

Comparative Poetics of Realism in The Short Stories of Somerset Maugham And Abdulla Kahhor

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Abstract: This article examines the comparative poetics of realism in the short stories of Somerset Maugham and Abdulla Kahhor. The study explores how both writers reveal the principles of realism through the portrayal of typical characters, everyday situations, and social contradictions. Using comparative and typological approaches, the research analyzes character representation in selected stories, focusing on lifelike details, realistic characterization, dialogue, and artistic representation of reality. The findings demonstrate that, despite belonging to different literary traditions, both authors employ realistic techniques to depict human experience and social conditions. However, Maugham's realism is characterized by irony and concise narration, whereas Kahhor's works emphasize national context, social criticism, and vivid depictions of everyday life.

Keywords: Comparative literature, literary realism, character portrayal, typological parallels, artistic representation, social criticism, narrative technique, irony, national context.

Introduction: Realism is widely recognized as a major literary mode that seeks to represent human experience and social conditions with authenticity. Unlike idealized or romanticized depictions, realistic literature seeks to reveal the essential features of human life through credible characters, ordinary events, and socially grounded situations. The artistic value of realism lies not only in its close connection to reality but also in its ability to transform everyday experiences into meaningful literary representations. Consequently, realism has become an important subject of literary scholarship, particularly in studies concerned with character construction, artistic detail, and the relationship between individuals and society. Comparative literary studies provide a productive framework for examining how similar aesthetic principles emerge in different national literatures. In this regard, the short stories of Somerset Maugham and Abdulla Kahhor offer valuable material for comparative analysis. Although the two writers belonged to different cultural and literary traditions,

both devoted considerable attention to depicting ordinary people, social contradictions, and moral dilemmas. Their stories demonstrate how realism can be expressed through concise narration, carefully selected details, and convincing character portrayal. Previous studies have explored various aspects of Maugham's and Kahhor's artistic heritage; however, the comparative poetics of realism in their short fiction has received limited scholarly attention. Therefore, this article aims to investigate the common and distinctive features of realism in the stories of these authors. The research focuses on the representation of typical characters, the function of artistic detail, the role of dialogue, and the depiction of social realities. By applying comparative and typological methods, the study seeks to identify the poetic mechanisms through which Maugham and Kahhor construct realistic literary worlds and reveal broader human and social concerns.

METHOD

The comparative analysis of Somerset Maugham's "The

Creative Impulse” and Abdulla Kahhor’s “Jonfigon” reveals important aspects of character representation in realistic fiction. In both stories, the central conflict arises from changing gender roles and the male characters’ attitudes toward women’s personal and professional development. Although the authors belong to different literary traditions, they construct their narratives around ordinary domestic situations and recognizable social realities. Through the characters of Albert Forrester and Jonfigon, the writers demonstrate how individual responses to female advancement reflect broader cultural values and social expectations. In “The Creative Impulse”, Albert Forrester initially appears as an insignificant man overshadowed by his wife’s literary ambitions. Other characters regard him as an unremarkable individual with little importance. However, the narrative gradually reveals his practical wisdom and emotional maturity. Although Albert feels alienated from the literary environment surrounding his wife, he never opposes her creative activities. On the contrary, Mrs. Forrester admits that “I read everything I write to Albert, and his comments are often useful to me.”[1] This remark highlights his intellectual support and shows that he plays a meaningful role in her creative development. Furthermore, it is Albert who later encourages her to write detective fiction, a decision that eventually leads to her success. Beneath his modest appearance lies a supportive, tolerant, and mature personality. A contrasting attitude is presented in Kahhor’s “Jonfigon”. As Malokhat becomes educated, socially active, and professionally successful, Jonfigon grows increasingly uncomfortable with her transformation. At first, he dismisses her ambitions with the remark, “There is no harm in dreaming.” However, when her achievements become more visible, his uneasiness develops into jealousy and resentment. Attempting to belittle her accomplishments, he asks, “Well, she may have driven a car, but is that really an achievement?” [2] His reaction demonstrates an inability to accept his wife’s growing independence and public recognition. Rather than supporting her development, he perceives her success as a challenge to his authority within the family. Through domestic conflicts and everyday situations, Kahhor exposes the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and their impact on family relations. The comparison of

these protagonists demonstrates two opposing responses to women’s social advancement. Albert Forrester accepts change and indirectly contributes to his wife’s achievements, whereas Jonfigon resists social transformation and attempts to diminish his wife’s accomplishments. Despite these differences, both figures are portrayed as convincing representatives of their social environments. Through their actions, attitudes, and interpersonal conflicts, Maugham and Kahhor reveal important aspects of social change, family relationships, and human behavior.

The comparative analysis of Somerset Maugham’s “Mr. Know-All” and Abdulla Kahhor’s “The Literature Teacher” reveals another important aspect of realistic character portrayal. In both stories, the authors focus on individuals who seek to present themselves as knowledgeable and intellectually superior. Through the characters of Max Kelada and Boqijon Bakoev, Maugham and Kahhor explore the relationship between appearance and reality, demonstrating how a person’s true nature is revealed through words and actions rather than public reputation. In Mr. Know-All, Max Kelada is introduced as an excessively self-confident and talkative individual who seems determined to express an opinion on every subject. Other passengers consider him arrogant and irritating, giving him the nickname Mr. Know-All. His confidence is reflected in statements such as “There was nothing in the world that he did not know better than anybody else” and “What I don’t know about pearls isn’t worth knowing.”[3] These remarks create the impression of a boastful man who overestimates his abilities. However, the crucial episode involving Mrs. Ramsay’s pearl necklace gradually changes this perception. Although Kelada recognizes that the pearls are genuine, he deliberately sacrifices his own reputation in order to protect Mrs. Ramsay’s dignity. Admitting defeat, he declares, “I was mistaken. They are imitation pearls.” Through this act, Maugham reveals that beneath Kelada’s self-assured exterior lies generosity, compassion, and moral integrity. Thus, the character evolves from a seemingly unpleasant individual into a figure deserving respect. A different type of character is presented in Kahhor’s “The Literature Teacher”, Boqijon Bakoev constantly attempts to appear educated and intellectual, yet his speech repeatedly exposes the superficial nature of his knowledge. When

asked about Chekhov's story, instead of providing a clear answer, he diverts the conversation with meaningless expressions such as "Practicum, minimum, maximum - these are all Latin or near-Latin words, at least in my opinion." His desire to appear superior is further reflected in his dismissive comment about another teacher: "Hakimov? He is a fool. He never works on himself." [4] However, when confronted with a simple literary question, Boqijon fails to demonstrate genuine understanding. His inability to answer directly reveals the gap between his self-image and his actual intellectual capacity. Through satire and irony, Kahhor exposes the phenomenon of false intellectualism and criticizes those who seek prestige without possessing real knowledge.

The comparison of these protagonists demonstrates two contrasting outcomes. Both characters initially appear self-confident and eager to display their superiority. Yet Max Kelada ultimately proves his worth through an act of self-sacrifice and humanity, whereas Boqijon's pretentiousness is gradually exposed. Through these realistic character types, Maugham and Kahhor show that true knowledge is inseparable from moral responsibility, while empty self-promotion inevitably reveals its own limitations.

The comparative analysis of Somerset Maugham's "Mackintosh" and Abdulla Kahhor's "Two Halves Make a Whole" reveals another significant aspect of realistic character portrayal. In both stories, the authors focus on individuals whose behavior is shaped primarily by personal advantage rather than moral principles. Through the characters of Jervis and Kamolkhonov, Maugham and Kahhor expose opportunism, flattery, and the absence of independent judgment. Although these characters belong to different social and cultural environments, both represent recognizable human types whose actions reflect broader social realities. In Mackintosh, Jervis is portrayed as a man who constantly adjusts his opinions according to the interests of those in power. Rather than evaluating events independently, he tends to support whoever occupies the strongest position. His attitude toward Walker clearly demonstrates this tendency. Despite Walker's questionable treatment of the local population, Jervis praises him by saying, "That was a good joke about the road... Good old Walker." [5] This remark reveals not only his admiration for authority but

also his willingness to overlook injustice for personal convenience. Later, when he realizes that Walker may soon leave the island, his loyalty immediately shifts toward Mackintosh. Attempting to gain his favor, Jervis declares, "We all like you on the island, Mr. Mackintosh," and adds, "When he goes, I hope you'll take his place." These statements expose a character who values influence and status above honesty or personal conviction. Through subtle characterization and realistic dialogue, Maugham presents Jervis as a typical opportunist whose principles change according to circumstance. A similar character type appears in Kahhor's "Two Halves Make a Whole", Kamolkhonov is unable to maintain an independent opinion and constantly adapts himself to the attitudes of influential people. His dependence on Sulaymonov's views becomes particularly evident during the famous "cream episode." When Sulaymonov praises spoiled yogurt as cream, Kamolkhonov immediately agrees, claiming, "The best cream I ever tasted in Margilan could be called watered milk compared to this." [6] However, the moment Sulaymonov identifies it as yogurt, Kamolkhonov changes his opinion and responds, "Indeed, it is sour yogurt." Moments later, attempting once again to satisfy his superior, he adds, "No, it must be spoiled cream." These contradictory remarks reveal his inability to defend a personal viewpoint. His primary concern is not truth but the approval of those holding authority. This characteristic becomes even more apparent when he tells Sulaymonov, "It is enough that you promised; whether you do it or not does not matter." Such statements expose the depth of his submissiveness and desire to gain favor through flattery. The comparison of Jervis and Kamolkhonov highlights a shared social phenomenon: the abandonment of principles in pursuit of personal benefit. Both characters alter their attitudes according to changing circumstances and place self-interest above honesty. Nevertheless, the authors employ different artistic strategies. Maugham reveals Jervis's opportunism through restrained observation and indirect characterization, whereas Kahhor exposes Kamolkhonov's weakness through satire and humorous situations. Despite these differences, both writers create convincing and recognizable character types whose behavior reflects real social tendencies. Through these figures, realism

serves not only to depict individual personalities but also to criticize the moral compromises that arise from excessive dependence on power and authority.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The conducted analysis demonstrates that realism occupies an important place in the short fiction of both Somerset Maugham and Abdulla Kahhor. Despite differences in cultural background and literary tradition, both writers employ realism through the portrayal of recognizable characters, believable situations, and conflicts rooted in everyday life. Their stories focus on ordinary individuals whose experiences reflect broader social and cultural realities. One of the principal findings of the study is the central role of character portrayal in the construction of realistic poetics. The analyzed characters embody specific attitudes, values, and patterns of behavior that reveal important aspects of human nature and society. Through their actions, speech, and interactions, the authors explore such issues as gender relations, intellectual pretension, opportunism, moral responsibility, and social change. Thus, characterization serves as the primary means of representing reality in the selected stories. The analysis also highlights the significance of dialogue and artistic detail in creating realistic effects. Dialogue reveals personality traits, social positions, and hidden motivations, while carefully selected details contribute to the authenticity of the narrative and deepen characterization. As a result, realism emerges through the close relationship between character, environment, and action. Another important finding concerns the relationship between individual character and social environment. The analyzed stories demonstrate that human behavior is shaped not only by personal qualities but also by cultural values, social expectations, and existing power structures. By placing their characters in realistic social settings, both writers reveal how external circumstances influence personal choices and moral decisions. This interaction between the individual and society strengthens the realistic dimension of the narratives and enhances their social significance.

The study further demonstrates that realism in the short stories of Maugham and Kahhor goes beyond the mere reproduction of reality and serves as an artistic interpretation of human experience and social life.

Through realistic characterization and carefully structured narrative situations, both authors address universal themes such as responsibility, dignity, social adaptation, and ethical conduct. Consequently, their stories not only reflect reality but also encourage readers to critically evaluate the values and contradictions of the societies they depict. The comparative perspective further indicates that both writers share similar realistic principles but employ different artistic strategies. Maugham frequently relies on irony, restraint, and indirect characterization to reveal human contradictions and moral ambiguity. Kahhor, by contrast, emphasizes satire, social criticism, and national realities, exposing social shortcomings more directly. These differences reflect the distinct literary and cultural contexts in which the authors worked. Therefore, the study confirms that realism functions as a common aesthetic foundation in the short stories of Somerset Maugham and Abdulla Kahhor. Character portrayal, dialogue, artistic detail, and socially grounded conflict emerge as the principal poetic mechanisms through which realism is realized. At the same time, the distinct artistic approaches of the two writers demonstrate the diversity and flexibility of realistic poetics across different literary traditions. The similarities and differences identified in this study contribute to a deeper understanding of realism as a literary phenomenon and highlight the value of comparative literary analysis in exploring cross-cultural artistic expression.

CONCLUSION

The present study has demonstrated that the short stories of Somerset Maugham and Abdulla Kahhor share a common commitment to realism despite being produced within different cultural and literary traditions. The comparative examination of selected stories reveals that both authors depict life through recognizable characters, ordinary situations, and socially conditioned conflicts, thereby creating convincing artistic representations of reality. The analysis shows that realistic poetics in the works of both writers is primarily realized through the interaction of character, situation, and social context. By presenting individuals confronted with family tensions, intellectual pretensions, changing social values, and questions of personal integrity, Maugham and Kahhor transform everyday experiences into

meaningful literary narratives. Their stories demonstrate how individual destinies can reflect broader social processes and cultural attitudes. An important outcome of the research is the identification of character representation as a key element connecting artistic form with social content. The examined stories illustrate that realistic characterization allows writers to reveal not only personal qualities but also the influence of historical, cultural, and social factors on human behavior. Through carefully constructed character types, both authors succeed in portraying the complexities of real life and the contradictions that shape human relationships. The study also confirms that realism serves an important cognitive and interpretative function within literature. By depicting recognizable situations and believable personalities, Maugham and Kahhor encourage readers to reflect on social values, ethical choices, and patterns of human conduct. Their stories demonstrate that literature can simultaneously represent reality and offer critical insight into the social conditions that influence individual experience. At the same time, the research identifies distinctive features in their artistic approaches. Maugham tends to reveal human contradictions through irony, restraint, and nuanced characterization, whereas Kahhor employs satire and social criticism to expose weaknesses within society and individual behavior. These differences illustrate how the same aesthetic method may generate diverse artistic outcomes in different literary environments. Furthermore, the comparative approach adopted in this study demonstrates the value of examining literary phenomena across national boundaries. The comparison of English and Uzbek short-story traditions makes it possible to identify both universal and culture-specific manifestations of realism. Such an approach contributes to a broader understanding of literary development and highlights the role of comparative literature in revealing connections between different artistic traditions. In conclusion, the comparative study confirms that realism serves not only as a mode of representing reality but also as a means of interpreting human experience and social change. The similarities and differences identified in the selected stories contribute to a deeper understanding of comparative realistic poetics and highlight the enduring significance of

realism in both English and Uzbek short-story traditions.

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