist aspires. Through its depiction, the writer’s striving from the transient world toward eternity is expressed.

In his short story “Tosh” (“The Stone”), the writer skillfully depicts transformations in the human psyche through portraiture and landscape. In the work, these two elements are not merely decorative; rather, they function as principal factors expressing the protagonist’s inner despondency and his perception of the world. The portrait features in the story are most clearly embodied in the figure of an unfamiliar woman. At first, the woman is portrayed as a being who “exudes a fragrant scent,” is “wrapped in a gleaming dress,” and is “beautiful enough to take one’s breath away.” Her brown hair falling over her bare shoulders and her pale-pink dress appear to the protagonist as legendary beauty. However, as the events develop, this beautiful portrait changes into a terrifying image. At the place where fish are being sold, a “wild excitement” appears in the woman’s eyes, and she prepares herself like a cat about to pounce on a mouse. The most powerful portrait detail is reflected in her lips: under the effect of the



twilight or paint, the woman's mouth appears to the protagonist as "blood like the muzzle of a predator that has just committed a murder." Through this image, the writer exposes the cruelty concealed behind beauty.

The landscape, meanwhile, serves in the work as a background that intensifies the protagonist's psychological depression. From the very beginning of the story, "the approach of dusk" and the "scarlet color" of the setting sun resonate with the constriction in the protagonist's heart. The "autumn song" of the trees in the park and the "wave of twilight" seem to temporarily intoxicate the protagonist and help him forget the "stone" within him. Yet after the cruelty of the market scene, the landscape returns to its pessimistic tones. In the dream sequence, the landscape expands further and culminates in the image of a mountain peak, where the protagonist develops a desire to commit evil even against the entirety of existence, including the sun, the very beginning of life.

Thus, in the story, while landscape serves as the foundation that prepares the protagonist's emotional state, portraiture functions as the principal element that triggers the eruption of that state and the emergence of evil.

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