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## Linguistic Lyricism and Postmodern Discourse in Contemporary Kazakh Prose: The Case of Roza Mukanova

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the interplay between lyricism and the postmodern artistic paradigm in contemporary Kazakh prose through the lens of Roza Mukanova's short story *The Prisoner*. The research applies an integrated methodological framework combining poetic-stylistic, psychoanalytic, and interpretive approaches. Lyricism is analyzed as a literary device that reveals the protagonist's inner world through poetic imagery and emotional expression, while postmodern elements – such as stream of consciousness, intertextuality, reminiscence, and symbolism – are shown to deepen the narrative's structural and semantic complexity. The analysis highlights internal monologues, imagined dialogues, and unconscious distress as key mechanisms that embody the lyrical mode of the text. Furthermore, the interplay between the authorial voice and the character's speech, along with metaphorical imagery and symbolic constructs, collectively shapes the multilayered meaning of the narrative. Special attention is devoted to the linguistic features of lyrical prose as manifested in *The Prisoner*, including the use of emotionally charged metaphors, evaluative epithets, and rhetorical syntactic structures. These linguistic tools serve as markers of the protagonist's inner fragmentation and spiritual longing, while stylistic devices such as repetition, anaphora, antithesis, and asyndeton intensify the text's lyrical tone. Through the symbolic deployment of objects like "mirror," "window," and "threshold," the story constructs an archetypal image of psychological captivity and the desire for transcendence. The findings establish *The Prisoner* as a distinctive

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example of artistic synthesis between lyricism and postmodernism. Mukanova's story demonstrates the convergence of lyrical-existential depth and postmodern formal experimentation in Kazakh prose.

**Keywords:** Prose; Lyrical Prose; Inner World; Psychological Space; Literary Process; Kazakh Prose; Contemporary Kazakh Literature

## 1. Introduction

In Kazakh literature, the concept of lyricism has traditionally been regarded as a subjective and emotional foundation of creativity. In literary discourse, lyricism is understood as an artistic form that directly expresses the poet's inner world, moods, and emotional waves <sup>[1]</sup>. For instance, Russian critic V.G. Belinsky defined lyric poetry as "a form of poetry that transforms the subject's innermost feelings into words and imagery, giving voice to the silent stirrings of the soul" <sup>[1]</sup>. While epic narration tends to focus on external phenomena, lyrical narration centers on the internal states that arise from the author's emotional response to those phenomena <sup>[2]</sup>. M.M. Bakhtin also emphasized the monologic nature of poetic (lyrical) discourse, noting that "in lyric poetry, we see the face of a single author who is responsible for every word," thereby underscoring that the entire artistic world in a lyrical work is subordinated to the unified voice of the author <sup>[3]</sup>. Kazakh literary scholars such as Z. Kabdolov have similarly explained lyrical expression as a reflection of the author's emotional universe <sup>[2]</sup>. Thus, lyricism can be viewed as a technique of aesthetically synthesizing the writer's delicate emotional reflections filtered through the heart.

In prose, elements of lyricism are manifested through a poetic consciousness, merging poetic sensitivity with philosophical reflection in narrative form. One of the key artistic directions in contemporary prose is the deep exploration of the character's inner world and psychology. Literary theory defines conflict in a fictional work as the transformation of life's realities into artistic truth, filtered through the author's consciousness <sup>[4]</sup>. Therefore, the writer's worldview and internal sensibilities play a decisive role in shaping the narrative. Psychological devices in prose – such as interior monologue, stream of consciousness, and the character's mental flow – are rooted in lyrical foundations. Scholars argue that the interplay between lyricism and psychology is especially evident in prose, where

the convergence of epic and lyrical elements, along with the fusion of the author's worldview and the character's inner world, becomes a crucial artistic method <sup>[5]</sup>. In lyrical prose, the character's inner self is conveyed through landscape, detail, and figurative language; the author's mood and philosophical ideas are often integrated into the narrative structure. Recent studies on Kazakh literature have highlighted the interconnection between lyricism, interior monologue, and psychological depth, revealing how authorial and character perspectives intertwine <sup>[5]</sup>. In summary, poetic consciousness in prose deepens the artistic content and serves as a powerful means of drawing readers into the emotional and psychological worlds of the characters.

In the era of independence, Kazakh prose has seen a transformation in the role of lyricism. Contemporary authors enrich epic narrative with lyrical resonance, foregrounding characters' emotional turmoil and spiritual quests <sup>[6]</sup>. In our previous research article, we systematically analyzed lyrical prose in contemporary Kazakh literature, tracing the convergence of epic and lyrical modes within prose, and elucidating the relationship between the author's worldview and the character's psychological makeup <sup>[5]</sup>. We observed that many recent works display an intensified lyrical-psychological tendency, where the author's inner thoughts and feelings are rendered in direct expression. One of the key features of today's Kazakh prose is its philosophical exploration of human existence and the meaning of life, offering a synthesis of realism and romanticism through the in-depth study of individual consciousness. Particularly in novels and stories published in recent years, the human psyche and spiritual crisis take center stage against a historical and social backdrop, reflecting an increasing concern with philosophical and existential issues <sup>[6]</sup>. Our earlier publications examined the role of interior monologue and landscape in contemporary prose, and how the author's lyrical "I" enables the depiction of mental and emotional waves <sup>[5]</sup>. Through the

study of lyrical prose in Kazakh literature, we found that it combines elements of realism with the emotional and intellectual impact of lyricism, offering a multi-faceted artistic experience.

One of the most prominent figures in contemporary Kazakh lyrical prose is writer Roza Mukanova. Her psychological stories such as *The Monster*, *The Mourning Hill*, *Yourself*, *The Prisoner*, *The Composer*, and Mukagali exemplify innovative trends in Kazakh prose<sup>[7]</sup>. Literary studies have explored the artistic features of Mukanova's prose and dramatic works, highlighting her unique place in contemporary Kazakh literature<sup>[8]</sup>. Scholars have examined her plot construction, compositional techniques, and thematic explorations, recognizing her contributions to the development of psychological prose in Kazakhstan<sup>[8]</sup>. *The Prisoner* is among the most distinctive works in her creative legacy, symbolically addressing themes of inner freedom and spiritual captivity. Critic Zhusipbek Korgasbek noted: "Roza Mukanova's works are born from a deep immersion into the human soul. The soul is most revealed in great suffering. Roza seeks human meaning in the animalistic suffering caused by human hands. She finds details that touch the heart," emphasizing her consistent focus on uncovering the deepest layers of the human spirit<sup>[7]</sup>. Indeed, the contradictions and emotional upheavals experienced by the characters in *The Prisoner* serve as artistic tools to convey the spiritual condition of the time and the complex questions of human existence. Scholarly analyses of Mukanova's work continue to focus on her mastery in portraying inner worlds and in addressing existential issues through individual destinies.

Lyrical prose often engages with existential elements such as the meaning of life, spiritual search, loneliness, and hope. Depicting the human soul in artistic form is not merely a psychological exercise, but also a philosophical one. French philosopher Paul Ricoeur described literary narration as a pathway to human self-understanding, asserting that through storytelling, people come to comprehend their existence in time<sup>[9]</sup>. Researchers have pointed out that philosophical depth in Kazakh prose has increased in recent years, with a growing emphasis on existential reflection<sup>[6]</sup>. Studies of post-independence prose reveal that modern characters often engage in self-exploration, analyzing their own contradictions and delving

into their inner worlds, thus bringing overt existential inquiry into the narrative<sup>[6]</sup>. This philosophical dimension of lyricism is often expressed through landscape imagery, symbolic detail, and interior monologue, inviting readers to emotionally and intellectually merge with the character's journey. The lyrical character is often engaged in an inner quest to answer fundamental questions like "Who am I?" and "What is the meaning of life?" The protagonist of Mukanova's *The Prisoner*, which is the focus of this study, likewise seeks his identity through art, experiencing a kind of existential awakening.

This article analyzes the convergence of lyricism and postmodern poetics in contemporary Kazakh prose, using Roza Mukanova's *The Prisoner* as a case study. The research employs poetic-stylistic, psychoanalytic, and interpretive methods. The aim is to uncover the aesthetic and philosophical potential of the lyrical form in prose and to scientifically substantiate its relationship with postmodern narrative structures.

## 2. Literature Review

In contemporary literary studies, the term *lyricism* often denotes the presence of inner emotional depth and poetic resonance in a literary work. In other words, when features typically associated with poetry-subjective emotion and musicality appear in a prose text, its lyrical quality increases. While the concept of lyricism was historically associated exclusively with the lyrical genre of poetry, its scope has significantly expanded in modern literary theory, and it is now applied in the stylistic analysis of both prose and drama.

In the traditional tripartite genre system of literature (epic, lyric, and drama) that dominated the 19th and early 20th centuries, lyricism was considered a domain specific to poetry. However, from the second half of the 20th century onward, the role of lyrical style in prose texts has grown considerably<sup>[10]</sup>. Although the linguo-stylistic features of lyrical prose began to be studied in the 20th century<sup>[11]</sup>, its psychological dimensions have become the focus of 21st-century research<sup>[12,13]</sup>. Lyrical prose tends to prioritize emotional states over plot development, and the authorial voice is typically marked by a heightened emotional intensity. This can be observed, for instance, in studies analyzing the works of C.C. Krijgelmans<sup>[14]</sup>.

In lyrical prose, conveying the protagonist's inner world convincingly is accomplished through psychological artistic devices. While traditional epic narratives emphasize external events and actions, modern prose with strong psychological undertones shifts attention to the inner space of the character. Here, the main focus is not the plot's progression, but rather the qualitative transformation in the character's consciousness and their emotional turmoil. Scholar G. Pirali identified three distinct features of psychological prose in Kazakh literature<sup>[15]</sup>. These features reveal the critical role of *psychologism* in representing the inner world of the individual, closely tied to the depiction of mental states. The *stream of consciousness* technique allows the direct and unfiltered narration of a character's thoughts and feelings<sup>[16]</sup>. Instruments of this technique often include interior monologue, free indirect discourse, and fragmentary structure. These methods offer readers access to the character's internal world, enabling them to experience processes ranging from unconscious impulses to conscious reflection alongside the protagonist.

Western literary scholars have been examining the phenomenon of the "lyrical novel," which refers to the increasing presence of poetic language and subjective feeling within the structure of the modern novel. This line of inquiry, initiated in the mid-20th century, has continued into the new millennium and now intersects with cognitive narrative theories<sup>[17]</sup>. Jonathan Culler's *Theory of the Lyric* revisits the lyrical genre within Western literary theory and reconceptualizes the nature of lyricism in both poetry and prose<sup>[18]</sup>.

In Kazakh literature, scholarly attention to lyricism has intensified over the past decade. Researchers have conducted extensive analyses of both global and national theoretical perspectives on lyrical prose, exploring in depth the interplay of lyricism and psychologism in Kazakh fiction<sup>[10]</sup>. In the works of Roza Mukanova, lyricism and psychologism merge organically: the protagonist's interior monologues and emotional details often replace conventional plot structures.

*The Prisoner* is one of Mukanova's most frequently discussed psychological stories. The narrative explores the protagonist's complex fate and inner conflict. Scholars have noted that the character's *I* is portrayed in an elevated and confident manner<sup>[19]</sup>. The story is especially

valuable for its depiction of inner freedom and spiritual resilience: although externally imprisoned, the character remains unconquered in spirit, striving for inner liberation. Researchers have emphasized that characters in Mukanova's prose often appear as either overcoming hardships or succumbing to them, allowing readers to deeply experience emotional states such as defiance or helplessness through their portrayal<sup>[19]</sup>. In *The Prisoner*, the author uses lyrical psychological narration to immerse the reader in the consciousness of the captive woman, simultaneously unfolding her hope and despair. This work by Roza Mukanova stands among the finest examples of lyrical-psychological prose in Kazakh literature. Through its analysis, not only is the relationship between lyricism and psychologism made evident, but its intersection with postmodernism is also examined from a scholarly perspective.

### 3. Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative literary-theoretical analysis of Roza Mukanova's short story *The Prisoner*. It adopts a single-text analysis model, in which a single literary work – *The Prisoner* – serves as the primary object of investigation. The study offers a deep examination of the narrative's aesthetic structure, lyrical expression, and postmodernist codes.

The article integrates three principal methodological approaches: psychoanalytic literary analysis, poetic-stylistic analysis, and interpretive (hermeneutic) reading. The combined application of these methods enables a comprehensive interpretation of the text's complex symbolic systems and lyrical imagery, while also providing a structured investigation of the protagonist's inner world.

#### 3.1. Psychoanalytic Analysis

The psychoanalytic analysis in this study is primarily based on Sigmund Freud's structural model of the psyche (id, ego, superego) and the mechanisms of repression, as well as Jacques Lacan's concepts of the mirror stage, the symbolic-imaginary-real triad, and the notion of "the Other." These frameworks enable a nuanced interpretation of the protagonist's inner conflicts, sexual anxiety, and existential isolation as represented in the text.

### 3.2. Poetic-Stylistic Method

The poetic-stylistic approach focuses on the text's figurative language, system of metaphors, rhetorical structures, symbolic representations, and rhythmic patterns. The lyrical expressivity of the story – manifested through interior monologue, poetic repetition, and emotionally charged syntax – reveals the emotional landscape of the protagonist. This method plays a decisive role in unpacking the nature of lyricism within the narrative.

### 3.3. Interpretive (Hermeneutic) Approach

The semantic layers of the literary text are explored through hermeneutic interpretation. The internal dialogue between the protagonist's inner self and his imagined figures, as well as the interplay of the author's and the character's voices, are examined within the framework of literary polyphony. This approach helps elucidate the philosophical and symbolic density of the narrative.

### 3.4. Textual Analysis and Theoretical Triangulation

The method of close reading is employed to analyze significant utterances, symbols, and poetic details in the text. Through theoretical triangulation, the study synthesizes insights from all three methodological perspectives into a unified framework. This allows for a nuanced and multidimensional understanding of the text's structural and semantic complexity.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Linguistic Features of Lyricism in the Short Story *The Prisoner*

One of the key artistic techniques in Roza Mukanova's short story *The Prisoner* is the lyrical stream of consciousness. The protagonist, Äumeser, is portrayed as a character detached from external reality, existing primarily within his inner spiritual world. He engages in imaginary conversations with idealized women figures born of his own imagination, expressing his subconscious desires and fears through poetic and figurative language.

In lyrical prose, the emotional and expressive power of artistic language is deeply rooted in the inner emotional

world of the character. This is closely tied to the use of metaphor, epithet, and syntactic structure in literary language. Roza Mukanova's *The Prisoner* demonstrates distinct linguistic features of lyricism that contribute to the story's aesthetic depth and psychological resonance.

#### 4.1.1. Metaphors Used in *The Prisoner*

"Value holds sacred power" – In this expression, the abstract concept of "value" is endowed with a sacred, mystical force, elevating it to a spiritual realm.

"A woman without compassion is a stone" – This poetic metaphor conveys the idea that a woman's essence is defined by her compassion. The image of a "stone" symbolizes emotional coldness and cruelty.

"Society is turning into stone" – An existential metaphor that links the deterioration of social relations to the spiritual desolation of the individual.

"Living statue," "cold body" – Poetic images expressing the dehumanization or emotional numbness of a person.

"We make life harsh ourselves" – A philosophical metaphor suggesting that it is not time or fate that hardens human existence, but our own choices and actions.

"A woman is pure light," "God's compassion" – Highly poetic metaphors portraying the woman as a source of light, grace, and divine benevolence.

"A burnt-out husband" – A tragic metaphor that reflects the emotional and psychological transformation of a delicate soul under domestic and moral pressure <sup>[20]</sup>.

#### 4.1.2. Epithets in *The Prisoner*

"The most beautiful is the woman" – An evaluative expression emphasizing the woman as the most exquisite and unique creation within nature and the universe.

"Falseness and truthfulness" – Presented as opposing concepts, these epithets delineate the moral dimensions of human life.

"A woman without compassion," "you will lose your dignity" – Emotionally charged epithets that convey intense psychological evaluation.

"Worn-out, shriveled, burnt, cold as stone" – Evaluative phrases depicting the inner torment and existential struggle of the woman.

"Cold body," "statue," "stone" – Symbolic epithets reflecting emotional numbness and a lack of sensitivity or

empathy<sup>[20]</sup>.

#### 4.1.3. Syntactic Features in *The Prisoner*

Repetitive structures:

a) “You violated that beauty. You violated it with your own hands.”

b) “Life is cruel to both you and me. But we make life cruel ourselves.”

Such constructions reflect the character’s obsessive thought loops and intensify the emotional tension born of inner turmoil. This is a hallmark of rhetorical syntax, typical of lyrical monologue.

Parallelism and coordinated sentence elements:

Phrases like “Falseness and truthfulness,” “where there is no respect – I cannot respect,” and “stone – without compassion” reflect moral contrasts and philosophical reflection through structural symmetry.

Multiple metaphors within a single sentence:

“A woman is the bearer of life. A woman is pure light. A woman is God’s mercy.”

This rhetorical repetition and anaphora amplify the sanctity of womanhood, creating a sacred poetic resonance.

Short rhetorical questions contribute to the dramatic tone:

“Why didn’t you believe in the beauty nature gave you?”, “Is that why you covered it with paint?”

These questions reflect the inner contradictions and lyrical appeal of the character’s voice.

Short, fragmented sentences:

“She cannot love. She cannot walk. She is only a statue.”

These express emotional resistance and a growing dramatic intensity. This style corresponds to asyndeton and anaphora techniques.

The use of interior monologue is one of the defining features of lyrical prose. The character’s lines such as “I take pleasure in a woman’s tears,” and “Don’t love me. Save me from this prison,” not only reflect deep psychological trauma but also convey profound philosophical meaning<sup>[20]</sup>.

In terms of textual composition, the author employs symbolic imagery to achieve lyrical depth. Symbols such as “threshold,” “window,” “mirror,” “hat,” “covering” function as artistic representations of the protagonist’s

captivity. These elements illustrate the conflict between the desire for freedom and the inability to attain it.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, these images represent traumatic experiences situated at the intersection of the conscious and the unconscious. The window serves as a limited channel to the outside world; the threshold implies a border that could be crossed, but remains inaccessible. This forms an archetypal image of spiritual imprisonment.

In Roza Mukanova’s prose, language is not merely a narrative tool—it is a poetic medium imbued with artistic significance. The story frequently employs poetic devices such as repetition, antithesis, rhetorical questions, and oxymoron. These elements intensify the lyrical tone and convey the protagonist’s emotional turmoil with clarity and impact.

#### 4.2. Postmodernist Elements in *The Prisoner*

Among contemporary Kazakh writers, Roza Mukanova is one of the most prominent authors whose work most closely aligns with postmodernist aesthetics. Her short story *The Prisoner* can be considered a compelling example of postmodernist literature. This is evidenced by the presence of such postmodern elements as unconsciousness, hallucination, the protagonist’s yearning for freedom while being unaware of its unattainability, a pursuit of truth and authenticity, intertextuality, allusion, reminiscence, stream of consciousness, dark humor, parody, and polyphony<sup>[21]</sup>.

The story presents the psychological condition of the central character, Aumeser – a man who has dedicated his love and passion entirely to art, yearned for freedom but eventually became a prisoner of the very art he revered. Ironically, he ends up confessing love not for art, which he held above all, but for the woman he feared most. Though his external appearance and society label him as mad, the voice of his inner world speaks with reason and coherence.

In his imagination, Aumeser converses freely with various women who either admire his art or exist only in his mind. His dialogues often unfold in poetic or philosophical tones, and his words at times resemble quotations lodged in memory from reading the works of great thinkers and writers – this is a clear example of reminiscence.

His conversations with imagined women center around themes of creation and authenticity. Through his words to the first woman he envisions – “Have you come?... You must have come because you like me, right?... But you are not to my taste. I am a painter. A great artist beyond your reach...” – the reader also glimpses details of his personal life and hardship <sup>[20]</sup>.

The symbolic critique of artificial female beauty and societal expectations begins here. He condemns the obsession with manufactured beauty and false virtue, accusing women of masking their truth and denying their reality: “You live composed of ‘beautiful’ masks that turn your back to truth and welcome sin. You are masters of deception, altering your appearance to fit an ideal that was never yours to begin with” <sup>[20]</sup>.

These statements, though seemingly spoken by a deranged mind, reflect deep philosophical insights. His polite tone and sudden shifts into reflection suggest that he was once a man of decency and intellect. His critique, while aimed at the woman, serves as a broader commentary on the absence of truth in society.

Aumeser’s emotional detachment becomes more visible when he quickly dismisses the first woman and expresses sorrow at not having spoken longer with her. The story reveals traces of jealousy, rejection, rivalry, and betrayal. For instance, his mockery of another man – a shallow, talentless actor masked in wealth and outward appearance – becomes a platform for dark humor and bitter irony: “That man hides his idiocy behind an expensive jacket and diamond ring. He’s an animal, swollen with gluttony...” <sup>[20]</sup>.

In his second imaginary dialogue, with Olga Vasil'yevna, the protagonist mockingly positions himself as a “cosmic genius” and corrects her when she praises him: “The seven heavens and the seven layers of earth all belong to my imagination” <sup>[20]</sup>. This declaration aligns with the postmodernist notion of the *übermensch*, or superhuman. Olga’s response – “Please descend a little from your lofty heights” – represents an effort to reintroduce moral perspective into his inflated self-image.

The artist’s keen perception of the artificiality of the female identity continues. When asked, “How can one ever see a woman’s true face?” Olga replies: “Everything a woman loves – her body, her clothes, her gestures –

must be beautiful.” The narrative here emphasizes Aumeser’s penetrating insight into performative femininity, exposing layers of pretense <sup>[20]</sup>.

Postmodern identity fragmentation is further illustrated in his mirror scene, where he addresses himself directly: “Please don’t be offended. This is all I have. Don’t think I’m a fool. I see what you don’t, I know what you can’t. That’s the difference.” This reflects the postmodern trope of a character engaged in dialogue with their own “self” <sup>[20]</sup>.

His desperate cry for freedom reaches its climax when he shouts: “Don’t love me. Free me from this prison!” – expressing the conflict between emotional entanglement and existential independence. When his imagined lover urges him toward intimacy, he recoils in terror: “Loving is like being staked to the ground. My soul seeks freedom. I do not want to belong – not to a woman, not to society!” <sup>[20]</sup>.

The irony lies in the fact that, having spent the entire narrative criticizing artificial women and proclaiming devotion to art, Aumeser ultimately admits to having fallen in love with a woman: “I worshipped art... But the truth is – I loved a woman. I feared her. Her standards destroy men like me. I sought a reason not to love her and found it in art” <sup>[20]</sup>.

In the closing lines, the protagonist collapses into emotional confession: “Please forgive me for what I lost. I beg your forgiveness every morning. I am a prisoner – shackled.” This declaration finalizes the metaphor of emotional captivity and unachievable freedom <sup>[20]</sup>.

Structurally, *The Prisoner* departs from traditional realist narrative conventions. Mukanova skillfully fuses dark humor with psychological depth. Aumeser’s monologues and inner voice flow with logical coherence, resembling a stream of consciousness. His perception of life as meaningless, his denial of truth, and his inner confusion align clearly with postmodern literary sensibilities.

The causes of his mental state are left ambiguous. One may infer a tragic love story, an unhappy family history, or an obsessive devotion to art that devolved into narcissism and madness. Alternatively, his existential dissent against societal norms might have pushed him into psychological isolation. However, the author intentionally refrains from resolving these possibilities, leaving the

reader within the realm of ambiguity – a hallmark of post-modern narrative.

### 4.3. The Identity of the Author and the Protagonist in *The Prisoner*

In *The Prisoner*, the central character is a mentally unstable painter named Aumeser – a name given by the author herself. Through his imagination, the number of characters in the story multiplies, blurring the boundaries between reality and fantasy. Throughout the narrative, the thoughts of the author and the protagonist frequently intertwine. For instance, when Aumeser is lost in his own thoughts and standing alone, he says: “– What a beautiful day. Look how all living things are bathed in divine light. A woman waiting for her lover would beautify herself just like this. I must step outside,” – a passage in which the author’s voice blends seamlessly with the character’s <sup>[20]</sup>. The story also presents instances of direct dialogue between the author and the protagonist.

One such moment occurs in a reflective scene: “He pitied the disheveled woman dragging herself out from the doorway, but did not stop her. She tucked her artificial hair under her arm as if her entire existence were a facade. All his lifelong dreams, grief, joy, and sorrow – everything had been a lie. Then what had he lived for? Was it truly as the painter had said?” – to which the protagonist responds, “– Yes... There is nothing genuine in this world – not true sorrow, not true joy. Everything is fleeting” <sup>[20]</sup>.

Aumeser’s boundless imagination is symbolized through his painting titled *People of the Thirtieth Century*. The author uses this canvas to both criticize pseudo-artists and emphasize that Aumeser himself is indifferent to superficial beauty – revealed through his eccentric clothing: “He draped a sleeveless apron over his body, colored in bright mismatched hues. On his worn-out cap, he attached a peacock feather. On his feet were outdated shoes – once fashionable, now disdained by the younger generation” <sup>[20]</sup>.

The author also reveals public perception of her character openly: “– It’s me... I just went outside, – he waved cheerfully, his appearance shocking like someone descended from the sky. The crowd stared in amazement. Some hesitated, others followed curiously. As the people parted to make way, he waved again: ‘It’s me, the one who went outside. This is me...’ One observer envied

his freedom, frustrated by a life bound by rules. Another whispered a prayer: ‘Please, don’t let me lose my mind. Don’t let me lose the reason that tames my emotions. Grant me the strength to control what’s inside’” <sup>[20]</sup>.

Though the author gives Aumeser complete freedom in his imagination, she does not allow him full liberation. This becomes evident during his encounter with the third imagined woman:

“– Enough. The one existence you denied and despised – woman – has come, – she approaches, no longer timid but emboldened.

– No! No! – Aumeser raised both hands above his head. Cold sweat covered his body. An empty threshold. No one in sight. He panicked, breathing heavily, trembling in fear. For the first time, Aumeser was terrified of his own imagination” <sup>[20]</sup>.

This tension climaxes when the narrator remarks: “Aumeser gave a final gasp. He felt death approaching. The truth he had hidden all his life was now ready to leave with his soul. Perhaps it was time to speak. A painful sob welled up inside him” – indicating that the author ultimately grants her character the chance to voice the truth he has long withheld <sup>[20]</sup>.

The protagonist’s journey ends with a confession and plea for forgiveness, as narrated by the author:

“– What is left for me now? – he whispered. – My emotions sought the truth, but my mind refused to allow it. The fault is mine alone. I will never retrieve what I’ve lost. Forgive the burden of my guilt. Each morning, I beg forgiveness from all of you. Forgive me – let it bring peace to my soul. I am a prisoner, shackled, – said the artist, weeping uncontrollably” <sup>[20]</sup>.

## 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, Roza Mukanova’s *The Prisoner* stands out as a distinctive work in contemporary Kazakh prose due to its masterful synthesis of lyrical and postmodern narrative techniques. As the findings of this study have shown, the story brings together elements of traditional lyrical narration and postmodern poetics, forming an integrated and mutually enriching artistic structure. This synthesis enables the author to portray the protagonist’s inner world through delicate lyrical introspection, while also exploring themes of spiritual crisis, the longing for



freedom, and the search for truth within a postmodern aesthetic framework.

The dominance of lyricism in the story is clearly reflected in the protagonist's emotional experiences and interior monologues. The author's figurative and emotionally charged language subtly conveys every nuance of the character's state of mind, drawing the reader deeply into the protagonist's spiritual landscape. The lyrical mode of narration imbues the text with intimacy and sensitivity, significantly enhancing its emotional impact.

At the same time, traditional principles of plot construction and spatiotemporal categories are reconsidered from a postmodern perspective, resulting in a conditional and fragmentary narrative structure. The boundary between reality and illusion is blurred, and the protagonist's subjective perception becomes the primary lens through which reality is interpreted. This creates a characteristic postmodern effect of ambiguity and polysemy, requiring the reader to engage in independent interpretation of the text.

The composition of the story employs stream-of-consciousness techniques alongside elements of irony, deliberately subverting the conventions of classical realism. Mukanova's *The Prisoner* enriches the Kazakh short story genre both thematically and formally by combining the humanistic and emotional potential of traditional lyrical prose with the formal experimentation of postmodern aesthetics.

The story also intertwines the emotional depth typical of Kazakh national consciousness with contemporary philosophical inquiry. This artistic unity prompts readers to reconsider concepts such as freedom and dependence in new ways. Thus, *The Prisoner* may be regarded as a prime example of thematic and ideological renewal in Kazakh literature – a complex artistic synthesis and a unique literary phenomenon born of the author's creative exploration.

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All the authors have made the same contribution to the writing of the article

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## Informed Consent Statement

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## Data Availability Statement

Not applicable

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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