

**HISTORICAL MIGRATION AND EDUCATIONAL EXILE IN JAVLON JOVLIEV'S
«QO'RQMA» (DON'T BE AFRAID): A LYRICAL-TRAGIC ANALYSIS**

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Abstract. This article provides a comprehensive examination of Javlon Jovliev's novel «Qo'rqma» (Don't Be Afraid, 2020) as a significant contribution to Uzbek literature's engagement with historical migration and educational exile [1, 376]. The study analyzes how the novel represents the experiences of Uzbek students who traveled to Germany in the 1920s for education, and it explores themes of intellectual migration, cultural hybridity, and tragic return [2, 13]. Through detailed textual analysis, the research investigates Jovliev's distinctive «lyro-tragic» (lyrical-tragic) style that combines lyrical prose, dramatic tension, and historical documentary [3, 16]. The analysis reveals how the novel connects early twentieth-century educational migration with contemporary Uzbek identity formation, and it employs innovative narrative techniques including dream-hallucination sequences, temporal fluidity, and semiotic symbolism [4, 15]. The study argues that «Qo'rqma» represents a new aesthetic direction in Uzbek prose, and it demonstrates how the work harmonizes traditional literary heritage with modern stylistic innovations while engaging with traumatic historical memory [5, 89].

Keywords: Javlon Jovliev, «Qo'rqma,» Uzbek literature, historical migration, educational exile, lyrical-tragic novel, 1920s Germany, Soviet repression, cultural memory, postcolonial identity.

Javlon Jovliev has emerged as one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary Uzbek literature [6, 234]. He is a member of the Uzbekistan Writers' Union, and he entered literary consciousness with his unique prose style that defies conventional generic categorization [7, 156]. His novel «Qo'rqma» (Don't Be Afraid), which was published in 2020 by Asaxiy Books, has been recognized as a bestseller, and it achieved 4th place in 2024 and 8th place in 2022 [8, 12]. This work represents a significant aesthetic achievement that has generated substantial critical attention and reader engagement [9, 78].

The novel addresses a historically significant but literarily underexplored subject, and this subject is Uzbek students who traveled to Germany in the 1920s for education and were subsequently executed by the Soviet regime [10, 112]. This historical migration was educational rather than economic, and it was voluntary yet ultimately fatal [11, 201]. This material provides Jovliev with resources for exploring fundamental questions of national identity, intellectual aspiration, and historical trauma [12, 267].

This article provides comprehensive analysis of how «Qo'rqma» represents historical migration and educational exile. The study examines the novel's innovative narrative strategies, and it analyzes the construction of migrant subjectivity and the engagement with Uzbek cultural memory. The analysis demonstrates how Jovliev's work contributes to both Uzbek literary tradition and broader post-Soviet engagement with traumatic history.

The early twentieth century witnessed significant educational migration from Russian-controlled Central Asia to Europe, and Germany was the primary destination for this migration. This movement was connected to the Jadid reform movement, which sought to modernize Muslim education and society through engagement with European scientific and cultural developments. Young Uzbek intellectuals traveled to Berlin, Leipzig, and other German cities to study medicine, engineering, literature, and political theory.

This educational migration represented a distinctive form of mobility. It was undertaken for intellectual development rather than economic necessity, and it was shaped by colonial and



revolutionary politics. This migration was ultimately marked by tragic consequences, and the Soviet consolidation of power in the late 1920s and 1930s led to the systematic elimination of many of these students. These students were accused of bourgeois nationalism, pan-Turkism, or espionage, and they were executed by the Soviet regime.

«Qo'rqma» engages with historical figures including Sattar Jabbor, Maryam Sultonmurodova, Ahmad Shukriy, and Abdulvahob Murodiy. These were Uzbek students who established the «Komak» journal and theater troupe in Berlin. The novel also depicts Olimjon Idrisiy, who served as translator between Bukhara-Turkistan government and Germany, and it portrays Grigoriy Meyerson, the Soviet representative who was sent to Berlin to force students' return [2, 201].

Jovliev transforms these historical materials through literary imagination. He creates protagonist Rovi— a six-month-old infant who is separated from his parents. Through the writer's fantasy, this infant becomes a «possessor of local thought and imagination». This narrative strategy allows Jovliev to explore historical migration through consciousness that bridges temporal and spatial distance.

Critics have identified «Qo'rqma» as creating a new generic category, and this category is the «liro-tragic» (lirotragik) novel. This designation captures the work's distinctive combination of four elements. First, the work contains lyrical elements including extensive poetic prose, emotional intensity, and musical language. Second, the work employs tragic structure with inevitable catastrophe, moral conflict, and cathartic recognition. Third, the work creates dramatic tension through dialogue-driven scenes and theatrical confrontation. Fourth, the work uses prose narrative with extended fictional development and psychological exploration.

As critic Bahodir Karim notes, «lyric and tragedy harmonize» in the novel. This harmony creates a work that operates «between dream and reality, sleep and wakefulness, love and hatred». This generic hybridity proves particularly suited to representing historical migration, which itself involves movement between different states of being.

Jovliev employs distinctive narrative techniques that distinguish «Qo'rqma» from conventional historical fiction. The novel extensively uses dream states and hallucinations to represent historical consciousness. Rovi's imagination allows the writer to introduce desired events into the narrative, and readers accept these events as natural and sincere. This technique solves the epistemological problem of historical representation—how to know and depict past events—by embracing imaginative reconstruction [4, 78].

The novel's treatment of time demonstrates temporal fluidity. The boundaries between time and reality can be broken at any desired point, and this appears natural to the reader. Past and present merge in this narrative, and historical record combines with contemporary reflection. This merging emphasizes the continued presence of historical trauma in Uzbek cultural memory.

The novel operates through what critic Omonboy Boltaboyev identifies as «semiotic keys». These are symbolic elements that carry multiple layers of meaning. The number seventy (yetmish) students functions as such a symbol, and the mirror serves as reflection of national consciousness. The Aral Sea operates as symbol of ecological and cultural destruction, and all these elements function as dense signifiers [5, 89].

Several distinctive features characterize Jovliev's prose. The novel avoids excessive «he said-she said» dialogue tags and lengthy speeches. Sentences are meaningful, impactful, and mature. Short sentences begin but conclude with different thoughts, words, and additions than readers expect. This technique creates necessity for re-reading, and it generates productive textual complexity.



Unlike some contemporary fiction, «Qo'rqma» avoids excessive philosophizing or pretentious wisdom. The novel presents «algae-turbulent century events, past time and people moving within it».

The novel creates vivid character portraits through concentrated, unconventional description. Grigoriy Meyerson is described through accumulated negative attributes: «If a mouse flies, it's worthless! Ears unbent like a tortoise's neck! Uneven face like a village road! Eyes like dogfish swimming! Two ruins sought by Boyogli—these are his nose! All these are Meyerson's personal property» [5, 156].

The novel represents educational migration through the experience of profound separation. Rovi is separated from his parents at six months old, and this is a radical severing that shapes his entire consciousness. This separation serves as metaphor for the broader experience of Uzbek intellectuals who left their homeland for education. These intellectuals lost connection with their origins even as they sought to serve them.

The departure scenes emphasize both voluntary choice and compelled necessity. The students go to Germany seeking knowledge, modernization, and national advancement. Yet their departure is also shaped by colonial conditions. These conditions include limited educational opportunities in Russian-controlled Central Asia, the desire to escape imperial surveillance, and the hope that European education will enable national development.

«Qo'rqma» depicts the students' German experience through multiple dimensions.

The novel represents the students' engagement with German philosophy, science, and literature. Their establishment of «Komak» journal and theater troupe demonstrates the productive cultural hybridity that migration enables. This hybridity involves Uzbek content in European form, and it presents traditional themes through modern media.

The students navigate between preserving Uzbek identity and adapting to German environment. Their letters, interrogation records, and interactions with German society reveal the complexity of this negotiation.

The novel traces how the students' political understanding develops through their German experience. Exposure to European political thought combines with observation of Soviet developments, and this shapes their evolving national consciousness.

The novel's tragic structure centers on the impossibility of successful return. Grigoriy Meyerson's mission to force students back to the Soviet Union represents the political closure of educational migration's possibilities. The students' resistance, their eventual return, and their execution constitute the novel's catastrophic conclusion [7, 78].

This structure parallels the broader pattern of Uzbek Jadid intellectuals. Many of these intellectuals were destroyed by the Soviet regime they had initially supported or hoped to reform [8, 156]. The novel's title, «Don't Be Afraid,» gains tragic irony through this structure. The command to fearlessness is issued in circumstances where fear is entirely rational, and where courage cannot prevent destruction.

«Qo'rqma» constructs explicit connections between 1920s educational migration and contemporary Uzbekistan. Rovi's investigation of the past serves as frame for the novel's historical narrative. This investigation includes archival research, imagination of historical events, and comparison of past students with contemporary youth.

The novel establishes parallels and contrasts between historical and contemporary migration. Past students went to Germany for education, while contemporary youth seek economic opportunity abroad. Past migration was state-sponsored or tolerated, while contemporary labor migration is individually organized. Past students faced political persecution, while contemporary migrants face economic exploitation and social discrimination. Both experiences involve cultural hybridity, family separation, and transformed identity.



Through these connections, «Qo'rqma» suggests that historical migration continues to shape Uzbek cultural memory and contemporary identity formation.

The novel's central thematic concern is the formation and preservation of Uzbek national identity through historical trauma. The students' educational migration represents an attempt to acquire knowledge and skills for national development. Their destruction represents the violent interruption of this project.

Jovliev depicts national identity through multiple symbolic registers [9, 201]. The novel's Uzbek prose incorporates Arabic and Persian literary heritage, and this demonstrates the linguistic continuity that historical trauma could not destroy [9, 234]. References to Gur-e Amir, Bukhara, and the Aral Sea connect historical migration to specific places [9, 267]. The novel itself serves as act of cultural memory, and it preserves knowledge of events that official histories suppressed.

«Qo'rqma» explores the dangerous position of the intellectual in political transformation [9, 78]. The students' education abroad makes them suspect to Soviet authorities, and their nationalist commitments make them targets of Stalinist repression. Their idealism proves no protection against political violence.

The novel presents multiple models of intellectual engagement. Sattar Jabbor and colleagues are committed to national development through education and cultural production. Olimjon Idrisiy serves as translator-mediator between cultures and political systems. Grigoriy Meyerson functions as Soviet functionary who enforces political conformity [105, 45]. Rovi operates as contemporary investigator who seeks to recover and understand this history [10, 78].

While primarily focused on male students, «Qo'rqma» includes significant female characters including Maryam Sul-tonmurodova. The novel depicts how women participated in educational migration and faced particular challenges and dangers [10, 156].

The novel's contemporary frame through Rovi's consciousness raises questions about masculinity and national identity. This frame explores how the «orphaned» male subject reconstructs connection to paternal/national heritage.

The novel employs ecological metaphor for cultural destruction. References to the Aral Sea—»like the Aral Sea, having disappeared into nothingness«—connect historical repression with environmental catastrophe [11, 45]. Both represent irreversible losses that shape contemporary Uzbek condition.

«Qo'rqma» engages with multiple Uzbek literary traditions. The novel continues traditions of representing Uzbek history, particularly the Jadid period and Soviet repression. These traditions were established by writers like Pirmqul Qodirov and Tog'ay Murod.

Jovliev's poetic language connects to traditions of Uzbek lyrical prose (lyrical story, lyrical novel). The author extends these traditions through his distinctive «liro-tragic» synthesis.

The novel's use of archival materials places it within traditions of documentary fiction [119, 45]. These materials include letters, interrogation records, and memoirs, and they seek to represent historical truth through literary form.

«Qo'rqma» can be productively compared with three categories of world literature. First, the novel belongs to post-Soviet traumatic memory literature. This category includes works addressing Stalinist repression across former Soviet republics, including Russian literature (Solzhenitsyn, Shalamov), Ukrainian literature, and Kazakh literature.

Second, the novel relates to postcolonial educational migration narratives. This category includes literature representing colonial and postcolonial students traveling to imperial centers for education, such as Laila Lalami's «The Moor's Account» and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's «Americanah».



Third, the novel connects to historical fiction of intellectual destruction [12, 45]. This category includes works addressing the destruction of intellectuals by totalitarian regimes, such as Julian Barnes's «The Noise of Time» (about Shostakovich) and Ismail Kadare's «The Palace of Dreams» [12, 78].

«Qo'rqma» has received substantial critical attention. Bahodir Karim's extensive review identifies the work as «a new novel of the new era, written in a new and painful way, in a new style and with its own new tone». Karim emphasizes Jovliev's discovery of «an artistic method-path that no one had thought of».

Academic analysis has focused on the novel's stylistic innovations. Omonboy Boltaboyev's study examines «style and artistic skills» in «Qo'rqma» and he analyzes how «lyrical, prose, and dramatic methods of poetic perception and expression» combine to create «a new individual style» [13, 16]. Linguopoetic and semiotic analysis demonstrates that Jovliev «successfully harmonizes traditional Uzbek literary aesthetics with modern stylistic tendencies» [13, 15].

The novel's bestseller status indicates broad popular engagement. Social media discussion, YouTube analysis videos, and reader reviews suggest that «Qo'rqma» has resonated with younger Uzbek readers particularly. The work's accessibility despite its stylistic sophistication explains this popular success [13, 112]. Critic Bahodir Karim describes this as «green tree» vitality that occasional «dry branches» cannot diminish.

«Qo'rqma» has been incorporated into educational contexts, and it appears on recommended reading lists for university students. The novel serves as cultural memory work, and it introduces younger Uzbeks to historical experiences that official Soviet and post-Soviet narratives marginalized.

Javlon Jovliev's «Qo'rqma» represents a significant achievement in contemporary Uzbek literature [140, 267]. Through its innovative «liro-tragic» form, its sophisticated narrative techniques, and its profound engagement with historical migration and educational exile, the novel extends the possibilities of Uzbek prose. This work contributes to cultural memory and national identity formation.

The novel demonstrates that historical migration can generate literary art of the highest order [14, 112]. This migration was educational, voluntary, and ultimately fatal [14, 156]. Jovliev's transformation of archival research into imaginative reconstruction creates powerful narrative effects. The author creates Rovi's consciousness as bridge between past and present, and his stylistic innovations make the historical experience of Uzbek students in 1920s Germany present and urgent for contemporary readers [14, 234].

«Qo'rqma» suggests that Uzbek literature's engagement with migration need not be limited to contemporary labor migration. The historical dimensions of Uzbek mobility provide equally rich material for literary exploration. These dimensions include educational migration to Turkey, Egypt, Russia, and other destinations. Jovliev's work opens possibilities for further engagement with these historical migrations.

The novel's final invocation expresses the ethical imperative that shapes Jovliev's entire project. This invocation declares: «O God, until Judgment Day the Motherland is entrusted to us, entrusted to us, betrayal of it is Judgment Day, Judgment Day, Judgment Day!». «Qo'rqma» enacts this fidelity to homeland through literary art that preserves memory, honors sacrifice, and demands continued commitment to national cultural development.

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