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ARTISTIC THINKING AND INTERTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION IN THE SHORT STORIES OF ISAJON SULTAN

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Abstract

This article examines the artistic thinking and intertextual features of the short stories of Isajon Sulton, one of the prominent representatives of contemporary Uzbek prose. Based on thematic, intertextual, and stylistic methods of analysis, the writer's artistic mastery and the ways in which layers of meaning are enriched through intertextual relations are examined on a scholarly basis. The findings of the study contribute to determining the place and significance of Isajon Sulton's short stories within modern Uzbek literature.

Keywords: Artistic thinking, intertextuality, folkloric archetypes, stylistic analysis, symbolic image, personality and creativity.

Introduction

In contemporary literary studies, the short story has increasingly been recognized as one of the most dynamic and innovative prose genres, particularly within modern Uzbek literature. Its compact structure, semantic density, and flexibility of narrative techniques allow writers to respond sensitively to social change, psychological complexity, and philosophical inquiry. As a result, the renewal of prose genres in recent decades has predominantly manifested itself through short fiction, where thematic diversity, the emergence of new social types, the multiplicity of characters, and original aesthetic strategies play a decisive role.

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Within this literary context, the short stories of the People's Writer of Uzbekistan, **Isajon Sulton**, occupy a distinctive place. His prose is marked by a synthesis of realism and symbolic imagery, a deep engagement with the inner psychological world of the individual, and a refined system of artistic devices that include metaphor, symbolism, and intertextual reference. Isajon Sulton's stories frequently transcend the level of everyday narration, transforming ordinary events into philosophically and spiritually resonant experiences. This article aims to analyze the writer's short stories through a set of interconnected methodological principles, with particular emphasis on **thematic analysis**, **intertextuality**, **symbolism**, and the relationship between folklore archetypes and modern narrative strategies. By doing so, the study seeks to demonstrate how Isajon Sulton's prose articulates universal human values while remaining firmly rooted in national cultural and spiritual traditions.

Literature Review

Scholarly research on contemporary Uzbek prose has consistently emphasized the short story as a key genre for artistic experimentation and ideological renewal. Literary critics note that modern Uzbek short fiction reflects a shift toward psychological depth, symbolic thinking, and philosophical generalization, often accompanied by a renewed interest in folklore, myth, and religious discourse. Within this framework, Isajon Sulton's creative work has attracted sustained academic attention due to its stylistic originality and conceptual richness.

Previous studies have highlighted the writer's mastery of lyrical prose, his careful selection of language, and his ability to construct multilayered images through metaphor and symbolism. Researchers have also emphasized the significance of **intertextuality** in his works, particularly the use of allusions, quotations, epigraphs, aphorisms, and references to folklore, religious texts, and classical Eastern literature. Intertextuality, understood as the interaction between texts and the creation of meaning through textual dialogue, has been examined in literary

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theory, linguistics, philosophy, and cultural studies, and is widely regarded as a defining feature of postmodern and contemporary narrative practices. In the context of Isajon Sulton's short stories, scholars observe that intertextual elements serve not merely as decorative devices but as structural and semantic components that deepen philosophical meaning. References to the ethical and spiritual teachings of Jaloliddin Rumi, Imam al-Bukhari, Alisher Navoi, as well as the reinterpretation of folklore archetypes such as the old man, the orphan, the traveler, the dervish, and the angel, are interpreted as manifestations of a broader cultural memory. Existing research also underscores the importance of biographical factors in understanding the writer's creative worldview, noting that childhood exposure to oral storytelling traditions significantly shaped his narrative imagination and symbolic thinking.

Methodology and Methods

The present study is based on a **qualitative literary analysis** that integrates several complementary methodological approaches. The primary method employed is **thematic analysis**, which involves identifying and interpreting major and minor themes within the short stories, examining their relationship to plot structure, character development, and narrative perspective. This approach enables a systematic exploration of key concepts such as destiny, faith, repentance, morality, love, and human responsibility.

In addition, the study applies **intertextual analysis** to reveal explicit and implicit textual references, including allusions to religious traditions, folklore, classical literature, and socio-political realities. Particular attention is paid to allusive structures, epigraphs, quotations, and symbolic motifs, which function as carriers of cultural and philosophical meaning. The analysis also draws on **symbolic and stylistic methods**, focusing on the artistic function of natural imagery (such as wind, rain, and landscape), metaphorical language, and sound symbolism.

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Furthermore, elements of **biographical and contextual analysis** are employed to clarify the connection between the writer's personal experiences, cultural environment, and creative choices. This multifaceted methodological framework allows for a holistic interpretation of Isajon Sulton's short stories as complex artistic systems in which form, content, and cultural memory are closely interconnected.

The main part

In contemporary literature, renewal within prose genres is primarily emerging through the short story, a process facilitated by the genre's inherent expressive and structural potential. The diversity of themes, the introduction of new social types, the variety of characters, originality in aesthetic criteria, and distinctive approaches to problem resolution may be regarded as the principal characteristics of the development of modern Uzbek short story writing.

In particular, the short stories of the People's Writer of Uzbekistan, Isajon Sulton, have consistently attracted the attention of literary scholars due to their incorporation of diverse modes of representation, the artistic synthesis of realistic expression with imaginative and metaphorical imagery, and their ability to penetrate the inner psychological world of the protagonist through a variety of narrative devices. The writer's frequent use of symbols and other poetic discoveries to ensure figurativeness further enhances the aesthetic value of his prose. In the present article, we therefore propose to analyze Isajon Sulton's short stories on the basis of several methodological principles, the first of which is thematic analysis. As is well known, thematic analysis facilitates an understanding of a work's idea and content by examining its themes through a division of the text into meaningful components. Conducting such an analysis requires identifying the major and minor themes in the writer's oeuvre, determining how they are connected to the plot and characters, and examining the author's ideas, symbols, and artistic techniques through which these themes are

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revealed. At the same time, it is essential to take into account the historical and social context in which the work was created. In Isajon Sulton's short stories, national values, social issues, the inner world of the individual, dreams, and aspirations are interpreted in a distinctive manner. The subtle depiction of nature, as well as the harmonious correspondence between natural imagery and human psychology in the creation of artistic characters, is rendered with notable mastery. In many cases, Isajon Sulton presents his short stories to the reader in the form of cycles under a common title, a strategy intended to convey the content more precisely and to articulate the underlying ideas and themes more profoundly. For example, by entitling certain cycles with terms borrowed from chemistry – such as “Organic Stories” and “Inorganic Stories” – the writer foregrounds highly relevant issues concerning the interdependence between living beings (organic entities), including humans, animals, birds, ants, and butterflies, and elements of nature that may appear lifeless at first glance (inorganic entities), such as trees, plants, soil, clay, and even walls, emphasizing that none of them can exist independently of the others [5, p. 56]. Alongside these, the author's cycles titled “Historical Stories,” “Where Are You, Paradise?” and “The Stories of the Garden of Iram” are also noteworthy for their portrayal of universal values and broadly humanistic ideas, which further underscores their literary and ideological significance.

In the artistic analysis of the writer's works, the issue of intertextualism is regarded as one of the leading characteristics. As is well known, intertextual elements comprise texts or parts of texts that contain implicit or explicit references, thereby establishing relationships between them. This phenomenon conveys the meaning of a “text within a text” and encompasses various forms such as allusion, parody, and collage. These devices are employed to enrich meaning, construct artistic imagery, and reveal the underlying idea of a literary work. Intertextualism emerges as a literary phenomenon that results from the enrichment and complete formation of textual meaning through its interaction

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with other texts. At present, the phenomenon of intertextuality is being studied across a number of disciplines in which the text constitutes the primary object of analysis, including literary studies, linguistics, philosophy, and cultural studies. In particular, intertextual units are actively employed in the works of Isajon Sulton. In the writer's short stories, intertextuality manifests itself through close connections with folklore, as well as through references to hadiths, religious symbols, and harmonized engagements with the traditions of classical Eastern literature.

In his short stories "Qismat," "Bibi Salima," "Bog'i Eram," and "Hazrati Xizr izidan," concepts such as destiny, sin, repentance, and supplication acquire profound philosophical significance, evoking the semantic layers inherent in hadiths. These elements do not appear in a direct or explicit manner; rather, they are manifested as intertextual semantics that subtly structure the deeper meaning of the narratives.

In Isajon Sulton's oeuvre, the ethical and educational ideas of Jaloliddin Rumi, Imam al-Bukhari, Alisher Navoi, and other eminent thinkers are frequently encountered. This is evident in the intertextual units – particularly quotations – drawn from their rich spiritual and intellectual heritage. A clear illustration of this can be seen in the writer's short story "Suvdagi kosa" ("The Bowl in the Water"), which is grounded in Rumi's aphoristic reflections such as: "We are like a bowl floating on the surface of water. The bowl does not move of its own will; rather, it moves by the will and command of the water," and "When a person is completely immersed in water, every visible movement and action no longer belongs to the person but to the water itself." These maxims serve as the conceptual and philosophical foundation of the narrative, confirming the writer's conscious engagement with Rumi's spiritual thought through intertextuality.

The characters depicted in the short stories "Qish ertaklari" ("Winter Tales"), "Farishta" ("The Angel"), and "Oftob chiqdi olamga" ("The Sun Rose over the World") are closely connected with folkloric archetypes. Figures such as the old

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man, the orphaned child, the traveler, the dervish, the angel, and the fairy-like maiden appear as artistically reworked versions of typical heroes found in legends, folk tales, and oral narratives.

In particular, Isajon Sul-ton's short story "Yigirma birinchi asrning sakkiz yashar bolasi" ("The Eight-Year-Old Child of the Twenty-First Century") employs the allusive type of intertextuality. As is well known, "allusion is a stylistic device based on a reference to a real political, everyday, historical, or literary fact that is presumed to be familiar to everyone" [4, p. 28].

"Next, a Japanese professor was speaking in his native language. He easily read the English subtitles that ran in a thin line under the picture: he was saying that because humanity was threatened by technology, he and his eight-year-old son were practicing the shōppuku tradition" [6, 146]. Here, the allusion is to socio-political facts, and it is about the shōppuku tradition, that is, the Japanese hara-kiri - a ritual of suicide. In the story, the child, watching various programs, also gets acquainted with programs that reflect the behavior of those who practice the teachings of the Buddha: "Next, a man is calling on all humanity to practice the teachings of the Buddha. In the background, a huge stone statue of a half-naked, fat man was visible, and his surroundings were full of young children" [6, 147]. As can be seen from this passage, allusion is created by using very famous events, customs, and famous names in a literary text. Allusion serves to revive a fact or information in the reader's memory. In this case, the popularity of the allusive name or event and its long-term residence in the memory of the linguistic person are important. "In a work involving allusion, two cultural-semiotic fields are interconnected. One of them participates in the external structure of the text, and the other is imagined and recreated by the reader. The restoration of the second feature occurs depending on the level of knowledge of the reader" [1].

In the stories of Isajon Sultan, the epigraph is also widely used as an intertextual unit, which serves to reveal the content of the story by bringing the reader into the reality of the work. In particular, for the story of "The Windy Night"

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Rahimjon Rahmat's lines "Orphan boy, oh boy, Where is the rich boy?.." were chosen, while in the story of "The Guardian" Sami Renschber's words "...This is what killed me, this!.." were used as an epigraph. In the story of "Longing" a children's song was used, which begins with "I am on the peach branch, I am by my mother's side, It is a long way to say goodbye, I miss my father..."

Almost all of Isajon Sultan's stories are also significant for their richness in a number of intertextual units, such as aphorisms, proverbs, and idioms. Intertextuality in his work is considered an important sign and feature, and serves to revive the reader's cultural knowledge.

Also, the issue of methodological analysis is considered a leading method of analysis in the analysis of literary texts. Literary scholars highly appreciate the style and artistic skill of Isajon Sultan. The clear lyricism in the works of the writer, the methods of using language and stylistic means, and the approaches to creating images are of particular note. The richness of the artistic language, the abundance of metaphors and symbolic expressions in the writer's stories can be a valuable source for individual analyses.

Isajon Sultan's words, "In fact, a writer is both a scientist, a philosopher, and a creator. He cannot reveal his talent until he accumulates various knowledge" [3], are reflected in his works. Whether his stories are historical, lyrical, philosophical, or based on symbolic images, they are based on a deep scientific conclusion, philosophical reflection, and artistic integrity.

The writer, having deeply studied the problems of the time, philosophically observes the issues of love, parent-sibling relations, oriental upbringing, and morality, relying on religious and scientific knowledge in a very convincing way. In particular, in the story "Bibi Salima", the entire village population achieved prosperity through the power of a prayer made at dawn, asking for help. The uniqueness of the writer's style is evident in the story, where he reflects the deep spiritual and psychological connection between artistic images and natural phenomena. The writer combines the idea he is putting forward with images of

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nature such as wind and rain, reflecting them in parallel with natural phenomena. Through the sentence in the story “The wind blows from the qibla in these places” [7, 31], the writer refers to the good that comes from the wind. In the story, the wind carries a very great meaning as a symbolic image. It sets events in motion and serves as the basis for the dynamics of thought. The writer moves the winds as if they were living organisms. The reader hears their blowing, humming, and roaring through the words. Details such as “it blew steadily,” “sometimes it blew fiercely, sometimes it subsided,” “it had not yet descended from the height,” “it gradually gained strength,” “after which another wind came. This one was not fierce and arrogant, but heavy and mournful” [7, 32] are phenomena that can only be found in the style of Isajon Sultan.

It is characteristic of Isajon Sultan to refer to the ancient and eternal wisdom of his people and reinterpret it in the light of modern literary concepts. In the story “Bibi Salima”, he artistically re-expresses the prayer left by our great people. That is, “the ancients say that four elements are enough for people to live well. They are wind, rain, cattle and milk. The wind changes the weather, brings clouds, and pollinates trees. Rain is a blessing, and livestock and crops are blessed because of it. Honey is healing, and milk is the beginning of life, purity and sustenance” [7, 35]. In this story, the writer describes the unprecedented changes that have occurred in the life of the people through the images of wind, rain, bees and animals. Giving "soul" to such natural phenomena, elevating them to the level of images, demonstrates the high talent of Isajon Sultan. Based on symbolism and convention, the author achieves his artistic intention.

The story “Bibi Salima” is read in the same tone and in one breath. This is due to its lyricism. The poetic clarity of the images in it served to convincingly reflect human feelings and experiences. “How good it would be if our writers used words with a poetic feeling,” Isajon Sultan said in one of his interviews. The writer used every word in the story with a heartfelt feeling. “The grass bent and bent. The rain flowed down the trunks of the trees, creating a rustling sound. Rosa made a

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wonderful melody: different sounds were heard in the overturned bucket, different on the wooden planks, and different sounds among the grape leaves, all of which, combined with the rustling of the rain, created a huge and vibrant melody.

- Tak-tak...
- Chak-chak...
- Tiq-tiq” [7, 32].

The highlighted words served an aesthetic function in drawing lyrical images in the story.

Isajon Sultan's stories are distinguished by their richness in aphorisms, wise sayings, and life confessions of the author or heroes of the work. “If you provide sustenance without straining, from your creatures that are as small as the tip of a needle to those at the bottom of rocks. Can you even provide me with a little sustenance? After all, what are the things I asked for in front of your power?” “You are the one who creates everything from stone and soil? ...You are the one who produces peaches and quince from dry wood. I am worried that unnecessary weeds will grow among my crops, and you have also created a cow so that she can eat them and turn them into milk for my servants” [7, 29]. These thoughts, reflecting the beautiful heart, mind, and intelligence of an ordinary village woman, sound like wisdom in the ears of the reader. There are no stylistic errors in the story, no unnecessary details, no clichés. Isajon Sultan is skilled in this story, creating a unique style of describing reality, achieving a unique expressiveness in expression.

In studies related to the artistic analysis of the writer's works, special attention is paid to the issue of the individual and the creator. Because at the heart of any artistic creation, the issue of the individual and the creator appears as a leading tendency. Each view of the creator is considered a product of his views as a person. In this sense, literary critics analyze the creative biography, life experiences and personal characteristics of Isajon Sultan. This helps to

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understand the motives and themes in his works more deeply. The life and creative work of Isajon Sultan are studied in connection with the images and events in his works.

Studying the biography of the creator helps to reveal the essence of his work. By reading the story "Winter Tales" by Isajon Sultan, one can feel the biographical factors that influenced the writer's path to creativity. In the winter, when the snow falls, the villagers, freed from the fields and household chores, gather around the hut and tell the legends and tales passed down from mouth to mouth, the stories they have experienced, the imaginary stories about the ogre, the giant, the fairy, the fish-man. This story makes it clear that in the writer's child's heart, along with some fear, great wonder, and interest in the mysterious creature called the world, man, and nature, it is clear that At the end of the work, the author himself admits this truth: "I now realize that those people who like to tell long, imaginary stories on winter nights have left a priceless treasure for people like me" [7, 73]. That treasure is now being reborn in the writer's soul, transformed into various images, symbols, images, and details, and is reflected in his novels, short stories, and stories.

The writer's childhood experience in the world of fairy tales is particularly evident in his stories created today. In particular, the stylization typical of folk tales is clearly visible in the stories "Windy Night", "The Sun Came Out into the World", and "The Fog". In them, the feelings of the children who, on a windy night in the steppe of the Dang'ara district of the Fergana region, were fed up with the cruelty of their stepmother and set off to Dashtqishlok - to their grandmother's house ("Windy Night"), the cries of an orphan who was left in the care of his aunt because his mother had married someone else and was humiliated by her children ("The Sun Came Out into the World"), and the youngest of four brothers who went to collect firewood in winter and got lost ("The Fog") can be considered products of creativity that emerged under the influence of the tales Isajon Sultan heard in his childhood. In the story "Windy Night", the writer lists the names of

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several villages in Fergana. In the work, a strong wind is not only a natural phenomenon, but also a means of symbolic meaning, embodying various troubles around us, turmoil in our psyche. The writer also emphasized this in his interviews: “In the lands where I grew up, the wind blows very strongly. It breaks trees and blows away roofs. As my mind matures, I learned that there are even stronger winds in the world. For example, the wind of thought that blows away thoughts, the wind of love that awakens feelings... The wind has one function: it refreshes the air, carries clouds of blessings and grace, and at the same time dusts the trees and collects old leaves. However, when the time comes, it also turns into the wind of time, pulling our hair and giving us a glimpse of the past and the incomprehensible future” [2]. Perhaps the secret to Isajon Sultan's masterful use of the image of wind in almost every work is that he grew up surrounded by such winds.

Indeed, a person who is not aware of the history, spiritual and educational life of his people, ancient traditions, literary and philosophical heritage cannot be a great creator. As the writer said in one of his interviews, “A creator becomes a very good person, almost an angel, during his creativity. A father at home, a passerby on the street, an employee at work, everyone has their own responsibility. In this sense, creativity should be a return to oneself” [3]. In this sense, the writer's inner world, spiritual suffering, spiritual image, artistic intention are reflected in his works. In his stories, the writer tries to describe his highest, life-giving, noble goals as a call. In the person of simple and sincere people of the village, he seeks to convey our national customs and historical traditions to the reader.

Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that Isajon Sulton's short stories represent a significant contribution to contemporary Uzbek prose, distinguished by their thematic depth, stylistic sophistication, and philosophical orientation. Through the effective use of intertextuality, symbolism, and folklore archetypes, the writer constructs

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narratives that resonate on both national and universal levels. His stories articulate enduring human values - faith, morality, compassion, and responsibility - while simultaneously addressing the challenges of modern life.

The study confirms that intertextuality functions as a central organizing principle in Isajon Sulton's prose, enriching textual meaning and activating the reader's cultural memory. Natural phenomena, particularly the recurring image of wind, acquire symbolic significance and serve as dynamic forces that shape narrative movement and psychological tension. Moreover, the integration of biographical elements and oral storytelling traditions underscores the continuity between collective cultural heritage and individual artistic expression.

In conclusion, Isajon Sulton's short stories exemplify the productive interaction between tradition and innovation in modern Uzbek literature. Their artistic integrity, lyrical intensity, and philosophical insight not only enhance the aesthetic value of contemporary prose but also offer fertile ground for further research in literary theory, intertextual studies, and cultural poetics.

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