



THE HISTORY, PRESENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND PROSPECTS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT-BIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 20 th November 2025 Accepted: 14 th December 2025	This article examines the features of enlightenment-biographical prose, its historical origins, and the factors contributing to its development, using the novels of literary scholar and academician Naim Karimov as a case study. The article reviews and analyzes the critical reception of this genre within literary studies. It also explains its developmental trends and its necessity as a form of artistic and scholarly expression
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Biography can be described as a branch of knowledge as old as humanity itself, which chronicles the lives and activities of individuals who have played a significant role in a society's life, created or caused a historical turning point, or established themselves in a particular field. This Greek term translates to "life story", "written destiny," or "life." Biography, which was once confined to the domain of history and historians, later evolved over time into a phenomenon expressing the characteristics of distinct literary genres (such as *manoqib*, *holot*, literary portrait, ocherk, and essay). As is known, history recounts the experiences and heroic deeds of people who have lived up to the present day. The stories and information about the lives of the people who participated in or caused an event are as important as the event itself. Since people are the cause and participants of events, the subject of biography is the study and narration of their lives and activities. For this reason, many historians of the East and West have attached great importance to biography within the branches of history.

In the Islamic world, biography demonstrated its distinct characteristics earlier. This is because Islamic historiography begins with the study of the life and activities of the Prophet, that is, with his biography.... The biographical information mentioned in the context of the narration of a hadith is also considered proof of that hadith's authenticity.... For this reason, biography often held a very important place in Islamic historiography, even attaining a more dominant position during that era compared to other fields related to history. Later, biography expanded into other branches of knowledge, including the field of literature and its genres. Any writer can describe historical events and processes or narrate the lives of historical figures. However, expressing and artistically analyzing the psychology of a hero, and psychological processes in general, is not something everyone can do. In other words, as Odil Yoqubov put it, where the historian's work ends, the writer's work begins. In Eastern literature, Arabic and Persian *tazkiras* and *manoqib-holots* are considered the first examples of biography as a literary genre, while in Turkic literature, this development is associated with the name of Navoi. In Western literature, biographical works began to enter the literary scene at the end of the 18th century (in Russian literature, one of the first examples of a novelized biography is Radishchev's "Fyodor Vasilyevich Ushakov," written in 1789).

Discussing biographical works, A. Rasulov puts forward the following idea: "Any field related to humanity refers to biography. In literary studies, there is a biographical method (approach), and in fiction, there is a biographical genre. World literature has a great many works that convincingly illustrate the laws of historical development, the spiritual and psychological state of society, and the processes of its growth and change by illuminating the characters of famous figures." While citing examples of such works from world literature, the scholar defines them as works of the biographical genre. However, biographical quality is a characteristic of a genre. If we were to consider biography a genre, then we would also have to say that genres such as historical, fantasy, detective, and so on exist. From this point of view, it is more appropriate to consider biography not as a genre, but as a sub-genre (like a biographical novel or biographical novella). As an example, we can point to a number of works published in world literature under the series "The Lives of Remarkable People". In Uzbek literary criticism, works such as "Hamza" (L.Qayumov, 1973), "Navoiy" (A.Qayumov, 1975), "Gafur Gulom" (A.Akbarov, 1974), "Hamid Olimjon" (N. Karimov, 1979), "Oybek" (N.Karimov, 1985), "Abdulla Qahhor" (O. Sharafiddinov, 1989), "Otajon Hoshimov" (O. Sharafiddinov, 1990), "Chulpon" (O.Sharafiddinov, 1993), "Usmon Nosir" (N.Karimov, 1993), "Qodiriy's Garden" (U.Normatov, 1995), "Chulpon" (N.Karimov, 2003), "Biography of a Work of Art" (N.Rahimjonov, 2008), "Maqsud Shayxzoda" (N.Karimov, 2010),

"Hamid Olimjon" (N.Karimov, 2013), and "Usmon Nosir" (N.Karimov, 2022) were created, through which we witness literary criticism drawing closer to creative literature.

It is difficult to classify artistic-biographical works in literary criticism into specific genres... in them, reviews, biographical material, portraits, and memoirs merge and coalesce. Elements of the essay are clearly evident. Scientific, documentary, and journalistic modes of expression take precedence over artistry. In poetics and literary studies, a number of critics and scholars have expressed, and continue to express, various attitudes toward this phenomenon. A. Rasulov and U. Rasulova do not assign a definitive genre to the novels Naim Karimov called "enlightenment" and "enlightenment-biographical." They discuss this type of novel under the general heading "novels in criticism." They put forward the view that, "The novel in criticism has not yet fully discovered its identity... In a critical novel, facts, information, and biographical circumstances contend for their rightful place, because they are integral aspects of the writer's biography." They consider works of this type to belong not to fiction, but to the field of literary studies.

In his article "An Enlightenment Novel or a Study?" S.Sodiq reflects on N.Karimov's enlightenment novel "Chulpon," writing that this work is "a valuable study that enriches our scholarship." At the end of the article, he concludes, "Let the great scholar Naim Karimov write the literary study. Let a true writer, Xayriddin Sulton, create the enlightenment novel." In other words, the critic defines the novels that N.Karimov called "enlightenment" as "studies" and assesses this work as a phenomenon within literary studies.

I. Yoqubov's views are as follows: The fact that N.Karimov's research focuses on the art of elegant words, artistic creation and its poetic and prose forms, and the system of Chulpon's views on literature and art, indicates that it is a literary-aesthetic phenomenon... Therefore, while acknowledging that the work "Chulpon" contains certain features characteristic of an essay, we are of the opinion that N.Karimov correctly defined its genre as an "enlightenment novel."

As the phenomenon of inter-genre mutation continues to manifest in literature, it is not an easy task to strictly define the genre of works created in recent years. This is especially true for biographical works, because every creator has their own style. While documentaryism prevails in N.Karimov's enlightenment novels, elements of the essay and the method of biographical analysis are clearly evident in N.Rahimjonov's "Biography of a Literary Work." If we consider X.Sulton's "Boburiynoma" an example of an artistic biography, then we can call Alisher Mirzo's novel-dilogy "The Lad from Kallaxona" and "The Artist" a novel-essay based on the author's autobiography. And the novel "The Bridge", which the writer Hamid Burkhon defined as a documentary novel, can be added to the treasury of literature as a novel-essay that embodies the characteristics of a memoir.

It should be particularly emphasized that the novel-essay and the enlightenment novel are not the same phenomenon. True, enlightenment novels also contain signs of the essay, of course. However, enlightenment novels are also distinguished by the fact that they are not written in the essay genre from beginning to end, are rich in scientific evidence, and this evidence is well-substantiated.

V.G. Belinsky emphasizes that in a biographical novel: 1) fabrication is not permitted; 2) facts should be presented in a lively, uplifting spirit; 3) documents should organize the events (scenes); 4) personal correspondence should be presented in the form of a dialogue; 5) the development of events must be guided by a central idea [2.74]. The novel-essay, however, does not have such requirements; it is much freer and is distinguished by its artistic nature rather than its academic one.

In conclusion, these types of works - which have emerged from the phenomenon of "essayization" in the novel and the convergence of artistic phenomena with academicism - await a comprehensive and in-depth study.

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