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LANDSCAPE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CLOSURE IN STEINBECK AND HAMDAM

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Abstract. This article compares landscape and psychological closure in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and Ulug'bek Hamdam's *Ko'nglimdagi daryo*. Qualitative close reading examines spatial recurrence, the distribution of attention, embodied experience, and the distinction between actual and imagined action. The analysis argues that returning to a meaningful place does not guarantee psychological settlement. Steinbeck combines a completed outcome with unresolved interpretation, whereas Hamdam articulates an alternative whose practical realization remains uncertain. The comparison distinguishes formal completion from restored agency and explains how recurrent waterside environments organize possibility without serving as automatic assurances of harmony.

Keywords: John Steinbeck; Ulug'bek Hamdam; landscape; psychological experience; attention; spatial recurrence; focalization; dream narrative; narrative closure.

STEYNBEK VA HAMDAM NASRIDA MANZARA VA RUHIY YAKUNLANISH

Annotatsiya. Maqolada Jon Steynbekning *Of Mice and Men* asari hamda Ulug'bek Hamdamning *Ko'nglimdagi daryo* hikoyasida manzara va ruhiy yakunlanish munosabati qiyoslanadi. Sifatga asoslangan matniy tahlil makon takrori, diqqatning yo'naltirilishi, jismoniy kechinma hamda haqiqiy va tasavvurdagi harakat farqini o'rganadi. Tahlilga ko'ra, muhim makonga qaytish ruhiy muammoning uzil-kesil hal bo'lishini kafolatlamaydi. Steynbekda voqea natijasi aniq bo'lsa-da, talqin ochiq qoladi; Hamdamda esa muqobil imkoniyatning amalda ro'yobga chiqishi tasdiqlanmaydi. Qiyos kompozitsion tugallikni shaxs irodasining tiklanishidan ajratib, suv bo'yidagi makonlar kechinma va harakat o'rtasidagi murakkab aloqani qanday tashkil etishini ko'rsatadi. Natijalar adiblar o'rtasidagi bevosita ta'sir haqidagi da'voga emas, tanlangan matnlarning farqli tuzilishiga asoslanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Jon Steynbek; Ulug'bek Hamdam; manzara; ruhiy kechinma; diqqat; makon takrori; fokalizatsiya; tush; narrativ yakunlanish.

ПЕЙЗАЖ И ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ ЗАВЕРШЁННОСТЬ В ПРОЗЕ СТЕЙНБЕКА И ХАМДАМА

Аннотация. В статье сопоставляются пейзаж и психологическая завершённость в произведении Джона Стейнбека *Of Mice and Men* и рассказе Улугбека Хамдама *Ko'nglimdagi daryo*. Метод внимательного чтения позволяет исследовать пространственное повторение, распределение внимания, телесное переживание и различие между действительным и воображаемым действием. Анализ показывает, что возвращение в значимое место не гарантирует внутреннего разрешения конфликта. У Стейнбека определённость исхода сочетается с незавершённостью его интерпретации; у Хамдама практическая осуществимость альтернативы остаётся неподтверждённой. Сопоставление разграничивает композиционную завершённость и восстановление самостоятельности героя, объясняя, как повторяющееся пространство у воды организует возможности переживания, не становясь безусловной гарантией гармонии. Выводы учитывают различия повествовательной формы и не предполагают прямого литературного влияния.

Ключевые слова: Джон Стейнбек; Улугбек Хамдам; пейзаж; психологическое переживание; внимание; пространственное повторение; фокализация; сновидение; нарративная завершённость.

Introduction

Landscape becomes psychologically significant when narrative changes what a character can notice, imagine, or decide within a place. A recurrent river therefore poses a more exact question than whether nature reflects an emotion: does returning to the same environment restore a previous relation to the world? John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* [1] and Ulug'bek Hamdam's *Ko'nglimdagi daryo* [2] permit a focused comparison because each gives a waterside setting a decisive position in its arrangement of psychological experience. Their recurrence makes continuity visible while exposing the difficulty of recovering an earlier possibility.

The comparison concerns a short novel and a short story, not equivalent accounts of American and Uzbek society. Its object is a formal relationship between place, attention, and endings. The central claim is that spatial recurrence can complete a narrative pattern without completing the protagonist's adjustment to experience. Steinbeck makes a return compatible with an irreversible outcome; Hamdam makes renewed access compatible with uncertainty about future conduct. These are different constructions of possibility, and their difference is as analytically important as the shared importance of water.

Psychological closure here means the degree to which a text warrants treating a character's relation to a troubling experience as settled. It is an interpretive term, not a diagnosis or a claim about the character's clinical recovery. It must be distinguished from the stopping of the text, the completion of an action, and a reader's satisfaction with an ending. Keeping these distinctions separate prevents circular reasoning in which any final landscape is automatically read as harmony because it occupies the last pages.

Three questions guide the analysis. How does each text distribute access to the river and to the experience associated with it? What makes environmental attention vulnerable to interpersonal or institutional direction? Finally, what changes when the place recurs, and what remains unestablished? The contribution is a comparative account of uneven closure: narrative form can settle where an experience belongs in the story while leaving unsettled what that experience enables a person to do. This claim is tested against local textual details rather than against an assumed shared philosophy of the two writers.

Materials and Methods

The study uses qualitative close reading and typological comparison. Steinbeck is consulted in the Faded Page electronic reproduction of the 1963 Compass Books edition; Hamdam is consulted in the Uzbek text posted by Ziyouz on 1 October 2014. That date identifies the online publication and does not establish the story's first print appearance. The electronic Steinbeck text adds navigation numbers to six originally unnumbered divisions. References therefore identify its opening or final section, while references to Hamdam use recognizable episodes. No pagination from an unconsulted printed edition is assigned.

The analysis first distinguishes narrated information from a character's perceptual judgment. Niederhoff's account of focalization is useful because grammatical person does not by itself determine how information is selected or restricted [3]. The procedure then separates physical location, the broader environment of action, and alternatives activated by imagination. Ryan's

distinctions between spatial frames, story space, and the narrative universe make it possible to compare an actual return with a represented dream without treating them as events of identical status [4].

Two further concepts clarify what psychological evidence can support. Caracciolo's discussion of experientiality connects represented embodiment, temporality, intention, and evaluation, while also distinguishing textual representation from experiences generated in reading [5]. Here the term concerns the organization of fictional experience; no audience response is measured. Walsh's distinction between reported dreams and dreaming as a process of narration supplies a separate question: how does a dream arrange significance, rather than merely deliver a concealed message that analysis must decode [6]? This framework avoids a clinical interpretation of either protagonist.

Finally, Klauk, Köppe, and Weskott associate perceived closure with completeness and unanswered questions, while warning against transferring their experimental findings directly to longer or more complex literary texts [7, pp. 38–41]. Their study supplies a distinction to interrogate, not empirical proof about this corpus. Each reading consequently separates textual observation, interpretive inference, and the limit of that inference. The decisive test is whether the ending supplies an event, a changed understanding, or evidence that such understanding will endure. These alternatives need not coincide.

Results

Inhabited and Contested Rivers

At the opening of *Of Mice and Men*, the river clearing contains a used path, accumulated ashes, and worn wood. George and Lennie enter, drink, and pause before continuing to the ranch [1, opening section]. These concise material indications matter because the refuge is already marked by use. A place can suspend a particular journey without standing outside the conditions that make journeys necessary. Reading the clearing as untouched innocence would erase precisely the traces through which its temporary hospitality becomes intelligible.

The distinction between rest and exemption is central. Rest is a situated possibility available for an interval; exemption would mean that the environment cancelled the demands beyond it. Steinbeck's opening warrants the first possibility without establishing the second. Spatial separation thus produces an interval of attention whose limits remain present even when they are not foregrounded. The river can be valued without being authorized to guarantee safety. Its psychological force comes partly from this incomplete separation: relief has meaning because departure remains conceivable and necessary.

Hamdam's narrator manages a long task list but admits neglected family obligations. After a puncture, he notices the nearby watercourse, experiences bodily freshness and a sense of childhood, and loses awareness of time. His wife has described the water as a dirty channel. An officer interrupts his absorption; the narrator acknowledges a traffic violation, and the whistle later recurs in his dreams [2, opening encounter and subsequent reflections]. The disagreement about the water's identity makes its emotional importance contestable within the narrative itself. The text does not require the critic to choose a correct geographical label.

This contested designation produces a different relation between proximity and access. Physical nearness does not ensure perceptual availability: a familiar environment may remain outside the arrangement of what counts as relevant. The narrator's self-description cannot settle the matter, because retrospective narration also contains evidence against his preferred account of himself.

The river becomes psychologically active through a change in relevance, not through geographical discovery alone. Hamdam thereby gives inattention a structure that can be examined without explaining it as an individual defect detached from obligations.

The two environments consequently differ in the kind of threshold they create. Steinbeck's clearing offers an interval within movement; Hamdam's watercourse interrupts an established routine of relevance. Neither relation is captured adequately by an opposition between oppressive society and innocent nature. A threshold connects domains while distinguishing them. Because passage across it remains conditional, the landscape can disclose another mode of experience without converting that disclosure into a secure alternative life.

Embodiment, Attention, and Constraint

The psychological importance of these scenes depends on how attention is organized. In Steinbeck, the opening relation between the two men makes perception interpersonal: Lennie imitates George's posture, while George evaluates the safety of drinking [1, opening section]. This distribution of competence cannot be reduced to an isolated consciousness responding to scenery. Attention already involves dependence, instruction, and uneven judgment. The river is a common location, but common location does not produce an identical experience or equal control over what can be done there.

This difference also limits the use of a single label for Steinbeck's narration. In the final section, the imagined Aunt Clara and rabbit speak in Lennie's voice [1, final section]. Their representation prevents treating third-person narration as uniformly confined to external observation. The analytical issue is not whether the narration is globally objective or subjective. It is how the available kinds of information change at a consequential moment. What appears externally shareable and what is accessible as inward experience belong to different dimensions of the scene [3].

Hamdam's represented bodily renewal invites a related distinction between felt intensity and demonstrated transformation. An experience may be convincing as experience without making every judgment attached to it reliable. Caracciolo's attention to embodiment and evaluation helps explain why sensory force and reflective interpretation should be read together without being equated [5]. The narrator's exhilaration establishes the importance of the encounter to him; it cannot independently establish the insignificance of duties or the justice of every response to interruption.

The social complication therefore strengthens rather than cancels the landscape's psychological role. A simple opposition between authenticity and discipline would give the critic a moral conclusion before the character's contradictory account had been examined. The admitted breach and the family perspective leave room for legitimate obligations, even while the experience of regulation becomes disproportionate to the immediate encounter. This is a formal argument about competing claims within one narration. It does not require treating the officer as the total explanation of distress or the narrator as a transparent representative of society [2, confrontation and reflections].

Across the texts, attention is thus both an opening and a point of vulnerability. To attend is to make some possibilities present while leaving others outside immediate concern. Direction by another person and internalized anticipation of correction differ, yet both complicate the idea that psychological freedom consists simply in looking at nature. The comparison identifies an unstable relation between access and agency: a character may gain a more intense experience of place

without gaining control over its consequences. Landscape participates in this instability because it organizes the field of possible attention.

Recurrence and Uneven Closure

Steinbeck's final section returns to the pool. A heron catches one snake; a second escapes as Lennie arrives. George directs Lennie's gaze across the river while describing their hoped-for farm, then shoots him. Slim and Carlson respond differently afterward [1, final section]. The compositional return is unmistakable, but the repeated location no longer supports the same practical horizon. Recurrence provides a measure of alteration. Its force depends on preserving enough spatial continuity for an irreversible difference to become legible.

The environmental action does not furnish a moral law that explains or excuses the human outcome. Predation is represented, but converting it into proof that George's act is naturally necessary would confuse juxtaposition with justification. Nor does the existence of an alternative animal outcome authorize a corresponding human escape. The scene allows analogy while resisting complete equivalence. This restraint preserves the specificity of human responsibility and avoids converting nonhuman life into a code whose only function is to predict the plot.

Directed vision is especially consequential for closure. The imagined destination occupies attention while the actual situation develops differently. The resulting discrepancy makes a projected future psychologically operative even when it cannot become a shared material future. Narrative can therefore bring an expectation to an end without reconciling the relations organized around it. The contrasting final responses leave interpretation socially divided. George's shivering, rigid posture, and repeated attention to his hand further complicate any inference of immediate psychological settlement [1, final section]. A character's assurance is part of that division, not an independent authorial verdict. The ending establishes an outcome more firmly than it establishes agreement about how the outcome should be understood [1, final section].

The location remains stable while the narrative progressively redistributes access to perception. At the beginning of the last section, environmental movement can be followed without belonging wholly to either man's awareness; later, spoken direction and selective disclosure divide what the two men know. The contrast turns the river from a broadly presented environment into a horizon differently occupied by each character. This is a change in narrative access rather than proof of the river's essential meaning. A comparative reading gains precision by tracking transitions between modes of presentation instead of assigning water a single symbolic value [1, final section].

Hamdam's final return occurs explicitly in a dream: the narrator throws his list and a whistle into the water, experiences relief, then awakens and reaches into his clothing [2, final dream episode]. This framing is decisive. Walsh's account permits reading the dream as an arrangement that produces significance rather than as an encrypted instruction [6]. Its internal coherence makes relinquishment imaginable. The waking continuation, however, does not establish that the represented relinquishment has become a durable practice.

Sentence patterning reinforces this distinction. The final dream develops through short clauses repeatedly joined by the Uzbek additive conjunction, giving successive perceptions and gestures their own forward impulse. Repetition here organizes an experience of release as well as, elsewhere, an imposed sequence of tasks. The dream therefore does not simply abolish structure; it imagines a changed relation to succession. The repeated conjunction also carries the narration into awakening. Its continuity makes the change of experiential status more consequential: the narrative maintains its movement to that boundary without supplying an account of a transformed life beyond it [2, final dream episode].

The difference is one of warranted inference. To call Hamdam's ending complete liberation would remove the uncertainty preserved by awakening; to call it complete failure would ignore the possibility constituted within the dream. The text supports neither closure by triumph nor closure by permanent defeat. Steinbeck's spatial return closes an action while leaving judgment unsettled; Hamdam's imagined return articulates a possibility while withholding its enactment. In both cases, formal completion and psychological settlement diverge, but the direction of divergence differs. This distinction refines the use of closure beyond a binary classification of endings as open or closed [7].

Discussion

The comparison suggests that landscape should be examined as a condition of psychological organization rather than as a ready-made translation of mood. This proposal also has an environmental limit. The criteria attributed to Lawrence Buell on Iowa State University's institutional page connect environmental representation with the implication of human and natural histories and with environment as an ongoing process [8]. These criteria invite a check on the analysis: treating all river details as signs of human interiority would reproduce the reduction that an attentive reading should question.

The present findings do not establish that either work fulfils every criterion of environmental writing. They show a narrower relationship. In Steinbeck, the surroundings cannot be reduced to the protagonists' wishes; in Hamdam, the narrator's evaluation does not exhaust what the watercourse can mean within the story. Environmental continuity and psychological meaning remain related without becoming identical. The place's capacity to support an experience must be distinguished from a promise that it exists for that experience. This distinction leaves room for situated human need without making nature its obedient instrument.

A further limit concerns scale. Two deliberately selected works cannot establish a comprehensive account of either writer's style, the psychological attitudes of a nation, or a genealogy of influence. The comparison instead offers a procedure that can be extended: identify the status of a return, examine who controls or contests attention, and ask which consequences the ending actually confirms. Its interpretive value lies in preserving asymmetry. Differences in genre, narration, and the relation between imagined and actual action are explanatory resources rather than obstacles to be removed.

Conclusion

Of Mice and Men and *Ko'nglimdagi daryo* organize psychological possibility through access to recurrent waterside environments. The river's significance emerges from the relation between physical place and selectively available experience. Its recurrence can make a narrative pattern complete while leaving a character's adjustment, future conduct, or the interpretation of an outcome unsettled. Landscape consequently does more than accompany feeling: it helps give feeling a duration, a location, and a contested relation to action.

The shared device leads to different endings. Steinbeck makes spatial continuity register an irreversible change whose interpretation remains divided. Hamdam makes a dreamed alternative vivid while maintaining the distinction between imagined release and established waking change. Preserving that distinction yields the article's principal result: psychological closure is not guaranteed by a return to the place of meaningful experience. Comparison becomes more precise when it asks what recurrence enables and what it cannot certify, rather than treating natural imagery as evidence of an already achieved harmony.

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