

# Sobir O'nar's Poetics: Synthesizing Folkloric Traditions with Realist and Paranormal Dimensions

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the synthesis of folkloric motifs, realist narrative techniques, and paranormal elements in the modern Uzbek novella *Chambilbelning oydalasi* by Sobir O'nar. The study demonstrates how the author fuses metaphysical thinking with national traditions to articulate spiritual transformation and moral renewal through the depiction of clinical death and out-of-body experiences. The work is evaluated through a modernist lens, revealing its philosophical and symbolic complexity.

**Keywords:** Uzbek literature, folklore, realism, paranormal, spiritual transformation, clinical death, modernism.

**Introduction:** In contemporary Uzbek literature, paranormal episodes have emerged as a significant artistic device for revealing the deeper semantic layers of the literary text. These elements are particularly prominent in the works of recent short story writers, whose creative endeavors reflect a growing tendency toward modernist thought and a deeper investigation into the psychological state of the individual.

Through the incorporation of paranormal phenomena, contemporary authors explore alternative modes of consciousness, psychological crises, the metaphysical relationship between life and death, and the intricate interplay between reality and unreality. These episodes are not merely decorative or genre-based elements; rather, they serve as expressive tools that reveal the inner world of literary characters while simultaneously addressing broader socio-philosophical issues within society.

## METHODS

The study employs a literary-analytical approach, focusing on: The structural and thematic features of *Chambilbelning oydalasi*. The classification of paranormal episodes based on a five-fold typology: illusionary-hallucinatory, mystical (featuring devils, spirits), metaphysical (transcending space-time), psychological-paranormal, and symbolic-allegorical. Intertextual analysis with folkloric sources, especially

the Go'ro'g'li epic tradition. Modernist literary theory, particularly concepts of spiritual renewal and postmortem consciousness.

## RESULTS

The setting of *Chambilbel*, the symbolism of light and transformation, and echoes of epic heroes reflect a strong folkloric foundation. **Realist Foundation:** The narrative realistically portrays the protagonist's psychological condition and physical transition into clinical death, maintaining plausibility within the fantastical elements. **Paranormal Dimension:** The protagonist's soul observing his body, the metaphysical detachment from worldly time-space, and the poetic vision of death as awakening are central paranormal components. **Modernist Markers:** The novella emphasizes existential questions, inner awakening, moral redemption, and a conscious break from material reality—hallmarks of literary modernism.

## DISCUSSION

The literary corpus of Sobir O'nar exemplifies such a synthesis of complex artistic structure and oral folk traditions. His ability to frame modern thematic conAbstract This paper explores the synthesis of folkloric motifs, realist narrative techniques, and paranormal elements in the modern Uzbek novella *Chambilbelning oydalasi* by Sobir O'nar. The study demonstrates how the author fuses metaphysical

thinking with national traditions to articulate spiritual transformation and moral renewal through the depiction of clinical death and out-of-body experiences. The work is evaluated through a modernist lens, revealing its philosophical and symbolic complexity. Keywords: Sobir O'nar, modern Uzbek literature, folklore, realism, paranormal, spiritual transformation, clinical death, modernism. Sobir O'nar's work within a national-cultural context distinguishes his work within the broader field of modern Uzbek prose. Of particular interest is his novella "Chambilbelning oydalasi" (The Moonlight of Chambilbel), which presents a compelling artistic fusion of modernity and folklore. In this work, the boundaries between the real and the supernatural are skillfully blurred, resulting in a narrative form that is both innovative and rooted in cultural memory.

The novella presents two parallel narrative threads:

- a) The first thread explores the mysterious disappearance of the character Otaqul Qirg'iy, shedding light on his life and activities;
- b) The second thread depicts the psychological experiences of another protagonist who undergoes a state of clinical death and subsequently returns to life.

Both narrative strands are unified by a shared conceptual framework: the existential problem of human beings and being itself; the relationship between soul and body, life and death; and a broader philosophical inquiry into the paradoxical narrowness and vastness of existence. These themes reflect universal human concerns and contribute to the metaphysical depth of the work.

Additionally, the novella incorporates intertextual references to the epic "The Birth of Go'ro'g'li". It includes fragments such as the episode of Ravshan Ko'r and Gajdumbek fleeing from Xunxorshoh, where one dies and the other takes refuge in a khanaqah (Sufi lodge); the scene of Hiloloy's death during labor and her miraculous delivery in the grave; and Hasanbek's adoption of the orphaned child. These references not only enrich the folkloric dimension of the narrative but also reinforce the central themes of death, rebirth, and spiritual continuity.

One of the most significant figures in the novella is Otaqul Qirg'iy, who serves as a contemporary embodiment of the traditional "white-bearded elder" (oqsoqol) archetype within Uzbek collective consciousness. He is portrayed as a discerning, thoughtful, and sharp-tongued man — a quintessential horseman of his era. However, fate leads him into captivity: he is taken by thieves and forced to work as a herder for wealthy strangers in the steppe.

This displacement constitutes a form of involuntary social isolation and spiritual degradation for Otaqul. Although his diligence and keen observation are acknowledged in this new environment, the experience leaves a profound psychological scar. Even when the opportunity for freedom presents itself, he firmly declares, "I will not leave." This decision is closely tied to deeply rooted notions of human dignity, moral elevation, and honor.

Within the narrative, Otaqul Qirg'iy is depicted as a respected and wise figure among the people — a man who has spent his life "on horseback," whose minor flaws are perceived as part of his virtuous character. As the poet Abdulla Oripov has noted, "In the works of Sobir O'nar, national spirit and color are conveyed with a natural sense of authenticity. Whether in a story or a novella, he always finds a central motif - a red thread that unifies the narrative. He never wanders aimlessly." This observation is especially evident in "Chambilbelning oydalasi".

Through the use of folkloric motifs, proverbial expressions, and timeless values such as honor, patriotism, and dignity, the author renders the national spirit in an artistically resonant form. These elements serve not only as cultural references but also as structural and thematic anchors, grounding the narrative in the ethos of Uzbek identity.

Otaqul Qirg'iy is depicted as a figure who masterfully performs epic tales, much like the traditional baxshi storytellers. He is characterized by Rahmatilla Baxshi as a "qumquloq," a person deeply attuned to the power of words and profoundly devoted to oral folk creativity. His poetic duels with Mahkam Tojik in the desert further affirm this portrayal. The relationships between the protagonist and his elder and younger wives evoke the figures of Yunus and Misqol in the Go'ro'g'li epics, thus anchoring the novella more firmly within folkloric traditions.

The central character of the novella is presented as a symbol of the modern human. He undergoes a clinical death as a consequence of betrayal by a close friend. Although this event is medically plausible, the author expands it into an artistic and philosophical symbol of spiritual renewal and social awakening. Despite its paranormal nature, the episode remains consistent with the artistic principles of realism.

After his death, the protagonist's spirit leaves his body and begins to observe his own life and those close to him from an otherworldly perspective. From this vantage point, he perceives the true nature of the person he considered a friend and the genuine attitudes of his loved ones toward him. This experience results in a profound spiritual transformation. Upon

returning to life, the protagonist adopts a new philosophical outlook. These episodes vividly illustrate the boundaries between soul and body, life and death.

The paranormal aspects of the novella *Chambilbelning oydalasi* are manifested against the backdrop of the protagonist's death, subsequent resurrection—that is, his experience of clinical death—and the depiction of the emotions and sensations following death. In particular, the sentences: "...an inexplicable lightness, my feet lifted off the ground and I rose to the ceiling, I watched the doctor leaning over me, my wife, daughter, son, Abdumalik, all remained outside; interestingly, I did not even consider that they were left outside, I fell into a corner of blissful joy: you ride on clouds, at least you can imagine that," portray the protagonist's wandering between two worlds, illustrating the liminal state between soul and body.

Regarding this work, the author states: "Whether this corresponds to the truth of life or not, I do not know, but as a writer, I tried to convince." In the novella, the author does not depict paranormality as an objective reality but rather in the context of spiritual and emotional experience. Possibly, the events of the story and the clinical death experience may partially approximate reality. However, the author enriches this event with emotional depth and effectively utilizes "paranormal episodes," drawing inspiration from the rare example of oral folk creativity - the epic *Go'ro'g'lining tug'ilishi*. The protagonist's words, such as, "...from this heavy, noisy world, something like a heavy bell severed my foot, I was free, light as the wind, perhaps a spirit; through the rapidly passing events, observation, and flow of feelings, I thought, 'Now I suppose I must be a spirit...'" clearly affirm this state. Through this episode, the author demonstrates the boundlessness of human consciousness and the artistic power of spiritual and inner transformations.

At the same time, the clinical death event serves not only as a dramatic turning point in the plot but also as a means to explore the profound layers of the human psyche, to artistically interpret the ambiguous boundary between life and death, and to symbolize spiritual purification and the acquisition of wisdom. Scientific sources do not provide definitive evidence regarding the soul of a deceased person observing those left behind. The sacred source, the Holy Quran, states on this matter: "And they ask you, about the soul. Say, 'The soul is of the affair of my Lord. And mankind has not been given of knowledge except a little.'" (Al-Isra, 85).

The author's depiction of the soul through artistic imagery brings the rarely explored theme of "post-mortem consciousness" in Uzbek literature closer to a

modernist style. Through this, the writer:

- a) analyzes life on a metaphysical level;
- b) guides the reader not only through the plot but also on an inner spiritual journey;
- c) portrays the rarely encountered theme of "rebirth" in contemporary Uzbek literature in a harmonious fusion with folkloric motifs.

Another significant aspect of the novella is the artistic function of space and setting. *Chambilbel* serves as the central setting where the events unfold. It appears as a desert, functioning as a borderland between this world and the afterlife. *Otaqul Qirg'iy* disappears precisely in this location. The protagonist, who experiences clinical death, also arrives at this very place as a matter of fate. The meeting of the protagonist and *Otaqul Qirg'iy* holds extraordinary artistic importance. Both characters have lost their place in society and have undergone spiritual trials, which connect them not only through an inner affinity but also genetically (through familial ties). The two narrative threads converge in this setting. The characters' emotional pain and their opportunity to examine their lives from an external perspective are made possible through this space. This, in turn, emphasizes the narrative function of the setting and underscores the aptness of the novella's title.

Underlying the novella is the idea of how narrow and yet how vast the world can be an idea manifested in the fact that *Otaqul Qirg'iy* disappears without a trace and is held captive in a desolate desert, and that the protagonist, who dies and comes back to life, also ends up in the same desert. From the perspective of others, both characters are presumed to have left this world; yet neither returns to say "I am alive" - one out of shame, the other out of inability. *Otaqul Qirg'iy*, a man who had "spent his life in the saddle" and served as a respected elder in his community, chooses to remain missing rather than return to the people. This is because, for individuals like him, concepts such as honor and dignity are held dearer than life itself. This sentiment is clearly reflected in his words: "Say I escaped alive and returned home - how can I live among my loved ones after such disgrace, after this shameful humiliation?" *Otaqul Qirg'iy*'s decision to disappear rather than return to his people, his home, or his children expresses the elevated significance of honor, pride, and dignity in his character. As a wise elder of the people, he chooses silence over dishonor. Through this character, the author illustrates how deeply rooted the values of pride and honor are within the national mentality.

One of the characters who drives the plot forward and brings latent conflicts to the surface is *Abdumalik*. He embodies a range of negative traits such as betrayal

and baseness, hypocrisy and deceit, pettiness and insincerity qualities that render him unworthy of the title “friend.” His unresolved feelings and spite toward Yaxshigul culminate in an act of revenge that leads the protagonist into a tragic accident. Although the orchestrated plan of death unfolds as Abdumalik intended, the protagonist's return from the grave after Abdumalik himself had hastily and violently buried him completely nullifies his malicious intentions.

Abdumalik's cunning, evident in all his affairs, also proves “useful” in the act of “disposing of” the protagonist. He meticulously performs all the funeral rites and even regards the institute director's attendance at the ceremony as a personal triumph. His ability to adapt quickly to any situation, to shift like a chameleon, and his awareness of every sphere of life suggest a deeper explanation - his supposed extrasensory perception (ESP). (An extrasensory individual is someone believed to possess a supernatural ability to perceive reality without the use of sensory organs, and to influence others - both humans and animals through non ordinary means).

This aspect is directly expressed by the protagonist: “When I heard he had become an extrasensory healer, I wasn't surprised. At that time, it was common to see miracle-workers who claimed to have spoken with passengers of flying saucers, or fortune-tellers and sorcerers who claimed to heal from a distance through magical means”. The protagonist even notes that Abdumalik secured a wife thanks to this so-called “unique ability”.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, in the novella “Chambilbelning oydalasi,” philosophical concepts such as soul, body, death, life, humanity, pride, and honor are expressed through artistic interpretation. The psychological and metaphysical layers of the narrative structure allow the work to be interpreted as a sample of modern literature. In particular, the harmony between folk oral tradition and contemporary artistic thinking enhances the literary value of the novella. At the same time, the author's philosophical reflections on life and death, existence and nonexistence, and loneliness occupy a central place in the text.

For example, the following lines affirm this perspective: “A person's sharpness, ingenuity, and the prestige and status they gain all come from other people. If there were no people, who would he be? Look at him now alone and in captivity what is he? Even calling him a slave would not be wrong. When life bends or breaks a person, there is no need to search the skies for answers in vain”. These reflections underscore the work's modernist orientation and its engagement with

timeless human dilemmas.

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