



THE POTTER OF A STORY: MAZHAR UL ISLAM (BASIC STYLISTIC FEATURES IN THE STORIES OF MAZHAR UL ISLAM)

BİR ÖYKÜ ÇÖMLEKÇİSİ: MAZHAR UL ISLAM (MAZHAR UL ISLAM'IN ÖYKÜLERİNDE TEMEL ÜSLÛP ÖZELLİKLERİ)

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Abstract

Mazhar ul Islam is one of the leading authors of contemporary Urdu literature. Due to the romantic, realist, surrealist, and symbolist concepts used in his works, the author's style, which allows contrasting or incompatible interpretations to be harmonized, is described as his most important feature. The events and characters in the stories of Mazhar ul Islam are generally a literary reflection of Pakistani society. At the same time, the author does not hesitate to bring the traces of his inner world to the reader. While reflecting local feelings and events in his works, Mazhar ul Islam mostly uses trend literary structures in world literature as a tool and indirectly contributes to the universalization process of Urdu literature. The main literary feature of the author is that he has a style of writing that transforms reality into mystery and then brings the real meaning of the mysterious with reality, allowing the cognitive process to begin without time and space. The works of the author are in the form of documents of his life, and therefore the emotional experiences that penetrated his soul, the stages he passed and the worldly issues he observed form the basis of his literary technique. The unconditional harmony arising from freedom, opposition and contrasts in the author's narrative is nourished by these contrasting life experiences. In this study, basic information about Mazhar ul Islam's life and career have been tried to be presented and the author's stories have been tried to be analyzed in a thematic context.

Öz

Mazhar ul Islam, çağdaş Urdu edebiyatının önde gelen yazarlarından biridir. Eserlerinde kullandığı romantik, realist, sürrealist ve sembolist kavramlardan dolayı, yazarın zıt ya da uyumsuz yorumların uyumlu hale getirilmesine olanak sağlayan üslubu, yazarın en önemli özelliği olarak tanımlanır. Mazhar ul Islam'ın öykülerindeki olaylar ve karakterler genellikle Pakistan toplumunun edebi bir yansımasıdır. Aynı zamanda yazar kendi iç dünyasının izlerini okuyucuya taşımaktan da çekinmez. Mazhar ul Islam, yerel duygu ve olayları eserlerine yansıtırken, çoğu zaman dünya edebiyatındaki popüler edebi yapıları bir araç olarak kullanır ve Urdu edebiyatının evrenselleşme sürecine dolaylı olarak katkıda bulunur. Yazarın temel edebi özelliği, gerçekliği gizleme dönüştüren ve ardından gizemli olanın gerçek manasını hakikatle buluşturan, zamansız ve mekânsız bilişsel sürecin başlamasına izin veren bir yazım tarzına sahip olmasıdır. Müellifin eserleri, hayatının vesikalarıdır ve bu nedenle, ruhuna işleyen duygusal tecrübeler, geçirdiği evreler ve gözlemlediği dünyevî meseleler onun edebi tekniğinin temelini oluşturur. Yazarın anlatısındaki özgürlük, muhalefet ve zıtlıklardan doğan ön koşulsuz uyum, bu kontrast yaşam deneyimlerinden beslenir. Bu çalışmada Mazhar ul Islam'ın hayatı ve kariyeri hakkında temel bilgiler sunulmaya çalışılmış ve yazarın öyküleri tematik bir bağlamda analiz edilmeye çalışılmıştır.

Introduction

Mazhar ul Islam is one of the new generations of Urdu literary writers who are loyal to traditional culture and literary accumulation. His works are enriched with metaphors that explore the realities of life, the mystery of emotions, and how the soul can touch and guide humanity. The author, who did not break away from the society in which he was born and observed the events that took place in his country from his childhood to the present, from his perspective, reflected these social observations in his works, sometimes with a sense of social sensitivity and sometimes with an artistic concern. Mazhar ul Islam also carefully followed the emerging literary trends in world literature and used the main features of these literary movements as a tool to express the feelings of the society and himself. The writer derives his literary strength from his life energy and his devotion to the absolute meaning in the universe. The author has merged literary movements such as Romanticism, Classicism, Surrealism, and Symbolism that flourished all over the world and influenced Urdu literature.

Mazhar ul Islam is considered as a local story writer as much as possible due to the themes he uses in his works, and as an extremely universal story writer with his style and technical structure. Thus, the author was instrumental in the molding and development of a new literary style. As can be understood from the statements of the author, there is a fundamental component of the process of shaping the style of a writer, and to do it in a way in which you can express yourself and emphasize multiplicities and contrasts, you have to rely on your own experiences. Fateeh Muhammad Malik says the following sentences about the multidimensional personality and literary style of Mazhar ul Islam:

“The style of Mazhar ul Islam has two gates, one of which opens to the outside, where social problems, political consciousness, and collective feelings are found when inside, and the other one that opens inside and when the threshold is crossed, the mystical and romantic world is discovered” (Islam, 2012, p. 182).

The period in which Mazhar ul Islam lived went through a period in which democratic administrative processes were tried to be established in Pakistan. For this reason, many military coups took place in the country and the negative impact of these military coups on society and the writers caused serious mental and physical injuries (Hussain, 2017). Due to the pressures on writers and other members of society, people have begun to imprison themselves in the imaginary worlds they have built in their imaginations. Unfortunate people who could not raise their peace in this

way, on the other hand, have experienced spiritual turmoil, the effect of which will perhaps last a lifetime, due to the pains of life. Mazhar ul Islam, who built his literary identity in these periods, wrote romantic stories, sometimes to reflect pure love and sometimes to repair the depressions of the individuals of the society with the taste of art, in the early periods of his author identity, on the one hand, he boldly reflected the traces of these coups in the society in his works. While writing these realistic stories, Mazhar ul Islam started to use symbolism in his works as a way of escaping from the systematic pressures of the military government on writers, and in this way, he formed the style of using romanticism, realism, and symbolism tendencies that form the basis of his story style. In the later stages of his literary life, Mazhar ul Islam started to reflect the new trend-theoretic tendencies of world literature in his stories and especially tended to use the conceptual principles of surrealism in his fiction.

The diversity that can be observed in Mazhar ul Islam's style also appeared in the process of producing works. The author has written a travelogue (Lok Punjab), a novel (Muhabbat: Murda Phoolon ki Symphony), a folkloric study (Foklor ki Pehli Kitab), two poems (Dua: Dukh aor Muhabbat ke Mosomon ka Phool, The Museum of Wasted Loves), an essay (Mein, Aap aor Voh) and four storybooks (Ghoron ke Şehir Mein Akela Admi, Baton ki Bariş mein Bhegti Lerki, Gurya ki Ankh se Şehir ko Deykho, Khat mein Post ki hue Dopher) in the period that has passed until today. Each of these works has been instrumental in Mazhar ul Islam's national and international success and has made significant theoretical and thematic contributions to the new era of Urdu literature.

In this study, especially the themes and stylistic features used by the author in his stories were tried to be examined. Four storybooks (Ghoron ke Shehar Mein Akela Admi, Baton ki Barish Mein Bhegti Lerki, Gurya ki Ankh se Shehar ko Deykho, Khat mein Post ki hue Dopher) written by Mazhar ul Islam until today have been analyzed and the concepts that the author has mostly included in his works have been tried to be analyzed in a thematic context.

Life and Early Writing Process

Mazhar ul Islam was born on August 4, 1949, in a small village called Piruval in the Vezirabad region of Punjab, approximately two years after the division of India and the establishment of Pakistan on 14 August 1947. Mazhar ul Islam lived his childhood in Vazirabad, and he received his primary education at home, from his father Muhammad Shafiq and mother Rashida Begum. His father, Muhammad Shafiq, who was an educated person, taught him the alphabet and the love for

literature. Mazhar ul Islam, who received his basic education from his family, completed his primary studies in the city of Gujranwala, then he enrolled in Vazirabad Mission High School, one of the best schools in the Vazirabad region. After his father passed away in 1967, he immigrated to Pakistan's capital Islamabad to establish a new life order. The author completed his master's degree in language and literature at Punjab University. He always states that during his school days he was forced to deal with loneliness and love, two of the most important themes that inspired him the most while writing his stories. About these feelings he stated the following:

“At that time I was in fourth grade at Mission High School in Vazirabad. The lady, who was the teacher of the second graders, started to return home with me after the vacation because she rented a room for herself in our neighborhood. The lady was alone and, like all our other teachers at the school, she was a Christian. In the past, I used to go to the teacher's house, usually after I finished my work at school. Sometimes I would come home first, get something to eat from my mother, and take it to the lady. When I was going home, the teacher would request to sleep here, and I would love to do so. However, my father was too authoritative, and after lying in her bed for a while, I would return home late. The time to lie in bed can be up to five minutes because the teacher used to sing to me at that time. I remember very well that most of these songs talk about loneliness. As the songs were sung, the teacher's eyes, lips, myself, and the teacher's entire presence would be enveloped in solitude. At that moment, I too fell under the spell of loneliness and tasted the first supposed loneliness in my life. Again, I encountered the love that appeared in the teacher's eyes for the first time in those days” (Islam, 2012a, p. 15).

Mazhar ul Islam performed his first important role in his business career in Islamabad, in 1971, by working in the team of a filmmaker named Safdar Mir. The author, who started his career in this way, later held various positions at the Japanese Film Company and Central Film Unite. Mazhar ul Islam worked as a program manager at the Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) between 1974 and 1976. Due to these activities, the first period of his civil service life was very productive; in fact, he was appointed as the administrative director of the same institution between 1976 and 1987. Mazhar ul Islam personally played a role in the establishment of Pakistan's first National Ethnology Museum, he was one of the

people who determined and directed the cultural policies of the Pakistani Government. In 1995 he became general manager of the Pakistani Literature Academy, and a year later he started to work as a member of the Pakistan Copyright Board. Mazhar ul Islam resigned from his job after serving as the general manager of Pakistani Literature Academy until 2001. He worked as a project manager in cultural events jointly organized between Norway and Pakistan in 2006, and then between 2008 and 2009 he was elected administrator of the Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage. Mazhar ul Islam resigned from this position in 2009 and was appointed as the director of the National Book Foundation of the Ministry of Education of the Government of Pakistan. The author ended his long-term government duties in 2013.

Mazhar ul Islam has been interested in literature since childhood and wrote his first story, *Talab*, in 1967 after his father's death. After his first short story, he created many literary works in a versatile style. Mazhar ul Islam wrote a travel book, a novel, two poetry books, and an essay, as well as four short story collections. These works brought Mazhar ul Islam to many local and international successes, but it was the genre, the story, that made Mazhar ul Islam stand out and gain popularity in Urdu literature. After publishing his first book, *A Lonely Man in the City of Horses*, in 1980, Mazhar ul Islam prepared three more collections of short stories; in these works, he explores the cultural, socio-psychological situations of Pakistani society, as well as the realist, symbolic, fictional characteristics and abilities of the author's inner and outer world. Among his most famous storybooks, there is *The Girl Soaked in the Rain of Words*, published in 1987, *Watch the World through the Eyes of a Doll* published in 1988 and *The Noon Sent in Letter*, published in 1991.

Basic Stylistic Features in the Stories of Mazhar ul Islam

The main themes of Mazhar ul Islam's stories comprehend the political, social, economic, and spiritual troubles of Pakistani society, but also romantic elements such as love, affection, female-male relationships, separation, loneliness, melancholy and inner depiction, and then death, grief, anticipation, longing, and pain.

Mazhar ul Islam emphasized that the events that happened since childhood and the emotions attached to his heart are among the main factors that determine his style and narrative themes. The author affirmed that he gave meaning to every event and every emotion he felt and stated that he saw them as details of his rich literary style. Indeed, when the works of Mazhar ul Islam are examined, it is seen that many of them have a part of his own life: the author's love for a woman, the pain he felt

from the difficulties he faced, and the hopelessness he internalized due to limited possibilities. In his Works, he observed the duality of the political and social developments, and like a reflection, they often became the main subject of his writings. There are even theories stating that the only reason why Mazhar ul Islam wrote is to express himself.

Mazhar ul Islam uses the following statements that provide a clue to how important his own life experiences are in the formation and development of the story technique:

“On my way to school, and on my way back, I always had to pass by an inn... On my way to school, I often stopped in front of the potters. I would have my classmate with me, but he had a sense of discipline of his own and he would leave me there and go to school alone. I used to watch the potters knead the clay and then make pots out of it on wheels. The potter's daughters smelled to me just like clay pots. The potter would spin the wheel quickly with the help of a stick and then he would grind the clay with his hands. I learned the methods of the story technique from these potters. My existence seemed to evolve for the expression of technique, and I felt myself spinning on that wheel. My whole being was like wet clay. Even when the school bell rang, I would walk to school carrying the wet soil of my being with me, sit in the classroom, and be busy kneading my soil. Now when I imagine, I realize that I learned from those potters to reshape events, ideas, and thoughts...”(Islam, 2012a, p. 16).

Mazhar ul Islam can be described as a writer who deals with the reality of romanticism and the romantic side of reality. He is neither a rigid social utilitarian realist who has closed his soul to emotions nor a dreamer living in a world of symbols that has turned his back on society and its realities. Fateeh Muhammad Malik states that Mazhar ul Islam captures the realities of life with his conscience and imagination and puts the reality sparked by imagination into the text with a new and modern literary style without marginalizing traditionalism and argues that the author is the creator of a new style in this sense (Malik, 2013, p. 760-768). The writer, who deeply feels the political and social problems of the society he lives in and never hesitates to deal with these problems in his works, on the contrary, criticizes the persistent oppressive governments that try to prevent people to denounce these problems; his works are written with this deep social understanding, and yet he did not ignore the aesthetic aspect of literature. He succeeded in creating a new spirit and a new literary

style by adding various elements. In addition to all these literary features, Mazhar ul Islam is one of the early symbolist surrealist writers who played an important role in the diffusion of Surrealism-Symbolism into Urdu literature, especially regarding Urdu short stories. Mazhar ul Islam defines a story as a fresh reality present in all places and all times” (Nashtar, 2016, p. 286). Thus the realistic aspect of Mazhar ul Islam forms the background of his works adorned with romance, symbolism, and surrealism. In his works, the narrative of Pakistani society crosses borders by passing through the intellectual world of the author, and he gives a universal character to the individual and social cases in these stories. The characters of Mazhar ul Islam internalize realities from the external world; this internalized reality, which acquired psychological elements through individual experiences in the body it enters into, is re-externalized with the author's creative and transformative style of writing. Mazhar ul Islam has built a bridge between the past, present, and future with his devotion to traditional values. Mazhar ul Islam's story named *What is a Story?* is a great example of the author's ability to melt realist, romantic, symbolist, and surrealist concepts in the same pot and present them to the reader in a harmonious way:

“She said:

What is a story?

I said:

...A story is the fatigue tied to the feet of the farmhand returning from
the fields in the evening

...A story is the tattered dress of a lunatic

...A story is a lover who is angry

...A story is the Word uttered in love

A story is the pain of the night

...A story is the flower of the rose-seasons of desires

A story is the dream of a girl standing on the threshold of womanhood

...A story is the prisoner serving a life sentence

...A story is the unpublished kiss”(Islam, 2012b, p. 38-40).

At the same time, the author blended the imaginative power of Sufism with new narrative techniques and created his works considering Sufism heritage as much as possible in the search for truth for himself and the characters he gave life to. Narrative contents such as love, death, longing, pessimism, melancholy, internal and external

psychological situations, Sufism, social and political events, loneliness, and injustice are among the themes frequently included in Mazhar ul Islam's works. The characters in the stories usually try to find their identity with a timeless and spaceless narrative style. In contrast to the new era story trend which involves the isolation of humans from society and the world by animalizing them with images (Syed, 2013), the author strives to make non-living beings and animals a part of society and life by attributing human characteristics and spiritual values.

Christopher Schackle describes Mazhar ul Islam's unique and groundbreaking story-writing style with these words:

“Besides the quirky syntax of their titles, a striking common feature of Mazhar ul Islam’s story collections is that they are all introduced by prologues in the form of prose poem dialogues between the author and an anonymous female interlocutor. Widely recognized, even parodied, as stylistic trademarks of Mazhar ul Islam’s distinctive persona, these are represented here by the prologue to the first collection ‘What is a story?’ Within its short compass the serial definitions this offers succeed in encapsulating almost all the elements which Mazhar ul Islam uses the underpin his stories: a series of strikingly visual images, some with local folk associations alongside others original and bizarre, the international pantheon of story writers including Manto as well as Chekhov and Kafka against whom he asks to be judged; the profound acknowledgment of the formative influences of mother, father, wife, mentor, and above and around all these, the hardşy spoken and never consummated dialogue with the Other as mysterious anima, which is ever needed to define both the writer and his art: ‘A story is what you are, a story is what I am.’(Islam, 2012b, p. 16-17).

Mazhar ul Islam has a utilitarian style. As a result of this style, his works usually end with a message for individual or social good. The author builds the plot on the search for freedom, income equality, morality, justice and welfare, and ends this search with an ending that sometimes results in frustration and sometimes success. However, the ending written by Mazhar ul Islam always brings with it the connotation of new beginnings in the reader. Mazhar ul Islam himself wants these last paragraphs to cause new intellectual inquiries in the reader and generally seeks answers to this curiosity by asking the people who read his works. These open-ended endings that the author chooses for his works sometimes aim to draw the reader into the narrative, causing each reader to think of himself as the main character of the

story, and to make them write an ending for themselves. We observe this stylistic feature in his story *The Pigeon on the Shoulder*:

“He finally succeeded in climbing the Wall by clinging to it with his knees. Then with a sudden flap of its wings a pigeon landed on his shoulder. It seemed to have come from inside himself. Controlling himself, he looked into the courtyard. Amazement began to dance over his face. The watchman was sitting stiffly on a chair, with his body changed into the body of a wolf. Unable to believe what he saw, the boy passed his hand over his face and dried off the sweat. He rubbed his eyes and again looked into the courtyard. The watchman really had turned into a wolf. He was sitting on a chair. Right next to the chair a rat was gnawing something. ‘Watchman! Watchman!’ he called out in panic. The watchman roared. Mingled in his roar, the smell leapt towards him. Holding his breath, he stuffed his fingers into both ears. It felt as if the earth was quaking and gazed steadily at the wolf. ‘Was the wolf already inside the watchman?’ he thought. ‘Or did one come and get into him from outside?’ He wanted to put this question to someone else. You, who are listening and reading this story, you tell him if you know the answer”(Islam, 2012b, p. 106-107).

Although the outer structure of Mazhar ul Islam's short stories, poems, and novels have the style of traditional Urdu ones, it is observed that the internal structure of his works has its form, content, and language, as well as an individual style. The main characters in the author's works are usually from the opposing and oppressed mob. This oppression can be social, political, economic, related to social classes, or it can be internal oppression felt in the face of the burning of love and the cruelty of the lover. The characters are generally ordinary people. While the weak and desperate characters used by the author appear as a reflection of the anger and distrust towards life and the life order, the children and women in the story communicate to the reader very valuable examples of freedom, and the states of peace and happiness caused by firmly holding on to life.

“The author is on a different line in terms of style, technique, and the subjects he chooses. The characters in his stories are usually ordinary people from the working, productive part of society. The content of his stories consists of photographs that reflect the reality of the majority of society. The personality conflict that emerges as a result of various social and economic factors in social life is often the subject of his stories” (Soydan, 2018, p. 240).

Christopher Shackle also states that the heroes featured in Mazhar ul Islam's works are usually anonymous, middle-class, middle-aged, hypersensitive, extremely lonely, disappointed. And he expresses that these heroes, who generally regard honesty as the purpose of life, see the painful realities of life as a nightmare (Islam, 2012b, p. 19).

Mazhar ul Islam shows women in his works as a symbol of freedom, just as he has children, and includes women as one of the most important parts of society in his stories. The author, who is against pushing women into a situation where they have to stay in the background, always conveys examples to the reader that if there is an equal opportunity, women can be successful in whatever they undertake. A chapter in Mazhar ul Islam's story *Cild Saz (Binder)* is a reflection of the female character image in Mazhar ul Islam's stories:

“She's a bookbinding craftswoman. She has been in this business for exactly forty years. It has been about ten years since she learned this profession from her father. When her father left him alone in this world and transferred to the eternal world, she took care of all the business of the shop. Now, people who want to bind their books, even from far away, come to her. She takes big binding jobs. And she trains her apprentices and makes them masters of binding. In fact, she didn't go to school for a single day. But she can read Urdu fluently and English by spelling words. Because before starting to bind incoming books, she reads them well in the first stage. She can tell a lot about books just by reading the titles” (Islam, 1991, p. 135).

Mazhar ul Islam embraces his observations on the lives of people of the country he lives in, and in his works, he suggests solutions to social, political, and economic problems by paying attention to artistry. The author does not oppose, even supports this understanding of seeing society and everything related to society as a part of literature. Although Mazhar ul Islam does not reject this understanding, he also insists that the author's style should not become passive in the face of this orientation. According to the author, society influences the writer, but the writer also affects society, and the literary world of the writer serves as a light for society to find the way to truth (Islam, 2012c, p. 16).

Mazhar ul Islam has dealt with basic issues such as the dystopic society structure caused by totalitarian governments, social and individual corruption, superstitions, the longing for justice and equality, the traces left by martial law in society, and the rights of the poor, with social sensitivity. In his works, where the

author includes social themes, the main conflicts are constructed over the elements of rich-poor, powerful-weak, liar-honest, fair-unjust, manager-managed, progressive-regressive, and within the scope of these conflicts, the value judgments of society and individuals that are beginning to disappear are questioned. At the same time, the author's social-themed works also often contain sharp expressions about the effects of the coups in Pakistan on people's lives.

Mazhar ul Islam's story named *İnnâ Lillâhi ve İnnâ İleyhi Râciûn* presents striking examples of how the coups in Pakistan affected people's lives. The protagonist of the story loses his voice and his tongue becomes so dysfunctional that it hurts his lips. His thoughts are in a limited working condition that disturbs him. The hero begins to look for his voice everywhere, and it will not be easy to find it and bring it back. Although people and decision-makers keep telling him that his voice is no longer alive, the hero states that his voice is hidden and sadly awaits him in a corner, loudly proclaiming that hope still exists (Islam, 1989, p. 65-77).

The situation that is intended to symbolize here is the restriction of people's freedom of speech and thought in Pakistan during the military governments. While the author criticizes the distorted coup system in his society with this story, he also becomes a voice for the troubles of world societies.

Reflecting his social sensitivity in his works, Mazhar ul Islam not only conveyed what he observed but also included the conclusions he drew from his own experiences. The author never hesitated to express the great influence of his experiences on the literary life, and he frequently stated that the problems faced by individuals are also social problems since society consists of individuals. Mazhar ul Islam chose the way of presenting these realities by combining them with romance, instead of transferring their determinations in line with this understanding to works as they are. Muhammad Ghalib Nashtar uses the following statements about this aspect of Mazhar ul Islam:

“The characters in the stories of Mazhar ul Islam are not another, but Mazhar ul Islam himself. That is why the stories of Mazhar ul Islam are a collection of expectations, loneliness, death, sadness, and suicide” (Nashtar, 2016, p. 3).

Prof. Dr. A.B. Ashraf also used the following statements about this feature of Mazhar ul Islam:

“Mazhar ul Islam is a noble, straightforward, innocent, and well-behaved writer. At the same time, all these good habits are also present in the characters in their stories. It seems to me from time to time that the character in these stories who speaks truth and truth, hates lies and flattery, and always suffers in return, is Mazhar himself. The style, style, and color of each writer is a reflection of himself. However, Mazhar ul Islam is a story writer with an even more individual and literary color without imitation in this regard” (Ashraf, 2009, p. 440).

The depictions of events in the short stories present in *The Season of Love, bitter Almonds, and delayed Rains* have a surrealistic trait that captures the attention of the reader and enhances the experiences and feelings of the author. Every symbol is in place, allowing us to grasp a piece of life we didn't know existed. Mazhar ul Islam represented life as a journey that comprehends sadness, love, and growth. Mazhar ul Islam uses symbols, metaphors, and images so much in his works that this reveals that he did not see these concepts only as ornaments, but that he created his literary style by embracing the view that the main meaning of the literary work is hidden in metaphors and myths(Wellek, 1983, p. 258).

In the short story *La pozza (Talab)*, a woman struggles with herself and her family because she didn't accept marrying the man who her parents wanted for her. A social limitation is depicted, where the woman decided for her freedom and the only love she gets is from a child; he loves her as a big sister, and she stated that he's everything for her, but at the moment in which he asks if she's married, she questions her decision. She doesn't want to hurt him and instead of telling him her situation she answers: “I'm married with destiny”(Islam, 2012d, p. 83). The child gets angry and also jealous, to the point of wanting to beat up this “destiny”, clearly not knowing what it was. The woman decides to tell him that she's going to marry him instead, and he suddenly becomes happy; she blushes at his demonstration of affection. She realizes that he's the only one who can calm her mind, her running thoughts, but above all to revive her, the true being from whom she ever received love, innocent and pure(Islam, 2012e, p. 71-74).

The woman refused all the proposals and decided to stay with him to take care of his deceased aunt's child, she devoted her life to the child just like husband and wife are devoted to one another. She made a choice, and by doing so she molded her destiny just like a pot maker molds his vase(Islam, 2012d).

How social struggles are described is at the same time soft and striking as reality itself. The woman is seen like a lake, that stagnates and flows, who takes care of the others even though she's not considered by society because of her social status. She conveys her love in the nurture of a child who in the end we know she'll maybe lose anyway. She just gives him space to live his life, as we can see at the end of the story. It's a beautiful example of a platonic dedication to love.

Mazhar ul Islam dealt with the basic issues such as dystopic social structure caused by totalitarian governments, social and individual degeneration, and the traces left by martial law in the society within the scope of this style in his works. Although the texts that Mazhar ul Islam weaves around these themes are realistic in their way, they offer the reader a combination of realistic, romantic, symbolic, and surrealist styles.

The story of Mazhar ul Islam called *A Man Reviled* contains striking statements about the individual and social degeneration that emerged in Pakistan especially with the modernization period. The main character in the story has adopted honesty as a motto, but in return for this feature, he was always postponed, battered, and attacked. What Mazhar ul Islam wants to tell about the events of the main character is undoubtedly his deep concern over the injustices that have arisen in society. Therefore, while those who do not adopt these irritating concepts should be people to be appreciated, they have been despised and excluded from the game by people who feed on injustice. As a result, social degeneration has occurred, and thus, individual and political degeneration has arisen. Mazhar ul Islam opposes this situation and reveals this rebellion through the subjects and characters in his story:

“Sir, you and my father have both had a profound influence on my life. But today, I've come to tell you that I have had no happiness from anything you taught me or from any of the lessons you gave me. I've always been vexed by meanness. I've always been enraged by it. I've demonstrated against dishonesty. I've always hated falsehood. I haven't let greed and avarice come near me. I've kept all my promises. I've never deceived anyone. For thirty-seven years I have carried the cross of truth. But I became lonely. No one loved me. They called me base. They passed resolutions against me. They gave me sufferings. I constantly nurtured the disease of truth but people continued to laugh. What is it that you have taught me? I've spent my entire life searching for happiness and all I've got is miseries...” (Islam, 2012e, p. 133-136).

The author frequently uses romantic concepts such as loneliness, love, conversation, grief, joy, death, reunion, melancholy, desire, dream, nature in his works. Mazhar ul Islam differs from other romantic writers in the method of using romantic themes. The author sprinkles romantic concepts, which are generally related to emotions, into a realistic event and pushes the reader into an environment of harmony derived from the conflict between romantic and realist elements in a social or individual realistic narrative. Sometimes the works of Mazhar ul Islam consist of purely romantic themes and the above-mentioned contrast is not observed. In such works, the author usually deals with a pure love story or the inner world of a person with a melancholic soul structure that also contains psychoanalytic elements. The language used by the author in such narratives, on the other hand, is far from being vicious and dense, and is as pure and easy to understand as possible. However, there is an important detail that should be noted here. Mazhar ul Islam also sees romance as a reality of life and incorporates romantic concepts into his works as an extension of this view.

In *Un corpo in cenci* (*Tan liran liran*) the author focuses on another shred of life, this time giving us an example of lost love; a woman collects pieces of fabric and rags in a dump, where every day she tries to recollect herself; it's like her memories and broken parts are spread throughout that place, as it was her temple. She is described like a lost memory herself, like a doll thrown away by her owner. We can see how the girl interacts with the man who wants to talk to her, at first she doesn't want to deal with him, to the point of telling him to go away, but after she starts to tell her story. These works often show conversations between people, a listener and a talker ready to know and to discover what's wrong with the other person. Through connection and curiosity, an almost comforting way in which the author discloses a story, he communicates to the reader that kindness and patience are the best way to keep in touch with the human self, it creates a deep understanding of us as living beings. This is enhanced by the action of the protagonist in the story, where he tries to help her to collect a piece of fabric, by mimicking the girl. Maybe he's trying to comprehend her point of view, to enter in the same mindset as the woman, but he doesn't understand that he's acting as an invader of her space, a past personal place difficult for her to share at the moment. Just like her memories, she doesn't want to share her rugs and pieces with him. She is trying to put herself together, to maintain her dignity, in fact she said: "Leave me alone, these are my rugs[...]" (Islam, 2012d, p. 121).

A lot of people, just like the girl depicted in this story, find it difficult to talk about their past experiences, and sometimes try to avoid help from others. The protagonist listened to her and tried to assist, the best behavior to adopt towards people in difficult situations. Even though the girl doesn't want him to collect her rags, for the first time she has someone from another place, from the external world, talking to her. The author left us with the hope that someone could always reach for her and help to recollect her pieces, like tiles of a complex mosaic.

The characters created by Mazhar ul Islam always try to know and understand in the best way possible the essence of people. The man in the story respects the girl, he doesn't get angry even though he's not treated well by her, and when she tells him that all women are like rags he answers: "You shouldn't say that, you could make women angry"(Islam, 2012d, p. 120) What she tells him after it's the beginning of her story, of her essence; she says that they wouldn't get angry because women know what she's talking about. She states that before she was covered in rags, and her heart and memories are with them. At the moment in which the protagonist created a connection with her, he was rewarded with her story, something extremely important: every person has a story to tell, and to share an experience means to give a part of ourselves to the listener.

Mazhar ul Islam uses the following expressions when describing the style he used while romanticizing his works and explaining the concepts of death, loneliness, and suicide that form the basis of his romantic style:

"I love death. It fascinates me. I am not afraid of it at all. I believe death is not the end of life; rather, a new life begins after death. As for suicide, it is the only pure thing in this world...I don't want to die of any illness — I want to die for the sake of death alone. Suicide is sheer romance as I tried it, but was saved. Now, at this age, suicide has no charm for me. Suicide has great charm when one is young. Also, suicide should not be committed under any compulsion. Suicide should be for suicide's sake alone" (Asad, 2010).

Stories are part of every person, but they can also narrate something unreal, funny, and out of this world. This is the case of the short story *L'uomo solo nella città dei cavalli* (*Ghoron ke shahr men akela admī*); the story starts with a man who is reading a book about his city, an image that suddenly captures the attention of the reader because he's the one holding the book, just like the character is doing. It's a meta-story in which all of a sudden a little girl appears and everything changes. The

change is so subtle that the reader almost believes what he's reading until he understands that the crazy horse roaming through the city was just a toy, the protagonist of the child's story. It's like fading away from reality to enter a completely different world, the one created by imagination and dreams.

At the end of the short story, when the girl takes her toy horse that was resting on the book, there is another sudden change of reality; it's like two completely different worlds were united for a short period because the reality contained in the book melted with the one imagined by the girl. That's why when she takes her toy horse, we realize that sometimes children are the best storytellers. But there is also a deeper meaning to this story.

In fact this writing of Mazhar ul Islam is regarded as the most basic example of the author's symbolist style. The horse, which is determined as the main character of the story, has been symbolized as the last person who opposed social injustice. A lot of obstacles are placed in front of the horse that seeks justice, but the horse continues on its way without giving up and destroys the distorted order in the city. In the background of the story, what happened to an honest person while looking for the truth is depicted with metaphorical narratives:

"The Great Mosque was full of voices. The noise was bubbling over its walls and filling the whole neighborhood. People were running into a mosque. I quickly made my way there too, but when I got inside my astonishment was unbounded. A horse was standing near the prayer rug belonging to the Imam of the mosque. Members of the congregation were beating the horse with sticks but it stood there quietly unconcerned as though the sticks weren't touching it at all. The horse seems to have performed its intention for prayer. I'd only just finished reading the hundred-year-old history of the mosque and an account of the great people who used to pray in it. And now I was grieved by the sight of a horse standing near the imam's prayer rug... The horse now started running towards the main square. People chased after it. More people kept joining the crowd. They all wanted to run it out of the city, but the horse was running towards the city center. Falling over one another, people were making a great noise and pelting the horse with stones. Then the horse gave a leap and landed up in a shop belonging to a thick-necked man. It gave the man a couple of kicks with its hind legs and went off on its way after trampling on the notes in his purse" (Islam, 2012b, p. 87-89).

Prof. Dr. A.B. Ashraf describes the horse's crushing money by entering a wealthy person's shop as a rebellion against capitalism and praises the unique symbolic style of Mazhar ul Islam (Ashraf, 2009, p. 445).

Telling stories means dealing with different realities and possibilities, and by doing so we can analyze better some circumstances. That's what happens in *Il sogno degli impiegati* (*Kalarkon me khwab*), in which the employees, victims of their daily job routines, are trying to decode their current situation through dreams.

The moment where they start revealing their dreams is almost described as a ritual: every day the employees sit at the table before starting to work, and everyone tells what they dreamt during the night. One of them has the role to interpret the dreams, but the reader can sense that something is not right; even the interpreter of the dreams isn't sure of what he's saying, as if the man is trying to understand himself, and why they all feel so out of place (Islam, 2012d). The mood completely changes when he reveals his dream: it was about a mouse eroding his chest little by little, and he felt strange, almost abused by it, as if the animal had invaded his personal space, and was about to nibble at his memories. Then he felt a sharp pain, and the mouse came out of his chest through a hole and ran away. The others didn't speak, until they realize that their chest was hurting too, they cover their hearts with their hands, and suddenly little mice found their way out of them (Islam, 2012d).

They discovered what they were looking for, and finally acknowledge their problem. They were stuck in the same routine, that like a mouse was eroding their dignity, space, and freedom as human beings. Fortunately, after that experience they are aware, and the author states that the employees are now dreaming by day, and living their dreams.

A lot of people are stuck in their daily routine, living a life they think it's the best for them, without being aware of their happiness. Here the author is describing the same feeling; we can see how troubled the dreams of the protagonists are, almost afraid of losing their identity.

Mazhar ul Islam plays with reality and surreal elements: an animal seen in a dream becomes a sensation and then an actual element of the story, a dream coming true for the protagonists, that can finally find themselves again. These symbols become essential to his stories, reconnecting us to the image and then to the feelings of the characters.

To become a story, continuously evolving, and to grow up are three of the main themes present in these works. From the author's writings, we can see that there is a will to understand others and to translate them into a story. In two short stories in particular: *Scrivi la mia storia (Meri kahani likho)* and *Come nasce una storia (Kahani kaisi bani)*, the narration focuses on the fugacity of life and also on the desire of people to leave an imprint in this world.

In *Scrivi la mia storia (Meri kahani likho)* the protagonist asks a girl who deeply wants her story to be written to give him details about her life, but she eludes all the questions; after that, she turns into a butterfly and flies away (Islam, 2012d, p. 161).

In *Come nasce una storia (Kahani kaisi bani)* Mazhar literally tells us how he became a story; he forged himself observing the world. He found love in the eyes of a girl, and hate in the eyes of poverty. The things around him changed like a pot maker applies changes to his pot. The author tells us about this molding, how everything incorporates into his experience. He tells us we can learn from everyone, and above all that everything he lived was like a tile, useful to create the story of the writer himself. In fact in the short story various scenes are depicted, the one that a person usually notice when he's starting to grow up: first we see the mother behaving differently from before, not caring anymore if her child has dirty shoes, and then the father with a serious and angry mood (Islam, 2012d, p. 33). The author openly narrates the fact that he noticed these changes, he gathered these moments into his being, and they became part of himself: a part of his story.

As we can see in the previous short story *Scrivi la mia storia (Meri kahani likho)*, becoming a story means also to struggle. The girl clearly didn't want to narrate herself, she's on the verge of crying and yet she desperately wants to be turned into a story, but she can't tell it, and she won't. The protagonist continues to question her, almost in a need to know how should he manage to write details of a story he didn't even listen to, and then she vanished; she became a butterfly-like she was a spiritual being.

The girl could also be the personification of a story for a writer, always looking for people's experiences and observing the world, listening and absorbing their stories and let them fly away in the end.

As we all know, there are also a lot of nuances in life, experiences that can lead us to mold our being in different ways; this is what the Short story *Il serpente in casa (Sanp ghar)* is about. It takes into consideration the social struggle that leads to the

hardening of character, caused by an unsatisfied life. The serpent is constricting the souls of the people, turning them rude and inconsiderate towards the others.

In the story the animal is seen as an internal personal issue, a parasite that forces people to deal with their inner fight alone with themselves; the protagonist tries to find information, he tells people of the snake, and someone even wants to avoid talking about it. His only hope is to meet a saint man, whom he thinks will cure his problem, but when he finds him, he answers harshly, and tells him: "There's a serpent in my house too" (Islam, 2012d, p. 68). We can see that in the ending there is a hint for a spiritual way to get rid of the serpent, even though the saint man himself wasn't able to do that. The characters of the story try not to get corrupted by their daily routine or bad experiences; the first person to whom the protagonist admits his problem is a friend who tells the man to pay attention, because at the same time of the year the same serpent will come and bite him, taking his vital energy.

This short story is similar to *Il sogno degli impiegati (Kalarkon me khwab)*, even though the development is more tragic: it starts in the same environment, with the only difference that people are already hit by the effects of an unsatisfied life; they try desperately to come out of this feeling alive before it's too late and the poison took them. It's a metaphor for how we should always nourish the best part of ourselves, because the serpent could come up anytime and worsen our lives.

Sometimes stories are so much radicated into human atavic knowledge that they become part of the people all around the world. In the short story *Incontrando Hir e Ranjha (Mai Hir se mulaqat, jahan Miyan Ranjha bhi tha)* the protagonist remembers Larissa, a romanian woman he met in Washington, who reminded him of Hir; he started reciting some verses, and then he asked Larissa if she knew them. She stated that it was Pakistani folklore, that her father was a poet and he was exiled from his country for what he wrote. At some point, she said that Hir doesn't seem necessarily from Pakistan and that for her she was from Romania. The man then told her, without hesitation, that Hir doesn't have a nationality (Islam, 2012d, p. 225).

The story develops with a scene in which the protagonist goes to the grave of Hir and Ranjha, but when he saw them standing in front of him, he knew that it was the wrong grave. He says that their grave was hidden, and from that moment the reader understands that they are continuously traveling, leaving a part of themselves in every person they meet. After realizing it, the man started to notice other characters of the Pakistani folklore, and he asks himself if the woman he sees is Hir, and if the one he spotted in the crowd was Saida, the person she was forced to marry. The

protagonist transferred the situation lived by Hir in the real life, in fact, we can find a part of their experiences in many people. Hir and Ranjha make a journey that reconnects everyone. The fact that the man told Larissa that Hir hadn't a nationality is very important; people usually find common ground with a story, an experience shared together. Hir and Ranjha haven't a nationality and they pass through the soul and mind of people, speaking a language everybody can understand. That's why when talking about literature nobody is an outsider, reading a story is like knowing something more about the author, and maybe we could find a tile we weren't aware it was missing. Each person can share his own story, uniting everyone in an endless journey.

Conclusion

Mazhar ul Islam is one of the most important storytellers of modern Urdu literature. In the author's stories are present various literary movements such as realism, romanticism, symbolism, and surrealism, an aspect that makes his writings unique. Using the social realities of Pakistan as the yeast of his style, the author adds romantic, symbolist, and surreal materials to the dough and reflects the resulting product in a symbolic style. The author expresses black psychology and emotional manipulation through his characters, with pessimistic fiction and narrative structure. There are a lot of different ways to describe a style, but the one used by Mazhar ul Islam is certainly the most inspiring and difficult to find. It's a narration that leaves a mark; not only are the events depicted in a delicate and at the same time striking way, but he concentrates also on discovering the deepest parts of the human soul. What we find in the author's style and works revolves around his life, and here he gave us the possibility to dive into his mind and to show us who he was through his lenses. By reading his words we know what he experienced and learned, and by doing so, we look into ourselves. Mazhar ul Islam usually uses contradictory or thematically incompatible literary movements and concepts that are thought to belong to philosophical tendencies. He draws his inspiration from the life cycle that finds his meaning in the presence of contrasting feelings, experiences, and thoughts in the universe. Mazhar ul Islam usually chooses his story characters from ordinary people and localizes the events of the characters as much as possible and envisions a reflection of the society in the mind of the reader. However, this is not enough to make Mazhar ul Islam a local writer. Although the author chooses the characters from ordinary people and localizes the events, the technique and stylistic structure

he uses are as universal and new as possible, giving the author a unique literary style.

The author's molding of the yeast of love through separation, the pain-centered construct of the search for truth, the ability to create harmony from incompatibility, and the brilliant use of symbols by stretching the language as much as possible, analyzes his style and what he wants to say difficult to understand, by simultaneously giving the reader the feeling that he is solving a puzzle. It can be said that realism-magical realism, romance, rationalism, surrealism, and symbolism are intertwined but never intermingled in the works of Mazhar ul Islam. According to the author, the basic material of literature is life with the emotions, events, minds, and bodies it contains. In the background of the reality that Mazhar ul Islam seems to convey in his stories, there is the reality that symbolizes the hidden and real truth, which is based on the historical, political, and psychological phases of society and individuals. Therefore, to reach the real meaning expressed by the author, it is necessary to make detailed readings on the society in which the author was born. Especially when analyzing the rebellious and humorous stories written by the author during the military governments, the political, social, and social developments that took place in these periods should be meticulously examined and the deep meanings of the stories should be revealed. Every word that comes out of the pen of Mazhar ul Islam should be considered as a piece, and by combining the discoveries uncovered from them, it should come to light the absolute meaning that Mazhar ul Islam tried to communicate.

While reading the works of Mazhar ul Islam and analyzing his style, it is necessary to be versatile just like the author. The invisible face of Mazhar ul Islam behind his works is more vast, meaningful, and mysterious than it appears, and his versatility leads the reader to dive into the inner and outer depths of his writings with a wider perspective. Mazhar ul Islam acquired a literary feature from each life experience, wrote stories that formed the basis of each of these literary features, and formed his literary style and life view with the combination of these features and stories. Therefore, it is very important to start from his stories to better understand Mazhar ul Islam, and to start from the author to better understand his stories.

Mazhar ul Islam describes the formation phase of his literary technique and the choice of themes in an article with the following striking statements and offers some important clues about his mysterious and complex literary style:

“I think that if it were not for:

- The first time of love and loneliness in Miss’s eyes
- The hatred in the eyes of the Basic Democracy member
- The death sleeping in the woman’s lap
- The horse owned by Majeeda, the Wrestler
- The Wheel and the damp clay of the potters
- The knitting done by Auntie Nuran
- And the wooden chest I got shut into

Then how could the making of the story happen” (Islam, 2012b, p. 37).

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Summary

Mazhar ul Islam is one of the new generations of Urdu literary writers who are loyal to traditional culture and literary accumulation. His works are enriched with metaphors that explore the realities of life, the mystery of emotions, and how the soul can touch and guide humanity. Mazhar ul Islam is considered as a local story writer as much as possible due to the themes he uses in his works, and as an extremely universal story writer with his style and technical structure. Thus, the author was instrumental in the molding and development of a new literary style.

Mazhar ul Islam worked as a program manager at the Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) between 1974 and 1976. Due to these activities, the first period of his civil service life was very productive; in fact, he was appointed as the administrative director of the same institution between 1976 and 1987. In 1995 he became general manager of the Pakistani Literature Academy, and a year later he started to work as a member of the Pakistan Copyright Board. Mazhar ul Islam resigned from his job after serving as the general manager of Pakistani Literature Academy until 2001. He worked as a project manager in cultural events jointly organized between Norway and Pakistan in 2006, and then between 2008 and 2009 he was elected administrator of the Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage. Mazhar ul Islam resigned from this position in 2009 and was appointed as the director of the National Book Foundation of the Ministry of Education of the Government of Pakistan.

Mazhar ul Islam emphasized that the events that happened since childhood and the emotions attached to his heart are among the main factors that determine his style and narrative themes. The author affirmed that he gave meaning to every event and every emotion he felt and stated that he saw them as details of his rich literary style. Indeed, when the works of Mazhar ul Islam are examined, it is seen that many of them have a part of his own life: the author's love for a woman, the pain he felt from the difficulties he faced, and the hopelessness he internalized due to limited possibilities. In his Works, he observed the duality of the political and social developments, and like a reflection, they often became the main subject of his writings. Mazhar ul Islam can be described as a writer who deals with the reality of romanticism and the romantic side of reality. He is neither a rigid social utilitarian realist who has closed his soul to emotions nor a dreamer living in a world of symbols that has turned his back on society and its realities.

Mazhar ul Islam has a utilitarian style. As a result of this style, his works usually end with a message for individual or social good. The author builds the plot on the search for freedom, income equality, morality, justice and welfare, and ends this search with an ending that sometimes results in frustration and sometimes success. However, the ending written by Mazhar ul Islam always brings with it the connotation of new beginnings in the reader. Mazhar ul Islam himself wants these last paragraphs to cause new intellectual inquiries in the reader and generally seeks answers to this curiosity by asking the people who read his works. These open-ended endings that the author chooses for his works sometimes aim to draw the reader into the narrative, causing each reader to think of himself as the main character of the story, and to make them write an ending for themselves.

Mazhar ul Islam has dealt with basic issues such as the dystopic society structure caused by totalitarian governments, social and individual corruption, superstitions, the longing for justice and equality, the traces left by martial law in society, and the rights of the poor, with social sensitivity. In his works, where the author includes social themes, the main conflicts are constructed over the elements of rich-poor, powerful-weak, liar-honest, fair-unjust, manager-managed, progressive-regressive, and within the scope of these conflicts, the value judgments of society and individuals that are beginning to disappear are questioned.

The author frequently uses romantic concepts such as loneliness, love, conversation, grief, joy, death, reunion, melancholy, desire, dream, nature in his works. Mazhar ul Islam differs from other romantic writers in the method of using romantic themes. The author sprinkles romantic concepts, which are generally related to emotions, into a realistic event and pushes the reader into an environment of harmony derived from the conflict between romantic and realist elements in a social or individual realistic narrative. Sometimes the works of Mazhar ul Islam consist of purely romantic themes and the above-mentioned contrast is not observed. In such works, the author usually deals with a pure love story or the inner world of a person with a melancholic soul structure that also contains psychoanalytic elements. The language used by the author in such narratives, on the other hand, is far from being vicious and dense, and is as pure and easy to understand as possible. However, there is an important detail that should be noted here. The author's molding of the yeast of love through separation, the pain-centered construct of the search for truth, the ability to create harmony from incompatibility, and the brilliant use of symbols by stretching the language as much as possible, analyzes his style and what he wants to say difficult to understand, by simultaneously giving the reader the feeling that he is solving a puzzle. It can be said that realism-magical realism, romance, rationalism, surrealism, and symbolism are intertwined but never intermingled in the works of Mazhar ul Islam.

In this study, basic information about Mazhar ul Islam's life and career have been tried to be presented and the author's stories have been tried to be analyzed in a thematic context.