PLOT AND COMPOSITION IN SHUKUR KHOLMIRZAYEV'S ESSAYS

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Abstract. *This article analyzes the specific artistic structure of plot and composition in the essays of Shukur Kholmirzayev. It substantiates that in the writer's essays, the development of reality is shaped not by a traditional plot line, but rather through inner experiences, memory, observation, and philosophical reflection. In the course of the analysis, the free compositional nature of the essay genre, the active role of the authorial "I," retrospective depiction, internal monologue, dialogic elements, as well as the harmony of journalistic spirit and artistic expression are elucidated through examples. Furthermore, the fragmentary nature of the plot, its episodic structure, and the logical-psychological coherence of the composition are interpreted as significant factors defining Shukur Kholmirzayev's individual style.*

Keywords: *essay, plot, composition, artistic thinking, internal monologue, retrospective narration, authorial image, individual style.*

Introduction. In Uzbek literature, the essay genre began to develop actively in the second half of the twentieth century, providing an opportunity to illuminate the inner world of the creative personality, modes of thinking, and attitudes toward reality through artistic and philosophical reflection. In this process, the work of Shukur Kholmirzayev occupies a special place. His essays are distinguished by the harmony of life observation, sincere confession, critical perspective, and deep inner experience.

In Kholmirzayev's essays, plot and composition are constructed freely and on the basis of the flow of thought, differing from traditional epic patterns. The development of events is revealed primarily through the author's inner world, memories, and philosophical reflections. Therefore, this article analyzes, from a scientific and theoretical perspective, the specific formation of plot in the writer's essays, as well as such features as the logical and psychological coherence of composition and episodicity.

Literature Review. A number of scholarly studies have been conducted in literary criticism on the work of Shukur Kholmirzayev, in which the artistic and stylistic features of his prose, the interpretation of national character, psychologism, and issues of language and style have been thoroughly examined. In particular, many articles and monographs have analyzed such aspects as the depiction of human psychology, inner dramatism, and mastery in character creation in the writer's novellas and short stories.

Studies devoted to the theory of the essay genre have highlighted its free compositional nature, the leading role of the authorial "I," the relativity of plot, and the harmony between journalistic and artistic elements. In Uzbek literary scholarship, academic views on the poetics of the essay demonstrate the close interconnection between the genre and artistic thinking. However, in existing research, the issue of plot and composition in Shukur Kholmirzayev's essays has not been examined separately and systematically.

Although certain scholarly articles have addressed the thematic scope, content, and stylistic distinctiveness of the writer's essays, the fragmentary nature of the plot, its episodic structure, the role of retrospective narration, and the compositional function of internal monologue have not been sufficiently explored. Furthermore, the influence of internal dramatism—formed through the flow of the author's thought—on plot dynamics requires comprehensive analysis.

In this regard, the present article, while generalizing existing scholarly views, seeks to identify the interrelation between plot and composition in Shukur Kholmirzayev's essays and to determine their role in shaping his individual style, which constitutes the scientific novelty of the study.

Research Methodology. In this article, a comprehensive methodological approach was applied to identify the specific features of plot and composition in Shukur Kholmirzayev's essays. First, based on the principle of systematic analysis of the literary text, the theoretical criteria of the essay genre and the poetic characteristics of the writer's works were examined in correlation.

As a methodological foundation, the study relied on the principle of analyzing a literary work as a poetic system, genre theory, as well as modern literary approaches such as textual analysis and interpretation. The integration of these methods made it possible to reveal more deeply the interrelation between plot and composition in Kholmirzayev's essays.

Analysis and Results. In Uzbek literary studies, the issue of plot and composition in the essay genre has not yet been sufficiently examined. In this regard, the views of American literary scholars R. Wellek and A. Warren on plot, composition, and conflict are noteworthy. In particular, they state:

"Usually, every plot is based on conflict (the contradictions and internal struggles of a person with nature, society, and oneself); this allows for a sufficiently broad and multifaceted understanding of plot and conflict" [7, 234–235].

The researchers also pay special attention to the way these terms are expressed. For example, proponents of formal analysis in Russia and Germany proposed the use of the term motif (French: motif; German: Motiv) in relation to the components of a literary plot. The term composition was referred to by German and Russian scholars as a "system of motivation," whereas American literary scholars use the terms "composition" and "system of motivation" interchangeably.

In Russian literary studies, G. V. Pospelov addressed the issues of plot, fabula, and plot elements, offering theoretically grounded views. In particular, he used the term "plot composition" in relation to plot components and details. According to the scholar, one of the essential functions of plot is the depiction of life's contradictions and conflicts. The German philosopher Hegel, in his Lectures on Aesthetics, referred to this concept as "collision" [3, 203–204]. Indeed, both "conflict" and "collision" essentially denote the meaning of contradiction.

Composition, however, is a broader concept, as it encompasses not only plot and its elements but also the overall language, structure, theme, and idea of a literary work. Literary scholar M. Qo'shjonov, in his book Lessons of Creativity, defines composition as "the arrangement of parts, images, and artistic means in a work in relation to a specific ideological purpose, as well as their proportionality and harmony" [4, 181]. The Russian writer Leo Tolstoy also expressed his own theory of composition, stating: "The main thing is to place the parts appropriately in relation to the focal center; if they are correctly arranged, all unnecessary elements will naturally fall away, and great success will be achieved" [5, 306].

The analysis of Shukur Kholmirzayev's essays first revealed that their plot construction differs from traditional epic models. In his essays, the sequence of events does not develop through a strict dramatic structure of exposition, climax, and resolution, but rather through inner experiences, memory fragments, and the flow of thought. The plot is often formed around a central idea or psychological state, while external reality becomes a means of revealing inner dramatism.

The analysis shows that the plot in these essays has a fragmentary character, with an episodic structure prevailing. Each episode carries an independent semantic load while ensuring overall compositional unity. Retrospective narration, internal monologue, and the author's direct address function as the main factors driving plot dynamics.

From a compositional perspective, a harmony between freedom and logical-psychological coherence can be observed. The essays often begin with an observation or the depiction of an ordinary event and gradually move toward philosophical generalization. The internal connection between the introduction and the conclusion is determined not by the sequence of external events, but by the development of the author's thought. As a result, the composition becomes a unified artistic system centered around the authorial "I."

The results of the analysis indicate that in Kholmirzayev's essays, the plot is constructed on the basis of internal psychological processes rather than external action, while composition, harmonized with the flow of thought, emotional dynamics, and a journalistic tone, shapes the writer's individual style. These features serve as significant factors determining the poetic value of his essays.

In Shukur Kholmirzayev's creative work, alongside his novels, novellas, and short stories, his essays and literary sketches also occupy a significant place. The collection *Snow Fell on the Mountains* includes five essays: "Snow Fell on the Mountains," "The Prophecy of Fate," "Look Back at Your Past," "An Evening Conversation, or My Friend Ro'zi Choriyev," and "Three Letters to a Critic."

Kholmirzayev's essays and literary sketches can be classified thematically as follows:

1. Essays about representatives of the arts: the cycle "Smell the Violet, Uncle," "When I Think about Odil Aka…," "Devotion," "An Evening Conversation, or My Friend Ro'zi Choriyev," "Three Letters to a Critic," "The Prophecy of Fate," "Oh, My Shuhrat Aka…," "Our Paths Diverged, However…," "Northern Radiance," and the unfinished "The Joy of Discovery."
2. Essays about public figures: from the cycle "The Regret of a Statesman" — "If He Must Kill, Let a Brave Man Kill," "Temptation," "Local Patriot," "One of the Lessons," "These Roads Are Ancient Roads," as well as "So Truth Does Exist!" and "Service to the Motherland Is Selfless."
3. Historical essays: "The Inextinguishable Fire" and "Look Back at Your Past."
4. Publicistic essays: "The Purpose of Society, or On the Question of Ideology," "Will Literature Die?" and others [6, 44–45].

Shukur Kholmirzayev's cycle "Smell the Violet, Uncle" consists of four essays with a distinct plot and compositional structure: "Smell the Violet, Uncle" (about O'lmas Umarbekov), "On the Roads of Fergana" (about Uchqun Nazarov), "Smell the Violet, Uncle" (about Botir Zokirov), and "Warm Soul" (about Shukur Kholmirzayev and A. Oripov). In these four independent essays, the image of O'lmas Umarbekov occupies a central place. The cycle "Smell the Violet, Uncle" can be characterized as essays with a concentric and retrospective plot. They are concentric because the image of O'lmas Umarbekov unifies the events and characters around

a single center. They are retrospective because the writer, speaking from the perspective of the 1990s, recalls events that took place in the 1960s–70s.

Thus, the author returns to the past. The first essay of the cycle, “Smell the Violet, Uncle,” begins with the writer’s characteristic depiction of an unexpected preparatory scene. On the occasion of a new book publication, creative friends gather at U. Nazarov’s house—O‘lmas Umarbekov, A. Oripov, B. Zokirov, T. Azizov, N. Komilov, M. Burxonov, Dilbar (Uchqun Nazarov’s wife), A. Maqsudov, and Shukur Kholmirzayev—to cook pilaf together. The process leading up to the preparation of the pilaf, along with the conversations and discussions that unfold, forms the compositional basis of the essay cycle. For the first time, Kholmirzayev meets and speaks with O‘lmas Umarbekov at this gathering of writers at Nazarov’s house. Throughout the cycle, the essayist consistently emphasizes Umarbekov’s image, openly expressing his own excitement and the reflections that arose during those conversations and gatherings. He even provides commentary on the creative personalities of the participants. In the exposition of the essay, Kholmirzayev describes Nazarov’s telephone conversation with Umarbekov, while simultaneously expressing his personal feelings:

“I was amazed at Uchqun’s boldness (yes, for me, his manner of addressing him was boldness). He called O‘lmas Umarbekov simply ‘O‘lmas.’ Moreover, he spoke to him quite freely” [9, 5]. The author admires Nazarov’s sincere relationship with Umarbekov. Therefore, in parentheses, he describes Nazarov’s free manner of addressing such a prominent writer as an act of courage. The parenthetical remark serves as an emphatic personal commentary. After this, the essayist provides a brief scholarly remark about Umarbekov’s place in the literature of the 1960s: “Umarbekov… At that time he was the leading writer of the new generation entering literature; his novella My Love, My Beloved had made him famous, and in addition, he worked in a responsible position at the radio committee” [9, 5]. As the plot develops, while riding in a car, Kholmirzayev expresses his joy and thoughts about meeting Umarbekov: “Yet beyond this joy there was another intense excitement: I will sit with Umarbekov. How wonderful! I will get acquainted with him. How will he behave at the gathering? … On the streets he appears very serious. Even when he speaks, he does not smile…” Imagining the meeting, the writer openly shares his personal impressions of Umarbekov, even noting that he sensed certain “artificialities” in his mannerisms.

The essayist meticulously describes every detail, situation, and movement in Nazarov’s courtyard. He portrays the entrance of his central character as follows: “A ‘Volga’ honked in the street. Then it became clear that it had stopped by the gate” [9, 5]. By presenting the scene from inside the courtyard, Kholmirzayev draws attention to Umarbekov’s arrival. Finally, he describes Umarbekov entering the yard: “Before Uchqun reached the apricot tree, the small gate opened and Umarbekov entered… He wore a short-sleeved white shirt, with a (nearly inseparable) tie around his neck. Of medium height, compact, like a spirited thoroughbred horse. As he quickly descended the steps, he met the elderly mother coming out of the house. She slightly raised one hand. Umarbekov bent a little, offering his shoulder, and they exchanged greetings at length. Finally, he walked toward Uchqun and they touched cheeks in greeting. (Strange customs!) Then Uchqun suddenly turned and pointed at me.” In this passage, the writer not only depicts the external portrait of the protagonist—his clothing, build, gestures—but also reveals his personal attitude through the brief parenthetical remark “(Strange customs!).” Thus, the portrait is presented gradually, through scattered details integrated into the flow of events, rather than through a single concentrated description.

– "Do you recognize him?"

Umarbekov smiled and looked at me; suddenly his brows drew together awkwardly.

– "Isn't it Shukur? Shukur Kholmirzayev, the author of *The Waves*."

Without waiting for an answer, he quickly stepped toward me. (Although it was I who should have moved toward him.)

– "That's him," Uchqun said from behind. "Get acquainted. A good fellow. One of us."

– "All the better if he's one of us!"

– "Oh, we are still far from that…"

The words remained unfinished on my lips. Umarbekov came up and took my hand. His palm and fingers were as strong and firm as his build. Yet from his face (I swear!) it seemed as though light was radiating, as if he had been searching for me for many years and had suddenly encountered me by chance [9, 5].

The essayist draws the external portrait of the protagonist—from his entrance through the gate to his clothing, physique, face, and movements. It should be noted that Kholmirzayev does not present a detailed portrait in one specific place; instead, he scatters various portrait details throughout the narrative, using them as artistic devices. The writer does not overlook a single gesture of the character. In particular, he describes Umarbekov's entrance through the gate, his descent down the steps, his greeting with the elderly mother who came out of the house, and finally his cheek-to-cheek greeting with U. Nazarov.

At this moment, the essayist expresses his surprise at two men greeting each other with a kiss in a brief parenthetical remark: "(Strange customs!)." In this short phrase, the writer's personal and free attitude toward the situation is clearly expressed. Kholmirzayev reproduces the Tashkent dialect in the characters' speech without alteration, thereby preserving the authenticity and vividness of the narrative style. He does not overlook even the subtle changes in facial expression, as in: "Umarbekov smiled at me and suddenly his brows furrowed awkwardly" [9, 5], or "…standing by the table near the kitchen, spearing a carrot with a knife and moving it as he spoke in Russian…" [9, 5]. In this depiction, the act of cutting carrots while speaking animates the character's movements.

The writer deliberately departs from strict literary language norms, using "savzi" instead of the standard "sabzi," reflecting the local Tashkent dialect. The characters are either native Tashkent residents or people who have moved to the city and adopted its speech patterns. In some places, the author even notes that he himself imitated Umarbekov's gestures: "I, too, imitating Umarbekov, smiled while pointing at the firewood with the adze in my hand" [9, 5]. Kholmirzayev's memoir-essay *"The Prophecy of Fate"* (Sketches for a Portrait of Shukur Burkhanov) also stands out distinctly. Its opening resembles the style of *"An Evening Conversation,"* beginning with portrait sketches of the protagonist:

"Even in his youth, Shukur Burkhan was broad-shouldered, curly-haired, with meaningful eyes; his movements corresponded to his speech—merely a smaller version of the Shukur Burkhan we see today" [8, 130]. In this memoir-essay, the author strictly adheres to chronology—an essential component of the memoir genre—in revealing the personality, life, and творчество of the individual [6, 188]. Shukur Burkhanov's father opposed his entry into the world of art. The writer makes use of this life conflict—the father-son tension—as a narrative axis in the memoir. This essay also shows close connections with Sh. Bo'tayev's "Shaykh" and Z. Muhammadjonov's "Mysterious Heart." Similarly, in the essay "Our Paths Diverged, However…," as in his mastery of the short story genre, Kholmirzayev does not present a detailed portrait in one place. Instead,

he offers observations about the character's external appearance and clothing within the narrative flow:

"Abdullajon also came down. In one hand he held a bundle of small books tied with rope; the other was in his pocket—under his arm he clutched his lecture notebooks. With the front of his raincoat open, he resembled an intellectual setting off on a distant journey." These portrait details appear at the beginning of the memoir-essay. Later, the author adds:

"Yet beneath that long raincoat, under that hat, in the depth of those astonished and excited eyes, that familiar figure was clearly hidden." Kholmirzayev's essays often begin with an unexpected preparatory scene. In them, the writer skillfully employs observation, reflection, memory, detail, and contrast, creating structurally sound and carefully composed memoirs. Essays such as *"Smell the Violet, Uncle," "Our Paths Diverged, However…,"* and *"The Prophecy of Fate"* exemplify this artistic achievement.

Conclusion. In conclusion, in Shukur Kholmirzayev's essays, plot and composition are constructed not according to traditional epic patterns, but on the basis of inner dramatism, the flow of thought, and the active participation of the authorial "I." The plot relies primarily on the dynamics of psychological processes and philosophical reflection, while the composition appears as a free and fragmentary yet logically and psychologically coherent unified artistic system. These features clearly define the writer's individual style.

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