

A CRITICAL EXPLORATION OF THE DEFINING FEATURES AND NARRATIVE USE OF WAR ELEMENTS IN AMERICAN AND UZBEK POSTMODERN LITERARY TEXTS

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Abstract. *This article examines the representation and function of war elements in American and Uzbek literary works produced during the postmodern period. Postmodern literature, characterized by fragmentation, metafiction, irony, and skepticism toward grand narratives, approaches war not as a heroic or purely historical event but as a complex psychological, cultural, and ideological phenomenon. Through a comparative analysis, the study highlights how American and Uzbek writers employ war motifs to question reality, identity, memory, and power, reflecting national histories while sharing universal postmodern traits.*

Keywords: *Postmodernism, war literature, American literature, Uzbek literature, trauma, narrative fragmentation*

Аннотация. *В данной статье рассматриваются способы репрезентации и функции военных элементов в произведениях американской и узбекской литературы постмодернистского периода. Постмодернистская литература, характеризующаяся фрагментарностью, метафизичностью, иронией и скептическим отношением к «большим нарративам», трактует войну не как героическое или исключительно историческое событие, а как сложный психологический, культурный и идеологический феномен. В ходе сравнительного анализа показано, как американские и узбекские писатели используют военные мотивы для переосмысления реальности, идентичности, памяти и власти, отражая национально-исторический опыт и одновременно демонстрируя универсальные черты постмодернизма.*

Ключевые слова: *постмодернизм, военная литература, американская литература, узбекская литература, травма, нарративная фрагментация.*

Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqolada postmodern davrda yaratilgan Amerika va O'zbek adabiy asarlarida urush unsurlarining tasviri va funksiyasi tahlil qilinadi. Parchalanganlik, metafiksiya, kinoya hamda "buyuk narrativlar"ga nisbatan shubha bilan yondashuv bilan tavsiflanadigan postmodern adabiyot urushni qahramonona yoki sof tarixiy hodisa sifatida emas, balki murakkab psixologik, madaniy va mafkuraviy fenomen sifatida talqin etadi. Qiyosiy tahlil orqali Amerika va O'zbek yozuvchilari urush motivlaridan voqelik, shaxsiyat, xotira va hokimiyat tushunchalarini qayta ko'rib chiqish uchun qanday foydalanishlari, milliy-tarixiy tajribani aks ettirgan holda postmodernizmga xos umumiy xususiyatlarni namoyon etishlari yoritib beriladi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *postmodernizm, urush adabiyoti, Amerika adabiyoti, O'zbek adabiyoti, travma, narrativ parchalanganlik.*

Introduction. War has long been a central theme in literature, but postmodernism fundamentally transformed how it is represented. American postmodern war writing, exemplified by Kurt Vonnegut, Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, and Tim O'Brien, focuses on trauma, media

saturation, and the dislocation of individual consciousness, often using temporal disruption, metafiction, and narrative fragmentation to convey these experiences. Uzbek postmodern literature, shaped by Soviet colonialism and censorship, addresses not only combat trauma but also cultural suppression and historical falsification, employing allegory, symbolism, and fragmented structures to critique official narratives.

Despite these differing contexts, both traditions share a commitment to exploring trauma, memory, and the ethical challenges of representing historical violence. This article offers a comparative analysis of American and Uzbek postmodern war literature, examining how postmodern narrative strategies mediate the psychological and cultural impact of war while reflecting the specific historical realities of each society.

Methodology. This study adopts a comparative literary approach to explore how war is represented and interpreted in American and Uzbek postmodern literature. It combines close readings of selected literary texts with theoretical insights drawn from postmodernism, trauma studies, and postcolonial criticism. The analysis focuses on key American postmodern writers Kurt Vonnegut, Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, and Tim O'Brien alongside influential Uzbek authors such as Utkir Hoshimov, Said Ahmad, and a number of contemporary writers. The theoretical foundation of the study is informed by postmodern literary theory (notably the works of Fredric Jameson and Linda Hutcheon), trauma theory (particularly Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra), and postcolonial thought (including Homi Bhabha and Aleida Assmann). Drawing on this interdisciplinary framework, the study examines how techniques such as narrative fragmentation, disrupted temporality, metafiction, and unreliable narration are used to convey the psychological and cultural impact of war. By placing American and Uzbek texts in dialogue, the comparative method highlights both the shared postmodern strategies these literatures employ and the distinct ways in which historical and cultural contexts shape their narrative responses to traumatic experience.

Literature Review. Scholars of postmodern war literature consistently point to the genre's break with traditional realist narratives that focus on heroism, linear storytelling, and national unity. Fredric Jameson's influential description of the Vietnam War as "the first postmodern war" draws attention to the ways media saturation, ideological uncertainty, and the collapse of grand narratives reshaped literary responses to warfare. In a similar vein, Linda Hutcheon argues that postmodernism is defined by its paradoxical practice of engaging with historical narratives while simultaneously questioning and undermining them. Trauma theory has played a crucial role in shaping critical approaches to postmodern war writing. Cathy Caruth's well-known description of trauma as "a wound in the mind" emphasizes the difficulty of directly representing traumatic experience. According to Caruth, trauma is not fully grasped at the moment it occurs but returns later through repetition, fragmentation, and temporal disruption.

This theoretical perspective has been widely applied to American postmodern texts such as *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, and *The Things They Carried*, where fractured timelines and metafictional techniques mirror the psychological disorientation caused by war. By contrast, critical work on Uzbek postmodern war literature is still developing, though recent studies increasingly highlight the lasting effects of Soviet colonialism and historical repression. Uzbek scholars such as Sarvinoz Raximova and Zulkhumor Mirzaeva suggest that postmodern narrative strategies in Uzbek literature serve purposes beyond aesthetic experimentation. Instead, these techniques function as means of challenging Soviet ideological discourse and recovering suppressed historical experience.

Within this critical framework, the Soviet-Afghan War is often read not only as a concrete historical event but also as a powerful metaphor for broader colonial trauma, situating Uzbek postmodern war writing within a postcolonial literary context.

Results and Discussion. American postmodern war literature emerges largely from the cultural shock of the Vietnam War and the wider anxieties of the Cold War period. Rather than depicting war through heroic figures or linear battle narratives, writers turn inward, focusing on fractured memory, psychological instability, and moral uncertainty. Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* stands as a foundational text in this shift, introducing narrative techniques such as temporal dislocation, metafictional self-awareness, and recurring motifs. Billy Pilgrim's experience of becoming "unstuck in time" mirrors the intrusive and non-linear nature of traumatic memory, while the repeated phrase "so it goes" both normalizes death and subtly critiques society's tendency to reduce mass violence to empty linguistic formulas.

Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* pushes this reimagining of war even further by portraying World War II not as a coherent historical episode but as a vast, decentralized network of technological, corporate, and psychological forces. The novel dissolves traditional distinctions between war and peace, civilian and military life, reflecting what Paul Virilio describes as the logic of modern warfare. In a similar way, Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and *Underworld* treat war as an ambient condition woven into media, technology, and everyday existence. Here, conflict manifests less through visible combat than through nuclear anxiety, environmental threat, and the pervasive sense of invisible danger shaping modern consciousness.

Tim O'Brien's Vietnam War fiction offers one of the most sustained explorations of postmodern war memory. Through fragmented storytelling and overt metafictional reflection, O'Brien challenges the boundary between "story-truth" and "happening-truth," suggesting that emotional and psychological realities may be conveyed more effectively through fiction than through factual reporting. Across these American texts, postmodern narrative strategies function not merely as stylistic experimentation but as ethical responses to trauma, revealing the limitations of traditional narrative forms when confronted with the lived realities of war.

Uzbek postmodern war literature develops under markedly different historical conditions, shaped by Soviet ideological control, censorship, and the long-term effects of colonial domination. Unlike their American counterparts, Uzbek writers were often unable to address war directly, which led to the use of coded language, allegory, symbolism, and fragmented narrative structures. Within this context, the Soviet-Afghan War emerges as a central literary motif, serving as a lens through which broader experiences of cultural erasure, political manipulation, and historical distortion are explored.

Utkir Hoshimov's *Lives Passed in Dream* exemplifies this postmodern approach through its complex narrative form, which blends diary entries, official documents, and dream sequences.

The psychological breakdown of the protagonist, Rustam, reflects not only the trauma of combat but also a deeper collective disillusionment with Soviet ideology. In this way, the Afghan War is transformed from a specific historical conflict into a powerful metaphor for historical falsification and cultural destruction, aligning the novel with Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction.

Said Ahmad's *Silence* extends this exploration through the use of unreliable narration and the interweaving of documentary and fictional elements. The novel foregrounds the relationship between trauma and silence, suggesting that certain historical experiences resist clear articulation and remain suppressed within both personal and collective memory.

Contemporary Uzbek writers continue to build on this tradition, employing irony, parody, and intertextuality to challenge Soviet legacies as well as post-independence nationalist myths.

Their work demonstrates that postmodern war discourse remains a vital means of engaging with unresolved historical trauma in Uzbek literature.

Despite their differing historical circumstances, American and Uzbek postmodern war literatures share a common commitment to questioning official narratives and representing trauma through fragmentation and disrupted temporality. Both traditions use postmodern techniques to expose the psychological and ethical consequences of warfare, yet their narrative priorities diverge in significant ways. American texts tend to focus on ideological contradiction, media saturation, and individual psychological dislocation within a democratic society, while Uzbek literature confronts the compounded trauma of warfare intertwined with colonial repression and cultural silencing.

In Uzbek postmodern writing, the Afghan War often functions as a palimpsest, simultaneously revealing and concealing deeper layers of historical trauma rooted in Soviet colonialism. This layered approach contrasts with most American war narratives, where trauma is more often linked to a single conflict rather than a prolonged history of domination. Taken together, these traditions illustrate both the universality of war-related trauma and the culturally specific ways postmodern literature responds to historical violence.

Conclusion. In both American and Uzbek postmodern literature, war functions as more than a recurring theme; it becomes a central means of exploring trauma, memory, and the problem of representing historical violence. Writers in both traditions turn to postmodern narrative strategies such as fragmentation, disrupted temporality, metafiction, and generic hybridity not for stylistic novelty, but because conventional realist forms prove inadequate for conveying the psychological and cultural impact of war. While American postmodern war literature tends to foreground individual psychological trauma and ideological uncertainty, Uzbek postmodern writing places greater emphasis on the entanglement of war experience with colonial history, cultural silencing, and collective memory. This comparative perspective shows that postmodern literary innovation emerges from historical urgency rather than aesthetic experimentation alone. Faced with experiences that resist coherent narration, writers develop new forms that allow trauma to be approached without simplifying or closing it off. Through this process, literature becomes both an ethical and expressive space one that acknowledges the limits of representation while still insisting on the need to remember and reflect. Ultimately, American and Uzbek postmodern war literatures reveal not only the shared, universal dimensions of traumatic experience but also the distinct ways different societies seek meaning, voice, and understanding in the aftermath of historical violence.

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