

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Types Of The Hero In Epic Short Prose Of Russian And Uzbek Literature Of The Early 20th Century

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Abstract

The early twentieth century was a period of profound social, political, and cultural transformation in both Russian and Uzbek societies. These changes were reflected in literature, particularly in epic short prose, where writers sought to depict new types of heroes responding to a rapidly changing world. This article examines the main types of literary heroes in epic short prose of Russian and Uzbek literature at the beginning of the twentieth century. Through comparative analysis, the study identifies shared and distinctive features in the portrayal of heroes, focusing on social background, psychological depth, moral values, and narrative function. The article demonstrates that while Russian and Uzbek authors developed their heroes within different cultural traditions, both literatures reveal similar tendencies toward realism, psychological introspection, and social critique.

KEYWORDS

Epic short prose, literary hero, Russian literature, Uzbek literature, early 20th century, comparative literature.

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the twentieth century marked a turning point in world literature. In both Russian and Uzbek literary traditions, this period was characterized by intense artistic experimentation and a growing attention to the individual as a bearer of social and moral conflict. Epic short prose—short stories, novellas, and narrative sketches—became one of the most effective genres for portraying the complexity of human experience in a time of historical change.

The concept of the literary hero underwent significant transformation during this period. Traditional heroic ideals were replaced or reinterpreted, giving rise to new character types shaped by social inequality, colonial experience, modernization, and ideological struggle. This article aims to analyze the main types of heroes depicted in epic short prose of Russian and Uzbek literature in the early twentieth century

and to highlight both common patterns and national specificities.

1. Historical and Literary Context

1.1 Russian Literature at the Turn of the Century

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Russian literature reflected deep social contradictions, political unrest, and spiritual crisis. The decline of traditional values and the anticipation of revolutionary change influenced literary themes and character construction. Writers such as Anton Chekhov, Maxim Gorky, Ivan Bunin, and Leonid Andreyev focused on the inner world of individuals caught between old and new realities.

Epic short prose became a space for psychological experimentation and social observation. Heroes were often

portrayed as ordinary people rather than idealized figures, emphasizing everyday struggles, moral ambiguity, and existential uncertainty.

1.2 Uzbek Literature in the Early 20th Century

Uzbek literature of the early twentieth century developed under conditions of colonial domination, social inequality, and cultural reform. The Jadid movement played a crucial role in shaping new literary forms and themes, promoting education, enlightenment, and national self-awareness.

Writers such as Abdulla Qodiriy, Cho'lpon, and Fitrat used epic short prose to depict the lives of common people, criticize social injustice, and explore the conflict between tradition and modernity. The literary hero became a symbol of awakening consciousness and moral responsibility.

2. The Concept of the Hero in Epic Short Prose

2.1 Epic Prose and Its Characteristics

Epic short prose combines narrative scope with conciseness. It allows authors to present a complete image of a character within a limited textual space while maintaining a broad social and philosophical perspective. The hero in such prose often embodies key conflicts of the era.

Unlike romantic or classical heroes, early twentieth-century protagonists are frequently anti-heroic, passive, or internally conflicted. Their significance lies not in extraordinary actions but in their ability to reflect social reality.

2.2 Typology of Literary Heroes

The concept of typology implies identifying recurring character models based on shared traits. In Russian and Uzbek epic short prose, hero types can be classified according to social position, psychological state, moral orientation, and ideological function.

3. Types of Heroes in Russian Epic Short Prose

3.1 The "Little Man"

The image of the "little man" continued to evolve in early twentieth-century Russian literature. This type is characterized by social insignificance, powerlessness, and moral vulnerability. In the works of Chekhov, such heroes often suffer from loneliness, unfulfilled dreams, and existential dissatisfaction.

Unlike earlier representations, the "little man" of this period is not merely a victim of external circumstances but also of

internal passivity and fear of change.

3.2 The Intelligentsia Hero

Another prominent type is the intelligentsia hero, representing educated individuals struggling with moral responsibility and social engagement. These characters often experience ideological doubt, spiritual crisis, and a sense of alienation.

In the prose of Bunin and Andreyev, intelligentsia heroes reflect the трагическое сознание of the era, torn between ethical ideals and harsh reality.

3.3 The Rebel and Social Protester

In contrast to passive figures, some Russian writers introduced heroes of protest and rebellion. In Gorky's short prose, such characters challenge social injustice and express faith in human dignity. These heroes are often portrayed as morally strong but socially marginalized.

4. Types of Heroes in Uzbek Epic Short Prose

4.1 The Enlightened Reformer

One of the central hero types in Uzbek literature of the early twentieth century is the enlightened reformer associated with Jadid ideology. This hero advocates education, progress, and social renewal, opposing ignorance and outdated traditions.

Such characters embody the aspirations of a society seeking modernization while preserving cultural identity.

4.2 The Oppressed Common Person

Similar to the Russian "little man," Uzbek literature presents heroes from the lower social strata—peasants, craftsmen, and workers—who suffer from poverty, injustice, and lack of rights. These characters reveal the human cost of colonial and feudal systems.

Their portrayal often combines realism with moral critique, emphasizing dignity amid suffering.

4.3 The Tragic Individual

Uzbek epic short prose also features tragic heroes caught between tradition and change. These characters experience inner conflict and emotional suffering, often leading to personal tragedy. Through them, writers explore the psychological consequences of social transformation.

5. Comparative Analysis of Hero Types

5.1 Common Features

Despite cultural differences, Russian and Uzbek epic short prose share several similarities in hero typology. In both traditions, writers focus on ordinary individuals rather than idealized heroes. Psychological depth, moral ambiguity, and social determinism are common traits.

Both literatures also reflect a shift from external action to internal conflict, emphasizing the hero's inner world.

5.2 National Specificities

Russian literature places greater emphasis on existential and philosophical questions, while Uzbek literature highlights national awakening, education, and social reform. The Russian hero often appears disillusioned and passive, whereas the Uzbek hero more frequently embodies hope for transformation.

These differences reflect distinct historical experiences and cultural priorities.

6. Narrative Techniques and Hero Representation

6.1 Psychological Realism

Both Russian and Uzbek writers employ psychological realism to reveal the inner lives of their heroes. Internal monologue, symbolic details, and subtle characterization are widely used techniques.

6.2 Symbolism and Social Context

Heroes often function as symbols of broader social processes. Their personal fates mirror historical change, making epic short prose a powerful medium for social commentary.

CONCLUSION

The types of heroes in epic short prose of Russian and Uzbek literature at the beginning of the twentieth century reflect a shared concern with human dignity, moral responsibility, and social change. While shaped by different cultural and historical contexts, both literary traditions demonstrate a move away from idealized heroism toward psychologically complex and socially grounded characters.

Comparative analysis reveals that the literary hero becomes a key means of expressing the anxieties and aspirations of an era marked by transition. The study of these hero types contributes to a deeper understanding of the development of modern prose in both Russian and Uzbek literatures.

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