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**THE MOTIF OF ALIENATION IN D. ISABEKOV'S PLAY «TRANSIT PASSENGER»
(a Comparative Analysis)**

Abstract. This article examines the motif of alienation in Dulat Isabekov's play “Transit Passenger” (1989) within the context of the cultural and historical shifts characteristic of the transitional period from the Soviet to the post-Soviet era in Kazakhstan. The motif of alienation is analyzed as a universal category reflecting fundamental changes in both collective and individual identity amid social and cultural instability. Through a comparative analysis with the works of Samuel Beckett (“Waiting for Godot”) and Tennessee Williams (“A Streetcar Named Desire”), the article explores the typological and semantic aspects of alienation, with a focus on its expression through the categories of time, loss of social identity, and fragmentation of cultural memory. The authors argue that Isabekov, by employing the motif of alienation, not only captures the existential crises caused by the rupture between past and present but also offers a new understanding of the process of social and cultural integration. Alienation in Isabekov's play is viewed as a dialectical process in which the preservation of cultural traditions confronts the necessity of adapting to changing realities, ultimately leading to a redefinition of collective identity. Thus, the article offers an original interpretation of the motif of alienation, demonstrating its role in expanding the boundaries of Kazakhstani dramaturgy within the context of global literary processes.

Keywords: alienation, Kazakh dramaturgy, existential crisis, comparative literary studies, cultural transformation.

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**Дулат Исабековтың «Транзиттік жолаушы» пьесасындағы жатсыну мотиві
(салыстырмалы талдау)**

Андапта. Бұл мақалада Дулат Исабековтің «Транзиттік жолаушы» (1989) пьесасындағы жатсыну мотиві кеңестік дәуірден посткеңестік және өтпелі кезеңге тән мәдени және тарихи өзгерістер контекстінде қарастырылады. Жатсыну мотиві әлеуметтік және мәдени тұрақсыздық жағдайында ұжымдық және жеке тұлғалық болмыстағы түбегейлі өзгерістерді бейнелейтін әмбебап категория ретінде талданады. Сэмюэл Беккеттің «Годоны күту» және Теннесси Уильямстың «Тілектер трамвайы» шығармаларымен салыстырмалы талдау жүргізу арқылы мақалада жатсынудың типологиялық және семантикалық аспектілері зерттеліп, уақыт категориясы, әлеуметтік болмысты жоғалту және мәдени жадының ыдырауы сияқты аспектілерге назар аударылады. Авторлар Исабеков жатсыну мотивін қолдану арқылы өткен мен бүгінгі күннің арасындағы үзіліс туындатқан экзистенциалдық дағдарыстарды бейнелеп қана қоймай, сонымен қатар әлеуметтік және мәдени интеграция процесіне жаңа көзқарас ұсынады деп тұжырымдайды. Исабековтің пьесасындағы жатсыну мәдени дәстүрлерді сақтау мен өзгермелі шындықтарға бейімделу қажеттілігі арасындағы диалектикалық процесс ретінде қарастырылады, бұл ақыр соңында ұжымдық болмыстың қайта анықталуына алып келеді. Осылайша, мақалада жатсыну мотивіне түпнұсқалық интерпретация ұсынылып, оның жаһандық әдеби процестер контекстіндегі қазақстандық драматургияның шекараларын кеңейтуге қосқан үлесі көрсетіледі.

Кілт сөздер: жатсыну, қазақ драматургиясы, экзистенциалдық дағдарыс, салыстырмалы әдеби зерттеулер, мәдени трансформация.

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**Мотив отчуждения в пьесе Д. Исабекова «Транзитный пассажир»
(компаративистский анализ)**

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается мотив отчуждения в пьесе Дулата Исабекова «Транзитный пассажир» (1989) в контексте культурных и исторических сдвигов, характерных для переходного периода от советской к постсоветской эпохе в Казахстане. Мотив отчуждения анализируется как универсальная категория, отражающая фундаментальные изменения в коллективной и индивидуальной идентичности в условиях социальной и культурной нестабильности. В сравнительном анализе с произведениями Сэмюэля Беккета («В ожидании Годо») и Теннесси Уильямса («Трамвай «Желание»») исследуются типологические и семантические аспекты отчуждения, акцентируя внимание на его выражении через категории времени, утраты социальной идентичности и фрагментации культурной памяти. Авторы утверждают, что Исабеков, используя мотив отчуждения, не только фиксирует экзистенциальные кризисы, вызванные разрывом между прошлым и настоящим, но и предлагает новое осмысление процесса социальной и культурной интеграции. Отчуждение в пьесе Исабекова рассматривается как диалектический процесс, в котором сохранение культурных традиций сталкивается с необходимостью адаптации к изменяющимся реальностям, что в конечном итоге приводит к переосмыслению

коллективной идентичности. Таким образом, статья предлагает оригинальную интерпретацию мотива отчуждения, демонстрируя его роль в расширении границ казахстанской драматургии в контексте мировых литературных процессов.

Ключевые слова: отчуждение, казахская драматургия, экзистенциальный кризис, сравнительное литературоведение, культурная трансформация.

Introduction

The relevance of studying the motif of alienation in Dulat Isabekov's play «Transit Passenger», written in 1989, is driven by both its historical context and its influence on contemporary perceptions of social and cultural phenomena. The play was created in the late 1980s, a time when Kazakhstan, like many other countries, was undergoing significant social and political changes. This transitional period between the Soviet and post-Soviet eras is directly reflected in the depiction of the alienation motif in the work.

Examining this motif within the context of Isabekov's play allows for a deeper understanding of how the social and political transformations of that time were mirrored in literary texts. The play stands as an important testimony to how literature responds to historical events and how these events shape both personal and collective consciousness.

Moreover, the play occupies a significant place in Kazakh literature, and its exploration in a comparative context allows for an examination of how the motif of alienation is treated within Kazakh dramaturgy in comparison to other literary traditions. This contributes to a deeper understanding of both the uniqueness and universality of the Kazakh literary process.

Research Methods and Materials

The aim of this work is to identify the features and differences in the treatment of the themes of alienation and existential crisis in the plays of such authors as Dulat Isabekov, Samuel Beckett, and Tennessee Williams. Primarily, a comparative analysis was employed, which revealed differences and similarities in the treatment of alienation and existential crisis within the context of cultural and social realities, as well as typological similarities and differences between works representing different literary traditions.

The interpretive method used in this study aimed at a deep understanding and analysis of specific scenes, dialogues, and monologues of characters. This method allowed for the unveiling of the symbolic and metaphorical content of the texts, revealing deeper levels of meaning related to the theme of alienation.

The research material consisted of plays by the Kazakh author Dulat Isabekov's «Transit Passenger» (1989), the American author Tennessee Williams' «A Streetcar Named Desire» (1947), and the Irish author Samuel Beckett's «Waiting for Godot» (1948). Despite differences in geographical and cultural origins, all these plays were created during periods of significant historical change, reflecting similar moods and challenges associated with transitional stages in society. As noted in the study by H. Noorbakhsh et al., «The 20th-century generation, especially the one which finds itself drowned in the oozy ocean of the Second World War trauma, is reluctant to show any kinds of belonging to the existing perturbed world. It finds its soul and mind fettered and shackled in the dark dungeon of alienation» [1, p. 71].

These works emerged against the backdrop of social and cultural crises: «A Streetcar Named Desire» and «Waiting for Godot» were written in the post-war period when Europe and America were experiencing profound changes in social structure and the loss of previous values. Isabekov's «Transit Passenger» appeared at the turn of the late 1980s, during the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when Kazakhstan was also in a state of cultural and social upheaval. All three works explore

the theme of alienation caused by the destruction of former guidelines and the uncertainty of the future, making them particularly relevant in the context of their historical periods.

Results and discussion

The theme of alienation in the 20th century is closely linked with existentialism, which became one of the significant philosophical and cultural trends of the period. Existentialism explores the crisis that arises from the loss of traditional guidelines and value systems. In the context of the destruction of former ideological and cultural structures, individuals found themselves facing existential emptiness and the absurdity of existence. As Saleem A. notes in his study: “Alienation emerges as a natural consequence of existential predicament” [2, p. 70].

Existentialist philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus analyze alienation as a result of the individual’s confrontation with the meaninglessness and uncontrollability of the world. They emphasize that the loss of stable guidelines and traditional values leads to a sense of isolation and inner conflict. In this context, alienation manifests as a feeling of detachment from society and an awareness of one’s existential vulnerability.

In 20th-century dramaturgy, alienation acts as a category reflecting not only the crisis of social identity but also the very nature of human existence. This phenomenon is not limited to the rift between subject and object, the inner world of the individual, and their external reality, but represents a more fundamental discrepancy where harmony between meaning and being disappears. As noted by Lumi E. and Lumi L., “Alienation arises from a state of despair, the destruction of connections, and the search for an escape from the path to death” [3, p. 53]. Alienation becomes a kind of metaphysical condition in which the unity of perception and self-awareness is destroyed, leading to the fragmentation of the subject in the conditions of modernization and technocratic progress. This is not merely the loss of connection with the world or alienation from social roles but a more radical loss of inner integrity, where the protagonist faces the impossibility of finding support in traditional cultural and moral structures. In this sense, alienation can be viewed as a manifestation of the tendency toward the destruction of former metanarratives that ensured the wholeness of human existence.

This interpretation of alienation reveals it as a process that destroys both subjective and social integrity but offers potential transcendence through a dialectical rethinking of one’s role and place in the world.

Let’s consider how the motif of alienation is embodied in the plays of Kazakh, American, and Irish authors. In Dulat Isabekov’s play «Transit Passenger», the theme of alienation is revealed through the multi-layered interaction of characters and their inner world. The play tells the story of two elderly people, Zeynep and Aitore, who find themselves in the same house.

The main character, Zeynep, embodies a deeply rooted sense of alienation that permeates her daily life and inner world. Her alienation manifests on several levels: social, emotional, and existential, each of which is revealed through her actions, dialogues, and inner monologues.

Zeynep’s social alienation is reflected in her isolation from the surrounding world. She lives alone, and her life is reduced to waiting. At the beginning of the play, she anxiously awaits the arrival of her son and his wife, but this waiting ends in disappointment, emphasizing her loneliness: “It has been a whole three hours since they called to say they were on their way. Where could they be wandering?” [4]. These words demonstrate that Zeynep feels abandoned and insignificant in the eyes of those she cares about.

Her alienation is heightened with the arrival of Aitore. His presence arouses her suspicion and fear: “Are you out of your mind, what are you rambling on about? I’ll call the police right now!” [4]. This reaction indicates her distrust of people and fear of strangers, which may result from years of loneliness and social isolation. Zeynep’s emotional alienation is particularly evident in her dialogue with Aitore. Although she agrees to let him into the house, her emotional guardedness and

suspicion persist: “Oh, my dear... old man! Trying to soften my heart? I won’t open the door anyway”. Even after Aitore shows kindness and attention, Zeynep cannot fully relax and trust him. Zeynep’s existential alienation is tied to her reflections on the meaning of life, time, and the inevitability of death. She says: “For three years now, it seems to me that my house has been surrounded on all sides, and I am in danger... Times have become such – only troubles”. These words express her deep anxiety and fear of the future, which appears to her as uncertain and frightening. Zeynep’s alienation is also manifested through her sense of responsibility and guilt over lost time and a wasted life (she feels guilty for her daughter’s death).

The second character in the play, Aitore, also embodies a figure of someone alienated not only from his surroundings but also from himself. Returning to the house that was once home to him, he confronts an insurmountable gap between the past and the present. Aitore is an immigrant, which fuels his sense of alienation. As M. Arif Khan points out, “For the immigrants who live thousands of miles away from their hearths and homes under different circumstances with different objectives, adds fuel to the fire and the sense of alienation intensifies manifold with positive or negative consequences both for the individual, his relatives and acquaintances in the host or one’s own nation and the place or the nation he is currently living in” [5, p. 508].

The dialogues between Aitore and Zeynep become a stage for the manifestation of their inner isolation. Despite his efforts to reconnect with the past, Aitore realizes the futility of these attempts. His words, «Oh, Creator! What has become of the Kazakhs? In the past, one would invite a passerby to visit, but now they don’t even let them in the house», “It seems we, Kazakhs, increasingly imitate others, and it seems we have become peerless in this. We lose everything that is ours... like native gold, at every step”, reflect not only nostalgia for a lost culture but also an awareness of the cultural gap that intensifies his alienation. Thus, in Aitore’s words, the alienation of an entire nation is expressed: “You praise the Kazakhs, but are they really worth it? In my opinion, they don’t take their lives seriously. They marry a Chinese woman – everyone in the house becomes Chinese, they marry off to the same Chinese – the same thing happens... It’s like the saying: hit an owl with a stone – the owl dies, hit the stone with an owl – the same owl dies”. Such cultural alienation is also addressed by A. Scott: “Alienated from a customary life, human beings, over the course of generations, come to see their new lives as normal, as the way the world just is. They develop a false consciousness, in other words” [6, p. 449].

Isabekov’s play portrays alienation as an inevitable consequence of cultural and personal changes. Aitore, facing the impossibility of restoring lost connections, finds himself in a situation where any interaction with the outside world only emphasizes his isolation. This motif is vividly expressed in his words: “I haven’t been to her grave for a long time. And I probably won’t find her unmarked burial site... And my life – here it is, I wander in a foreign land...”. In a broader sense, the alienation of the characters is connected with alienation in the Marxist sense – the loss of traditional forms of economy and social organization, leading to the destruction of collective structures and the erosion of individual identity. Thus, alienation in the play is not just a personal experience but a metaphor for broad cultural and social disintegration, encompassing all aspects of the characters’ lives and plunging them into a deep existential crisis.

“Waiting for Godot” is an absurdist play by Samuel Beckett in which two characters, Vladimir and Estragon, await the arrival of a certain Godot, who, they believe, will change their lives for the better. The action takes place in an indeterminate location, under a tree, and consists of repetitive conversations and actions that highlight the futility of waiting. Godot never appears, and each act ends with the characters deciding to leave, but they remain in place. Alienation is a central theme here, manifested through the dialogues and actions of the characters. Despite their togetherness, Vladimir and Estragon experience deep loneliness. For example, Estragon says: “Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it’s awful!” [7] – this phrase emphasizes their

sense of stagnation and helplessness, creating an atmosphere of complete isolation from the outside world.

The existential alienation of the characters is expressed in their reflections on the meaning of life and the meaninglessness of waiting. Vladimir says: «We wait. We are bored. No, don't protest, we are bored to death, there's no denying it». These words testify that their actions are devoid of purpose, leading to a state of constant boredom and inner emptiness.

The sense of alienation is heightened by the loss of the perception of time. Vladimir reflects: “Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today?”. This statement reflects his inability to distinguish between sleep and reality, creating a sense of temporal disorientation and detachment from the real world.

The waiting for Godot, who never appears, symbolizes the characters' alienation from any higher power or meaning in life. Vladimir questions: “What are we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come”. This statement underscores their hope for some kind of salvation or meaning that never comes, further deepening their sense of alienation and existential crisis.

In Tennessee Williams' play “A Streetcar Named Desire”, alienation is a crucial theme that pervades the lives of the main characters, especially Blanche DuBois. From the moment Blanche arrives in New Orleans to stay with her sister Stella, she feels like an outsider in this new world. Her alienation is expressed in her attempts to maintain an illusory version of reality that sharply contrasts with the harsh reality of the surrounding world.

One of the key quotes that reveal Blanche's alienation is her admission: “I don't want realism. I want magic!” [8]. This phrase illustrates her desire to escape from reality, which brings pain and disappointment. Blanche strives to create around herself a world of illusions where she can remain young, beautiful, and desirable, despite reality shattering these dreams. Her alienation from the world is manifested in her inability to accept her appearance, age, and the truth about her past.

Blanche's alienation is also evident in her interactions with other characters. Her relationship with Mitch begins as an attempt to find protection and refuge but ultimately collapses when the truth about her past comes to light. Mitch accuses her: “You're not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother”. This exposure and rejection become the culmination of her alienation from a world where she desperately tries to find her place.

Blanche's alienation is tied to her inability to cope with the loss of her former status and privileges. Her famous phrase “I have always depended on the kindness of strangers” emphasizes her vulnerability and dependence on others, which, in turn, heightens her sense of isolation and alienation as she fails to find genuine support from either her family or new acquaintances.

Thus, alienation in “A Streetcar Named Desire” permeates Blanche DuBois' entire life, making her a tragic figure unable to find harmony either with herself or the surrounding world. Her desire to live in a world of illusions, her reluctance to accept reality, and her inability to find support among close people intensify her isolation and lead to her ultimate downfall.

In Samuel Beckett's “Waiting for Godot”, alienation is elevated to the level of existential emptiness, where the characters lose not only the meaning of life but also the ability to perceive reality. Their alienation is global and metaphysical, reflecting the absurdity of existence itself. In Williams' “A Streetcar Named Desire”, alienation manifests through social and psychological isolation. Blanche cannot reconcile with reality, leading her to the breakdown of social connections and complete isolation from society. Her alienation is more personal and tied to internal conflicts arising from her inability to adapt to changes. In Isabekov's “Transit Passenger”, alienation is examined through the prism of cultural and social changes. The characters experience the loss of their identity and connection with traditions, leading them to an internal and cultural crisis. Unlike

Beckett and Williams, Isabekov focuses on the cultural context of alienation, linking it to broader sociocultural disintegration.

It is important to note that, unlike Western plays, which often end tragically, the Kazakh play has a happy ending: by the end of the work, the connection that arises between the two elderly people allows them to overcome their state of alienation. This optimistic interpretation of the existential problem of alienation marks a fundamental difference between this play and its Western counterparts. The famous Kazakh writer A. Kim notes the unique character of Kazakh existentialism: “The face of European existentialism looked deathly pale, its gaze dull and deeply introspective. The face of the nomadic existentialist, however, bore a golden-brown suntan, the color of қоңыр, and its narrowed eyes were vigilantly directed forward, anticipating some new dangerous challenge of fate, which had to be met head-on and overcome at all costs” [9]. Abdina A.K., Sarsenbekov N.Z. also write about this “prototypical” understanding of existentialism inherent in Kazakh civilization, noting that “for modern society, it is extremely important that existential, life-affirming positions, which have a positive character and are oriented towards living a brief life in accordance with human existence, become spiritual needs, as embedded in the worldview of the nomads” [10, p. 38].

Thus, in the three plays – Dulat Isabekov’s “Transit Passenger”, Samuel Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot”, and Tennessee Williams’ “A Streetcar Named Desire” – the motif of alienation appears as a universal category, linking various cultural and social contexts but interpreted differently depending on the characteristics of national traditions and historical conditions.

First, in each of the plays, alienation emerges as a result of the destruction of familiar guidelines and the loss of social and cultural connections. In Isabekov’s “Transit Passenger”, the characters face a rift between traditional values and modern reality, where cultural heritage is under threat of extinction, generating a deep sense of isolation and disconnection. In Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot”, this is manifested in the purposeless waiting of characters, deprived of any points of reference in life, highlighting their existential alienation. Williams, in «A Streetcar Named Desire», emphasizes alienation as an inner conflict, where the main character, Blanche DuBois, cannot reconcile with harsh reality, leading to her psychological isolation.

Second, in all three works, alienation is associated with the loss of time as an organizing principle of life. In «Transit Passenger», the temporal gap between the past and the present becomes a source of alienation for the characters, who cannot reclaim the lost and adapt to new conditions. In Beckett’s play, time loses its traditional linear flow, turning into chaotic and cyclical waiting, where there is no progress, only repetitive meaninglessness. In Williams’ “A Streetcar Named Desire”, Blanche is in constant struggle with the passage of time, trying to maintain the illusion of youth and beauty, which only intensifies her inner discord and alienation from the surrounding world.

Third, alienation in these plays often manifests through the characters’ inability to establish genuine human connections. In “Transit Passenger”, the characters are trapped within themselves, unable to overcome the barriers erected by cultural and social changes, and their interactions only heighten the sense of isolation. In Beckett’s play, the interaction between Vladimir and Estragon, though constant, is devoid of meaning; they cannot truly support each other as they are lost and alienated themselves. In Williams’ “A Streetcar Named Desire”, the main character tries to find protection and understanding from those around her, but her attempts to connect with others prove futile, leading to her ultimate isolation.

It is also worth noting the typological similarities in the titles of the plays: the title “Transit Passenger” refers to people who have lost familiar guidelines and are in search of their place in a new world. «Transit Passenger» symbolizes a transitional state, where a person is constantly on the move but without a clear destination. This movement reflects the state of alienation, where characters are uprooted and lack stability, seeking their place in the world.

In “Waiting for Godot”, alienation is expressed through waiting, which turns into a meaningless and endless action. Here, movement is absent, and waiting itself becomes a metaphor for life devoid of purpose and meaning, where characters are detached from reality and themselves. The title “A Streetcar Named Desire” metaphorically reflects movement not in the external world but in the world of inner passions and psychological states. This transit along the path of desire leads not only to physical displacement but also to spiritual and psychological self-destruction. The characters, like passengers on this streetcar, are alienated from their true needs, immersed in illusions, where their fates are dictated by blind passions.

Thus, each title uses the metaphor of movement to express various forms of alienation: transit without purpose, waiting without end, and movement toward destruction. These titles underscore the complexity of human existence, where movement, whether external or internal, becomes a source of alienation and existential crisis.

Conclusion

Alienation in 20th-century dramaturgy functions not only as a negative phenomenon but also as a methodological tool that allows authors to delve deeper into the transformations of subjectivity under conditions of radical social and cultural changes. The motif of alienation in Dulat Isabekov’s play “Transit Passenger” is revealed through the interaction of personal, cultural, and social factors, which create a deep sense of isolation and inner discord among the main characters.

Isabekov’s play seamlessly fits into the global trend of 20th-century dramaturgy, where the theme of alienation becomes a reflection of global changes in human consciousness and culture. However, unlike Western plays, where alienation is often depicted as an irreversible existential crisis, the Kazakh play offers a different approach. Here, alienation is perceived not only as a result of social disintegration but rather as an opportunity for rethinking and restoring lost connections.

Isabekov integrates the motif of alienation into the context of Kazakh culture, where a deep connection with traditions and collective consciousness plays a crucial role. This allows the play to transcend local boundaries and become part of a broader trend in world dramaturgy while maintaining the uniqueness of the Kazakh perspective on existential problems. Thus, “Transit Passenger” demonstrates how national cultural features can interact with global literary trends, creating a new understanding of universal themes such as alienation and the search for identity. This underscores the importance of studying Kazakh literature in the context of world dramaturgy.

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