

THE ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION OF GOTHIC NOVEL FEATURES IN T. MALIK'S "FAREWELL, CHILDHOOD"

Safarova Zilola Tolibovna

Associate Professor, (PhD) BSU

Ergasheva Gulshoda Ortiqjon qizi

MA student of the Foreign languages faculty BSU

Abstract

This thesis looks at how Tohir Malik brings elements of the Gothic novel into his work "Farewell, Childhood", giving them new life in an Uzbek literary setting. It focuses on the way Tohir Malik uses classic Gothic features—like mystery, fear, and emotional tension—not just to build suspense, but to explore deeper issues such as identity, memory, and moral struggle. The story's dark, emotional atmosphere and symbolic use of setting help reveal the inner turmoil of characters growing up in a time of great social and personal change. Rather than simply following Western Gothic traditions, writer reshapes them through a local lens, connecting them to the post-Soviet experience. This blend of Gothic style with national and psychological themes makes "Farewell, Childhood" a powerful and original reflection on growing up, loss, and the human condition.

Keywords: Gothic literature, Tohir Malik, Farewell Childhood, Uzbek fiction, Gothic conventions, mystery, psychological tension, trauma, memory, moral ambiguity, isolation, identity, fear and suspense.

Introduction

Tohir Malik's "Farewell, Childhood" (Alvido, bolalik) occupies a unique place in modern Uzbek literature for its fusion of psychological depth, historical trauma, and subtle genre experimentation. While at first glance the novel appears rooted in realist traditions, a closer reading reveals the underlying presence of Gothic features—such as emotional isolation, moral ambiguity, dark atmospheres, and buried secrets—that give the narrative an unsettling resonance. This study argues that writer's artistic interpretation of the Gothic mode is not merely decorative but serves as a powerful vehicle for exploring personal and collective memory, identity formation, and the lasting psychological effects of a repressive sociopolitical past.

The Gothic genre, originating in the late 18th century with writers like Horace Walpole and later Mary Shelley has long been associated with themes of horror, the supernatural,

psychological instability, and societal breakdown. These narratives often unfold in claustrophobic, decaying spaces and revolve around tortured individuals haunted by guilt, loss, or existential dread. As Jerrold E. Hogle¹ notes in his foundational essay “The Gothic in Western Culture,” the genre serves as “a cultural mirror, projecting the anxieties of its era through symbolic landscapes and aberrant characters.” While originally a product of European Romanticism, the Gothic’s adaptability has allowed it to take root in diverse cultural contexts far beyond its origin.

In “Farewell, Childhood”, writer transposes many of these Gothic elements into the Uzbek cultural and historical environment, particularly drawing on themes of memory, repression, and internal struggle. The novel’s setting—a post-war Soviet-era neighborhood steeped in silence and unspoken fear—acts as a symbolic prison, much like the haunted castles of classic Gothic fiction. The protagonist’s journey through emotional and psychological turmoil mirrors the Gothic hero’s confrontation with the past, the unknown, and the morally ambiguous. Furthermore, the novel’s exploration of childhood trauma and the loss of innocence reflects a deep engagement with Gothic motifs of buried secrets and the return of the repressed.

This thesis will analyze how Tohir Malik draws from and reinterprets Gothic conventions such as narrative uncertainty, shadowy environments, symbolic use of fear, and the conflict between personal morality and social conformity. Particular attention will be given to the novel’s treatment of isolation, surveillance, and the moral decay of authority figures, all of which echo classic Gothic tropes while also reflecting the unique conditions of Soviet and post-Soviet society. As Michael McKeon² suggests in his essay on genre and social change, the evolution of literary forms often parallels shifts in cultural consciousness—a concept that underpins this study of Malik’s genre-blending narrative.

By situating “Farewell, Childhood” within both the Gothic tradition and its socio-historical context, this thesis seeks to demonstrate how the author uses the Gothic not simply to tell a dark or mysterious story, but to articulate the complex emotional and moral landscapes of a generation shaped by authoritarianism, silence, and suppressed memory. Ultimately, the novel becomes a cultural text that reimagines the Gothic form through a distinctly Uzbek lens—one that speaks to both individual and collective experiences of fear, resilience, and transformation.

Main part

Tohir Malik’s “Farewell, Childhood” is a novel that skillfully incorporates and reinterprets core elements of Gothic literature within a uniquely Uzbek context. Though writer does not

¹ Hogle, Jerrold E. “Introduction: The Gothic in Western Culture.” *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, Cambridge UP, 2002, pp. 1-20.

² McKeon, Michael. “Generic Transformation and Social Change: Rethinking the Rise of the Novel.” *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, edited by Michael McKeon, Johns Hopkins UP, 2000, pp. 382-99.

use overt supernatural motifs as seen in classic European Gothic fiction, his narrative is saturated with emotional darkness, psychological depth, and an atmosphere of haunting memory that aligns with key Gothic conventions. The Gothic in this novel operates not through castles and ghosts, but through silence, surveillance, fear, and emotional imprisonment—an internalized Gothic landscape shaped by sociopolitical trauma and personal loss.

One of the most prominent Gothic features in the novel is the pervasive sense of isolation, both physical and emotional. The protagonist's inner world is shaped by the silence surrounding his family's past, the absence of his father, and the constant awareness of invisible forces that constrain his behavior. The neighborhood, described in hushed tones and half-lit corners, resembles a metaphorical prison—a space where history is buried but never forgotten.

In a scene where the young protagonist overhears adults whispering about events he is not supposed to understand, Malik writes with subtle ambiguity: “Ular jim turardi, so‘ng sekin-sekin gapira boshlashardi. Gaplarning yarmi eshitarlar, yarmi yo‘q... Shunda yuragimni tushunarsiz bir vahima bosardi³.” (“They would fall silent, then begin to speak softly. Half the words reached me, half did not... Then a strange fear would seize my heart.”) This moment encapsulates the Gothic tension between known and unknown, the way fear grows not from what is said, but from what is left unsaid. This is classic Gothic storytelling—not through ghosts or monsters, but through silence, shadows, and uncertainty. Fear builds in the unknown. The “strange fear” that grips his heart reflects how trauma and confusion begin to form in a child's mind, not from facts, but from what is withheld, what is too complex or dark to be spoken aloud.

In this novel, the protagonist Asror experiences profound emotional isolation, a hallmark of Gothic literature. His feelings of entrapment are vividly depicted when he reflects on the loss of his innocence: “Qilayotgan ishingizga o‘zingiz to‘g‘ri baho bera olgan oningizdan boshlab bolaligingiz bilan vidolashasiz. Ha, ha, aynan vidolashasiz. Bolalik sizning xotirangizga ko‘chadi. Vaqti kelib, bu xotira vijdon azobiga soladi..⁴” This passage underscores Asror's internal confinement, as he grapples with memories that haunt him, reflecting the Gothic theme of being trapped by one's past.

The novel delves into how past traumas resurface, influencing the characters' present lives. Asror's descent into delinquency is not solely his doing but is shaped by his environment: “Bilasanmi, odam jinoyatchi bo‘lib tug‘ilmaydi. Uni atrof-muhit jinoyatchi qilib tarbiyalaydi⁵.” This statement reflects the Gothic motif of the inescapable past, where societal and familial neglect perpetuate a cycle of suffering.

³ Malik, Tohir. Alvido, bolalik. Toshkent: Sharq, 2016, page 120.

⁴ Malik, Tohir. Alvido, bolalik. Toshkent: Sharq, 2016, page 40.

⁵ Malik, Tohir. Alvido, bolalik. Toshkent: Sharq, 2016, page 40.

Tohir Malik doesn't rely on the supernatural to create a sense of Gothic unease—he turns instead to the everyday settings of a child's world and fills them with emotional darkness. One powerful example is Asror's experience at the weddings he attends with his father. These are not joyful celebrations in his eyes, but unsettling scenes of adult behavior he can't fully understand, yet instinctively feels is wrong.

Tohir Malik writes: "To'yxonadagi mast-alastlarning nojo'ya xatti-harakatlari... qaysi tomonga egsangiz shu tomonga egiladigan tuyg'ularini g'oyat erta so'ndiradi⁶." Here, author uses imagery of intoxication and corruption to reflect the emotional damage seeping into Asror's consciousness. These weddings, which should symbolize tradition and community, instead expose him to a world of chaos and moral decay. Asror's young, impressionable heart—described through the metaphor of bending feelings—is being prematurely hardened and misdirected.

Qamariddin quietly confesses: "Mening ham o'qigim kelardi, student bo'lib yurgim kelardi. Olim bo'lib, oq "Volga"larda kerilib yurgim kelardi⁷." ("I also wanted to study, to walk around like a student. I wanted to be a scholar, strutting around in a white "Volga") This moment is disarming in its honesty. It peels back the hard shell of his present identity to reveal a longing for dignity, education, and recognition—things he was perhaps never given a real chance to pursue. The imagery of the "white Volga" a symbol of success and respect in Soviet times, evokes a dream life that starkly contrasts with his grim reality.

Gothic literature often explores the theme of duality—the coexistence of light and dark, virtue and vice, within a single person. Qamariddin is not just a villain or a side character in a child's memory; he is a tragic embodiment of the social and emotional forces that twist human lives. On the surface, he represents danger and lawlessness, a man shaped by a life of violence and regret. But author does not allow us to dismiss him so easily.

Tohir Malik powerfully critiques societal indifference—one of the most chilling themes in Gothic literature—by portraying apathy not just as a flaw, but as a form of complicity in the spread of evil. In "Farewell, Childhood", this theme comes into sharp focus through the narrator's reflection: "Jamiyat uchun jinoyatchidan ko'ra loqayd odam xavfliroq! Jinoyatchi jabrini tortadi... Loqayd odam esa yangi-yangi jinoyatlarni ko'rganida ham ko'z yumib ketaveradi⁸." This stark observation echoes the Gothic tradition's emphasis on moral ambiguity and social decay. In classic Gothic tales, evil often thrives not just through monstrous figures, but through the silence and blindness of those around them. Writer

⁶ Malik, Tohir. Alvido, bolalik. Toshkent: Sharq, 2016, page 53.

⁷ Malik, Tohir. Alvido, bolalik. Toshkent: Sharq, 2016, page 51.

⁸ Malik, Tohir. Alvido, bolalik. Toshkent: Sharq, 2016, page 122

modernizes this idea, showing that in post-war Soviet Uzbek society, passivity itself becomes a silent accomplice to injustice.

Ultimately, *Alvido, bolalik* is more than a coming-of-age story. It's a sobering meditation on how young people are shaped not only by what is done to them, but also by what is ignored around them. Through its dark atmospheres, moral complexity, and subtle echoes of Gothic convention, Malik's novel urges readers to recognize the quiet, pervasive dangers of indifference.

Conclusion

"Farewell, Childhood" quietly evokes the emotional weight of growing up in a world shaped by silence, fear, and lost innocence. It opens a window into the silent battles waged within a young mind navigating a world of unspoken fears and invisible scars. The unsettling quietness in the background of familiar streets, the emotional weight of incomplete conversations, and the gradual erosion of innocence all echo the haunting traits of Gothic literature. Yet here, these elements are not draped in castles or ghosts, but rather in the shadows of everyday life: the indifference of grown-ups, the broken dreams of men who once hoped, and the creeping awareness of a world that doesn't protect its children.

Through subtle use of dark imagery, moral ambiguity, and inner conflict, the novel brings forth a unique kind of terror—not one of monsters, but of apathy, lost potential, and the quiet complicity of those who choose to look away. The psychological depth and emotional texture recall the Gothic tradition, but they are reshaped into something deeply local and intimately human. Pain is not theatrical—it is muted, often unnamed, and buried in gestures, glances, and unfinished sentences. In doing so, it reshapes the Gothic tradition into a deeply local and human expression, urging readers to recognize the quiet tragedies hidden in ordinary lives.

References

1. Malik, Tohir. *Alvido, bolalik*. Toshkent: Sharq, 2016, page 221.
2. https://uz.wikiquote.org/wiki/Alvido_bolalik.
3. "Tohir Malikning "Alvido bolalik" asari tahlili." Fayllar.org, <https://fayllar.org/tohir-malikning-alvido-bolalik-asari-tahlili-tohir-malik.html>.
4. Hogle, Jerrold E. "Introduction: The Gothic in Western Culture." *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 1–20.
5. Malik, Tohir. *Alvido, bolalik*. Toshkent: G'afur G'ulom nomidagi Adabiyot va san'at nashriyoti, 1986.

6. McKeon, Michael. "Generic Transformation and Social Change: Rethinking the Rise of the Novel." *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, edited by Michael McKeon, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, pp. 382–399.
7. Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*. Methuen, 1986.
8. Wicke, Jennifer. "Gothic Fiction." *The Columbia History of the British Novel*, edited by John Richetti, Columbia University Press, 1994, pp. 98–122.
9. Sharipov, Ma'mur Mansurovich. "The Lives of Servants in the 19th Century." *Advanced Journal of English Language*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2025, pp. 45–58.