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REALISTIC AND NATURALISTIC ELEMENTS IN THE DESCRIPTION OF NATURE IN ERKIN SAMANDAR'S NOVEL "DARYOSINI YO'QOTGAN QIRG'OQ" ("THE SHORE THAT LOST ITS RIVER")

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ABSTRACT

This article presents reflections on the concept of the human-nature relationship as the foundation of Erkin Samandar's literary works, particularly focusing on how the plot reality in the novel "The Shore That Lost Its River" is depicted through the comparison of two entities – humanity and nature. Additionally, the description of nature in the novel is analyzed through the lens of both realistic and naturalistic stylistic features.

KEYWORDS: *Human, Nature, Plot, Realistic Style, Naturalistic Style*

Among the literary figures who hold a unique place in literature, Erkin Samandar is notable for his expression of human-nature relationships from various artistic angles. In his works, one encounters deep philosophical depictions of reality and naturalism, including vivid portrayals of the animal, inanimate, and plant worlds—elements often overlooked by other authors. Such philosophical reflections that focus on the problems of humanity and nature are evident in Samandar's poetic collections like *Amu Reflections*, *Spring Evenings*, *Which Garden Is This Called*, and his prose works such as *Land of a Thousand Horsemen* and *The Shore That Lost Its River*.

These distinctive features in Erkin Samandar's work are closely connected with his deep study of folk creativity, the lifestyle of ordinary villagers, the nature of our homeland, as well as his familiarity with the creative traditions of world literature figures like Chingiz Aitmatov, E.S. Thompson, and Jack London. His years of work at Uzbek television, interviews with fellow countrymen who share a spiritual connection with nature, his keen observation of the natural world, and his childhood and adolescent years spent in the bosom of nature laid the foundation for his creation of such original works dedicated to the Mother Nature.

Furthermore, an artist's personal world is shaped by biographical, cultural-aesthetic, national, domestic, and social experiences. Indeed, the emergence of Erkin Samandar's prose is directly and multidimensionally linked with these crucial foundations. As researcher Sarvar Atajanov has stated: "Erkin Samandar is a writer who seeks the contemporary face of the people in their past… The novel *The Shore That Lost Its River* stands apart from his other works. It is a unique piece that marked his emergence as a professional novelist and inspired the creation of his subsequent novels" [1].

In Samandar's prose, the relationship between artistic and real reality is depicted through realistic and naturalistic methods. The portrayal of events in a realistic spirit is characteristic of his literary style. But what exactly constitutes a realistic style? According to V.G. Belinsky, whose views are widely recognized in our literary criticism, poetry can reflect life phenomena in two ways: "The artist may recreate life in accordance with their ideals based on their worldview, the world they live in, the era, and their attitude toward the people, or they may represent it with full nakedness and truth, remaining faithful to every detail, color, and shade. Based on this, poetry can be divided into two categories—ideal poetry and realistic poetry" [2].

Another prominent literary theorist, L. Timofeev, elaborates: "In the works of those we call realists, the emphasis lies on what we refer to as reflection—the intent to depict phenomena as they truly are in life. This differentiates them from writers whose creative impulse leads them to reshape reality and develop characters based on artistic reconstruction" [3].

Dilmurod Quronov also comments on this point: "The principle of realism in artistic reflection requires that characters act in accordance with the socio-historical conditions that shaped them, and the logic of these conditions. The novel *The Shore That Lost Its River*, which we are studying today, is a strong embodiment of the spirit of realism. Given the context in which it was written, representing reality in such a way was a remarkable literary feat."

The majority of the novel's events are portrayed through the lens of the realistic style. For instance, if we examine the storyline related to the character Anor Xola, it becomes evident that life has not been particularly kind to her. Her husband went to war and never returned. Her brother, Qilich Aka, divorced his wife when their son Ganja was just one year old and later

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remarried, fathering many more children. Anor Xola, however, requested custody of Ganja from her brother and raised him as her own child. She never married again. With her humility and pure heart, Anor Xola attracts the reader's sympathy—she is a heroine drawn from the real world. She observes all events in the novel, distinguishing between good and bad, and guides Ganja toward the right path.

The realistic style becomes clearly apparent in the episode where Obod and Ganja travel to the Aral Sea. Initially, Ganja did not want to go. Obod persuaded him, saying, "I won't let you miss seeing the Aral." Ganja agreed, using the trip as an excuse to visit his relative G'ulomjon aka in Muynak. In Nukus, they were met by Obod's friend Shomurod, who had studied with him at university and now worked as an expediter. A hospitable man, Shomurod took them to his home, slaughtered a sheep, and treated them to a warm welcome. The next day, they set out for Muynak.

While crossing the Amu Darya after leaving Nukus, Shomurod remarked, "Look at the state of the Amu—it's nothing more than a trickle now. Over there is the Karakum Canal, the Amu-Bukhara Canal, Tallimarjan, and now Duldulsoy—they've drained the river dry [4]." Upon reaching the Aral Sea, they saw that the water level had dropped by at least five or six hand spans. They sighed as they recalled how in the past, its waves would leap sky-high like the humps of a camel. The conversation continued:

- **Ganja:** If I'm not mistaken, this very place we're standing on used to be the sea.
- **Shomurod:** That's right, friend. The Aral used to flow over there.
- **Ganja:** Has it receded that much?
- **Shomurod:** If you keep taking and don't give back, eventually, it all dries up [4].

While Obod was questioning the young men, Ganja removed his shoes and stepped into the sea. The water was calm like a still lake. Emerging from the water, he fell into deep thought. In his mind, he envisioned the people building the Duldulsoy reservoir: "These construction workers, who know only how to work, don't realize that they are robbing the Aral of its sustenance. When this massive hydro-complex is completed and the Amu Darya is blocked, and the gate key is slipped into someone's pocket, will they still release water to the Aral [4]?"

What makes the realistic style in E. Samandar's perspective so compelling in this episode is that the movement and events are constructed on a foundation of truth. The primary reason for this is that the author himself experienced the events described in the novel. The characters were shaped by the very social environment depicted. Through this, the writer sharply criticizes the societal flaws and the destructive human attitude toward nature. The people were misled with false promises and mobilized to build reservoirs, but the work did not serve the cause of progress or just living. These ideas are conveyed through undeniable examples. It also reveals the deceptive governance system of the Soviet era in the 1970s and 80s and the exploitative condition of Central Asian nations in the name of resource extraction.

While the author uses the principle of realism to reflect life artistically, he also simultaneously applies naturalism—a universal and philosophical method to explain nature and all beings within it. "Naturalism is a philosophical trend that regards nature and all its entities as the sole and universal principle of explanation. According to I. Kant, naturalism is the approach of linking and deriving all occurrences from nature [5]."

A careful study of Erkin Samandar's novels and their stylistic elements clearly reveals the weight of naturalistic expression in his work. In our view, the writer's tendency to depict natural phenomena, animals, soil and rock, mountains and stones in a literary manner has naturally led him toward a naturalistic style.

The protagonist of the novel is Ganja. The writer places a great burden of responsibility on his shoulders. Since Ganja considers all living beings and nature around him as his kin, he treats nature like his own relative. In return, nature shares its pain with him. Moreover, the names of all the characters in the novel are highly symbolic. Ganja—in folk speech—means "wealth", but in the novel, he is a rare individual ready to fight to protect nature, symbolizing a "treasure." Obod, Ganja's friend, is a character who brings prosperity and order, including to nature itself (a figure who opens Ganja's eyes to the importance of environmental protection). G'anijon Aminov, one of the main characters, represents someone who becomes wealthy by ruthlessly exploiting nature's resources. Qurbonboy is portrayed as one who sacrifices his life for the sake of protecting nature, standing side-by-side with Ganja. The author's deliberate emphasis on the meaning behind the characters' names is worthy of praise.

The novel depicts water and riverside nature, along with the people who inhabit those areas. These riverside dwellers, hills, animals, birds, and plants constitute the novel's main subjects. Most importantly, the author not only portrays nature and its beings, but he also weaves his reflections about them into the very fabric of the narrative. Through the portrayal of humans, animals, even soil and stones from this environment, the author emphasizes understanding and expressing the philosophy of nature. He artistically captures the harmony and, more significantly, the points at which human-nature relations are destroyed.

Let us examine the storyline involving Aminov and his son Kamol. Aminov, who devotes very little time to his family and children's upbringing, unknowingly shapes Kamol's fate into a tragedy. Firstly, Kamol inherits his father's traits—violence, arrogance, delight in others' suffering, and ruthlessness in achieving personal goals. Secondly, the destruction of Kirtepa under Aminov's orders erases history and silences the cries of those living in that area. Ganja and Qurbon, who opposed the demolition, were disregarded. On one side, the father destroys Kirtepa; on the other, Kamol, standing on the banks of the Amu Darya, tries to impress Gulsora—a girl in an atlas dress, a student at a construction college—by boasting that she would obey his command. Unfortunately for Kamol, Gulsora was not such a girl. With determination and modesty, she replied, "No one is afraid of you—stop this nonsense," and walked away to

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her classmate Zarif. Kamol's friends laughed at his humiliation, yelling, "You lost!" Unable to endure the shame, Kamol grabbed Zarif's arm and struck him repeatedly.

Initially, the other boys laughed and encouraged the fight. Then, hearing Gulsora's cries for help, Ganja and Qumri rushed in to break it up. That evening, unable to command the girl, Kamol vowed revenge on Zarif. He gathered information about Zarif, took a metal slingshot and his father's double-edged knife, and waited outside the dormitory to attack him. At that moment, a large rock suddenly flew through the air and struck Kamol on the head—it was a fragment of the demolished Kirtepa. Symbolically, it was a stone thrown by his own father. This incident was not a coincidence. It conveys the profound wisdom in the saying: "The sins of the parents befall their children."

This episode shows how the author strives to depict real-life events as they occur in reality. The damage to nature caused by the destruction of Kirtepa is depicted with a raw, naturalistic character.

In conclusion, Erkin Samandar's novel *"The Shore That Lost Its River"* artistically expresses the relationship between humans and nature through both idealistic and naturalistic observations. The author merges philosophical-aesthetic theories with the poetic mastery of symbolic imagery, unifying nature, water, animals, and humans into one universal message that advocates for the harmony and preservation of our shared environment.

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