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The Formation of Psychological Depiction in American Realism and Uzbek

Abstract: This study explores the formation and evolution of psychological depiction in American realism and Uzbek classical short fiction of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By examining the narrative techniques of authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, and O. Henry alongside their Uzbek counterparts, including Ahmad Donish, Abdulla Qodiriy, and Abdulla Qahhor, this paper reveals how writers from distinct socio-cultural contexts employed psychological introspection to articulate the complexities of human consciousness. The comparative analysis highlights that while American realists developed psychological realism as a response to industrial modernity and moral disillusionment, Uzbek writers integrated similar inner explorations within moral, ethical, and spiritual frameworks shaped by Eastern traditions. This cross-cultural literary dialogue underscores the universal aspiration to portray the individual's inner world as both a social and metaphysical phenomenon.

Keywords: psychological realism, Uzbek classical prose, American realism, narrative psychology, comparative poetics

1. Introduction

The nineteenth century marks a turning point in world literature, where attention shifted from external events to the inner states of human consciousness. This transformation is particularly visible in the rise of psychological realism in Western literature and the deepening of moral-psychological narration in Eastern literary traditions. In American literature, writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Henry James, and later O. Henry used psychological depth to reveal the human mind's contradictions under the pressures of modernity. In parallel, Uzbek authors including Ahmad Donish, Avloni, and Abdulla Qodiriy used psychological portrayal to reflect the spiritual, ethical, and social dilemmas of their characters amid colonial transformations and moral awakening.

This essay investigates how the psychological depiction of character evolved in these two traditions — the American realist movement and Uzbek classical short fiction — emphasizing both their convergence and divergence. By drawing on comparative poetics and narrative psychology, the study argues that while both traditions aimed to represent the individual's inner life, their methods and ideological frameworks diverged according to historical and cultural contexts.

2. Literature Review The emergence of American realism has long been associated with the decline of romantic idealism and the rise of industrial capitalism. According to Donald Pizer (1995), realism sought to present “a truthful representation of ordinary life,” emphasizing psychological complexity rather than heroic idealization. Critics such as Millicent Bell (2002) and Michael Davitt Bell (1993) underline that psychological realism in the United States evolved from the tension between individual freedom and moral disillusionment. Edgar Allan Poe's interior monologues, Mark Twain's irony, and Henry James's refined narrative psychology marked key stages in this evolution.

In Uzbek literature, the formation of psychological depiction is linked to the Enlightenment (Jadid) movement and the intellectual response to modernization. As noted by Valixo'jaev (1974) and Qosimova (1975), writers like Ahmad Donish, Fitrat, and Abdulla Qodiriy began to move beyond didactic moralism to explore the character's internal conflicts. Their stories combined ethical reflection with subtle inner monologue, anticipating the psychological prose of later authors such as Abdulla Qahhor and Said Ahmad. Shukurova (2024) emphasizes that Uzbek classical narratives relied on emotional sincerity and spiritual duality rather than Western analytical realism, forming a distinct type of Eastern psychological poetics. Comparative studies (Abdullaev, 1982; Rasul, 1962) highlight the shared humanistic purpose of both traditions — to represent man as a complex moral being — but note key differences in worldview. American realism tends to derive psychological conflict from social alienation, while Uzbek classical prose views it through the prism of ethical harmony and divine justice.

3. Comparative Analysis

3.1 American Realism: From External Reality to Inner Consciousness

American realism arose as a reaction to romantic abstraction and sentimentalism. Writers like Mark Twain and O. Henry transformed the depiction of “ordinary people” into a psychological study of moral ambiguity. Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) reveals the psychological turmoil of a young boy navigating moral contradictions in a racially divided society. Huck’s moral dilemma between friendship and social norms exemplifies the realist concern with inner conflict as ethical revelation.

Similarly, O. Henry’s short stories such as *The Gift of the Magi* (1905) and *The Last Leaf* (1907) present simple plots infused with profound emotional insight. His narrative irony conceals layers of empathy and self-sacrifice, demonstrating how the realist mode accommodates psychological intensity within brief, economical forms. The characters’ internal motivations — love, pride, guilt — are subtly revealed through gesture, dialogue, and ironic denouement rather than explicit introspection.

In contrast, Edgar Allan Poe’s tales, though often categorized as gothic, laid the foundation for psychological narrative form. His stories like *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1843) dissect the pathological mind, using unreliable narration to portray obsession and guilt. Poe’s method of psychological interiority influenced later realists by introducing a structural principle where narration equals consciousness — a concept that would later be echoed in modernist fiction.

Thus, American realism’s psychological dimension emerged not as an abstract theory but as a technique of moral inquiry, using the ordinary consciousness as a site of existential conflict.

3.2 Uzbek Classical Short Fiction: The Spiritual Depth of Inner Life

In the Uzbek literary tradition, the psychological portrayal of characters developed within a moral-spiritual worldview rather than a secular realist one. Ahmad Donish (1827–1897), often regarded as a precursor of modern Uzbek prose, depicted the inner world of his protagonists as a struggle between enlightenment and ignorance, faith and hypocrisy. His writings mirror a transition from medieval didacticism to introspective moral reflection.

Abdulla Qodiriy (1894–1938), the founder of modern Uzbek prose, deepened this tendency through his masterful psychological realism. In works such as *O'tgan kunlar* (1925) and *Mehrobdan chayon* (1929), he portrayed the emotional complexity of individuals caught between love, duty, and social expectation. Qodiriy's psychological insight lies in his ability to transform social and ethical dilemmas into inner conflicts — the essence of realism adapted to Eastern sensibilities.

Abdulla Qahhor (1907–1968) further refined psychological narration in the short story form. His stories (*O'tgan kunlar*, *Anor*) focus on the internal dialogue of conscience, guilt, and compassion. Qahhor's minimalist realism aligns him with Western counterparts like Hemingway, yet his narrative voice remains rooted in communal ethics and moral introspection.

Unlike American realism, which often isolates the individual, Uzbek prose preserves the link between self and society, soul and spirituality. Inner psychology becomes a reflection of ethical and social harmony rather than existential dislocation. This distinct epistemology forms what may be called Sufi-psychological realism, where human consciousness is both rational and divine.

3.3 Cross-Cultural Convergence and Divergence

A key point of convergence between the two traditions lies in their focus on the ordinary individual. Both American and Uzbek authors abandoned epic heroism for intimate portrayals of moral struggle. However, their divergence lies in interpretive framework:

For American realists, the psyche is a product of social environment and economic modernity.

For Uzbek writers, it remains bound to moral law, faith, and collective identity.

Moreover, the stylistic realization differs: American prose favors objective narration, irony, and psychological observation, while Uzbek fiction prefers allegory, dialogue, and lyrical monologue to convey inner states. Despite these contrasts, both traditions ultimately converge in their humanistic pursuit — the truthful depiction of the mind as a mirror of moral and emotional reality.

4. Conclusion

The evolution of psychological depiction in both American realism and Uzbek classical short fiction represents a global literary phenomenon — the shift from external representation to inner consciousness. While American realists articulated this shift through the language of empiricism and moral skepticism, Uzbek authors reformulated it within ethical and spiritual paradigms inherited from Eastern thought.

Both literatures reveal that psychological realism is not a Western monopoly but a universal mode of human expression adapting to different moral and metaphysical traditions. By juxtaposing these two literary systems, we uncover not only aesthetic parallels but also a shared philosophical commitment: to explore the complexity of the human soul as it navigates between self-awareness, moral duty, and the search for meaning.

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