

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Psychological Portrait of Literary Characters in The Short Stories of Somerset Maugham And Abdulla Kahhor

Sheralieva Dildora Abduvakhob kizi

Basic Doctoral Student, English teacher, Language and Translation faculty, The Department of Teaching English language methodology, Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages named after Is'hokhon Ibrat, Uzbekistan

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Abstract

This article examines the psychological portrait of literary characters in the short stories of Somerset Maugham and Abdulla Kahhor. Using comparative, typological, and textual analysis, the study explores how both writers reveal the inner world of their characters through psychological conflict, emotional tension, and social influences. The research focuses on *The Kite* and *The Headless Man*, *The Luncheon* and *Pomegranate*, as well as *Alien Corn* and *The Artist*. The analysis shows that both authors employ psychologism as an important artistic device for portraying human nature. While Maugham emphasizes individual psychological struggles through irony and subtle detail, Kahhor connects character psychology with social realities and family relationships. The study concludes that psychologism plays a significant role in the poetics of both writers' short fiction.

KEY WORDS

Character psychology, inner conflict, emotional tension, human nature, moral dilemma, artistic interpretation, narrative technique.

INTRODUCTION

Psychological representation has become an essential aspect of literary studies, enabling authors to depict the multifaceted nature of human experience. Through psychological representation, literature explores emotions, thoughts, desires, doubts, and inner conflicts that shape individual behavior. As a result, literary characters are portrayed not merely through their actions but through the motives and experiences that determine those actions. For this reason, the psychological portrait of a character has become one of the essential elements of artistic expression in modern fiction. The importance of psychologism increased significantly in twentieth-century short fiction. The short story genre requires a high degree of artistic concentration, where a character's inner world is often revealed through a single situation, dialogue, or meaningful detail. Psychological depth therefore

becomes an important means of characterization, allowing writers to present complex human experiences within a limited narrative space. Among the writers who achieved remarkable success in this respect are Somerset Maugham and Abdulla Kahhor. Although they belonged to different literary and cultural traditions, both authors devoted considerable attention to the psychological dimensions of human experience. Their stories focus on ordinary individuals confronted with emotional tension, moral dilemmas, personal disappointment, family conflicts, and social pressures. Through carefully constructed characters, both writers reveal the hidden aspects of human behavior and expose the motives underlying external actions. Maugham's short stories are characterized by subtle irony, restrained narration, and close psychological observation. His characters frequently

experience inner alienation, uncertainty, and personal conflict, while their emotional states are disclosed through psychological detail and indirect characterization. Kahhor, in contrast, connects character psychology with social realities, family relationships, and national values. In his stories, psychological experiences often emerge from poverty, social expectations, or domestic tensions, giving his characters a distinct social and cultural context. Despite these differences, both writers regard the inner world of the individual as a central element of artistic representation. Their stories demonstrate that the true nature of a character can be understood only through the exploration of psychological motives and emotional experiences. Therefore, this article examines the psychological portrait of literary characters in the short stories of Somerset Maugham and Abdulla Kahhor, focusing on the artistic techniques used to portray inner conflict, emotional tension, and the relationship between personality and environment.

METHOD

The comparative analysis of Somerset Maugham's "The Kite" and Abdulla Kahhor's "The Headless Man" reveals important aspects of psychological characterization. In both stories, the protagonists appear to be mature and married men; however, they remain emotionally dependent on their parents and fail to develop independent identities. Through Herbert Sunbury and Fakhriddin, the authors demonstrate how excessive parental influence can hinder personal growth and undermine family relationships. In "The Kite", Herbert Sunbury is portrayed as a man whose emotional development remains incomplete despite adulthood. His attachment to his mother and childhood environment shapes his behavior even after marriage. Herbert's psychological dependence is symbolized by his passion for kite-flying, which represents both childhood freedom and an escape from adult responsibilities. His immaturity becomes evident when he assumes that marriage will not change his life and insists that "everything will remain the same." This statement reveals his inability to accept the responsibilities associated with family life. Later, despite conflicts with his wife Betty, Herbert returns to his parents' house and declares, "I've come home, Mother." [1] Through such moments, Maugham exposes a character trapped between childhood security and adult independence. Herbert's inability to separate himself from the influence of his mother eventually contributes to the collapse of his marriage. A similar psychological portrait appears in Kahhor's "The Headless

Man." Although Fakhriddin is an adult and a husband, he lacks the ability to think and act independently. His personality is shaped by the authority of his father, Usta Abdurahmon, who makes important decisions on behalf of the family. Fakhriddin's dependence is clearly expressed when he says, "If I do not know, my father knows." This remark reveals not only his lack of personal judgment but also his psychological inability to assume responsibility for his own life. His immaturity becomes even more apparent during the tragic events involving Mehri and her child. Faced with a shocking situation, he is unable to respond independently and instead remarks, "Let me ask my father." [2] Through these details, Kahhor portrays a character whose excessive dependence prevents emotional and moral development. The comparison of Herbert and Fakhriddin demonstrates significant similarities in their psychological portraits. Both characters remain emotionally attached to parental authority and fail to achieve personal maturity. Consequently, their dependence contributes to family conflict and emotional suffering. Nevertheless, Maugham explores this problem through individual psychological conflict, whereas Kahhor presents it within a broader social and family context. Through these characters, both writers reveal the destructive consequences of psychological dependence and the failure to achieve emotional independence.

The psychological portrayal of the protagonists in "The Luncheon" and "Pomegranate" demonstrates how financial hardship influences human behavior and emotional relationships. In both stories, economic difficulties become a source of inner conflict and psychological suffering. Although the protagonists attempt to conceal their material limitations, their anxiety, wounded pride, and emotional distress gradually become visible. While Maugham presents this situation through irony and humor, Kahhor portrays it through dramatic emotional tension. In "The Luncheon", the narrator is a young writer living in difficult financial circumstances. He admits that "I had only eighty francs to last me till the end of the month," [3] revealing his precarious situation. When a woman invites him to lunch at the expensive Foyot's restaurant, he becomes increasingly anxious. As she orders caviar, salmon, champagne, and asparagus, his psychological tension intensifies. His remarks such as "my heart sank" and "I was panic-stricken" expose the growing fear hidden behind his polite appearance. Throughout the meal, he silently calculates the cost and even considers what he would do if he could not pay the bill. Nevertheless, he continues the conversation

calmly, attempting to preserve his dignity. At the end of the story, when the woman advises him, "Never eat more than one thing for luncheon," he replies ironically, "I'll do better than that. I'll eat nothing for dinner tonight." This response reveals both his embarrassment and his attempt to disguise financial distress through humor. A similar psychological conflict appears in Kahhor's "Pomegranate", Turobjon is unable to satisfy the simple wish of his pregnant wife, who longs for a pomegranate. His poverty creates feelings of helplessness and emotional suffering. The depth of his frustration becomes evident when he complains: "A single pomegranate costs so much, while I earn only eighteen coins a month." [4] His inability to provide for his family gradually develops into psychological pressure. When his wife continues to insist on having a pomegranate, he exclaims bitterly, "Shall I kill my master and take his money, or sell myself as a slave?" This emotional outburst reveals the extent of his despair. The situation becomes even more painful when his wife compares him with another man who had brought pomegranates to his beloved. Deeply wounded by this remark, Turobjon experiences a crisis of dignity and self-respect. By the end of the story, his pale face and trembling body indicate the heavy psychological burden he has endured. The comparison of these protagonists demonstrates how financial hardship can shape human psychology. Both characters experience anxiety, humiliation, and emotional conflict when confronted with their inability to meet a woman's expectations. However, Maugham expresses this tension through subtle irony and psychological detail, whereas Kahhor presents it through dramatic conflict and emotional suffering. Despite these differences, both stories reveal the profound influence of poverty on personal relationships and inner experience.

Both Somerset Maugham's "Alien Corn" and Abdulla Kahhor's "The Artist" depict the psychological experiences of individuals who overestimate their artistic abilities. In both stories, the protagonists possess strong confidence in their talent, yet their confrontation with reality produces profound psychological tension. Through George Bland and the Artist, the authors explore pride, self-deception, and the painful process of self-recognition. In "Alien Corn", George Bland abandons wealth, social status, and family expectations in order to become a concert pianist. His devotion to music strengthens his belief in his exceptional talent. After years of intensive study in Germany, he asks the famous pianist Lea Makart a single question: "Can I become a first-rate pianist?" Her answer, "Not in a thousand years," destroys the dream

upon which he has built his entire identity. She explains that his hands are unsuitable for a great pianist and that his musical gifts are limited. Although George does not argue or protest, the narrator observes that his face turns pale. Maugham notes that "except for his pale face, no one would have guessed that all his hopes had been shattered." [5] This psychological detail reveals the depth of his inner suffering. George's calm response, "To tell the truth, this is not very different from my teacher's opinion," suggests that he had long suspected the truth but was unwilling to abandon his dream. Thus, the conflict between aspiration and reality leads to a profound psychological crisis. A different response to criticism appears in Kahhor's "The Artist." The protagonist considers himself a talented and respected singer. When a tractor driver criticizes his performance and advises him to learn the lyrics properly, the Artist interprets the remark as a personal insult. He reacts angrily, declaring, "What does a tractor driver know about singing?" Unable to accept criticism, he attempts to justify himself by insisting, "If my voice were bad, why did they make a record of it?" [6] His psychological insecurity becomes increasingly evident as he continues to think about the incident long after it has occurred. He complains that journalists and writers have never criticized him, yet now "a tractor driver dares to criticize me." Although he rejects the criticism publicly, it continues to haunt him internally. The recurring image of the smiling tractor driver in his imagination symbolizes the persistence of self-doubt and emotional unease. Through irony and satire, Kahhor exposes the psychological weakness hidden behind excessive self-confidence. The comparison of George Bland and the Artist reveals a common conflict between self-perception and reality. Both characters are forced to confront the limitations of their abilities, yet they respond differently. George ultimately accepts the truth and experiences a tragic inner crisis, whereas the Artist rejects criticism and remains trapped in self-deception. Through these contrasting reactions, Maugham and Kahhor reveal the complex relationship between ambition, pride, and psychological self-awareness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The conducted analysis demonstrates that psychologism occupies a significant place in the short fiction of both Somerset Maugham and Abdulla Kahhor. Despite differences in literary tradition and cultural background, both writers employ psychological characterization as a principal artistic means of revealing the inner world of their characters. The

study shows that emotions, inner conflicts, and psychological experiences function as essential elements in the construction of literary character and contribute to a deeper understanding of human nature. One of the major findings of the research is that psychological conflict serves as a fundamental mechanism of characterization. The analyzed stories reveal various forms of inner tension, including emotional dependence, economic anxiety, wounded dignity, excessive self-confidence, and disappointment. These psychological experiences shape the characters' behavior, influence their decisions, and determine the development of the narrative. As a result, external events gain significance primarily through their impact on the characters' inner lives. The study also highlights the importance of dialogue and psychological detail in portraying character psychology. Carefully selected remarks, emotional reactions, gestures, and symbolic details allow both writers to reveal hidden motives and states of mind. Through these artistic techniques, ordinary situations acquire psychological depth and become effective means of exploring human consciousness. Another important finding concerns the relationship between personality and environment. The analysis indicates that psychological experiences are closely connected with family relationships, social expectations, and material conditions. However, the two writers approach this relationship differently. Maugham primarily focuses on individual psychology and internal conflict, emphasizing personal emotions and self-awareness. Kahhor, by contrast, presents psychological experiences in close connection with social realities, family circumstances, and cultural values, thereby giving his characters a distinct socio-psychological dimension. The research further demonstrates that psychologism in the works of Maugham and Kahhor extends beyond the simple depiction of emotions. It functions as an artistic method for interpreting human behavior, moral dilemmas, and personal development. Through psychological characterization, both authors reveal the complexity of human nature and encourage readers to reflect on the motives underlying individual actions. Therefore, the study confirms that psychologism constitutes a common aesthetic foundation in the short stories of Somerset Maugham and Abdulla Kahhor. Psychological conflict, emotional tension, dialogue, and psychological detail emerge as the principal poetic mechanisms through which literary characters are portrayed. At the same time, the different artistic approaches employed by the two writers demonstrate the diversity of psychological representation across literary traditions and highlight the value

of comparative literary analysis in the study of character psychology. An additional finding of the study is the role of psychologism in strengthening the artistic and narrative structure of the short story. In the analyzed works, psychological experiences do not function merely as character traits but also serve as important elements that shape plot development and narrative progression. Inner conflicts frequently become the driving force behind external events, allowing the authors to construct meaningful and psychologically coherent narratives. Consequently, the psychological portrait becomes an essential link between characterization and artistic composition. The comparative examination further reveals that the psychological problems depicted by Maugham and Kahhor possess a universal human dimension. Although the stories emerge from different cultural settings, they address experiences that transcend national boundaries, including dependence, insecurity, disappointment, pride, and the search for self-realization. This universality demonstrates that psychologism enables literature to explore fundamental aspects of human existence while preserving the distinct cultural identity of each literary tradition. As a result, the analyzed stories contribute not only to national literature but also to a broader understanding of human psychology in world literature.

CONCLUSION

The present study has demonstrated that the psychological portrait occupies a central place in the short stories of Somerset Maugham and Abdulla Kahhor. Despite belonging to different literary traditions and cultural environments, both writers attach particular importance to the representation of the inner world of their characters. Through psychological conflict, emotional tension, and personal experience, they reveal the complexity of human nature and the motives underlying individual behavior. The comparative analysis of "The Kite" and "The Headless Man", "The Luncheon" and "Pomegranate", as well as "Alien Corn" and "The Artist" shows that psychologism serves as one of the principal poetic mechanisms in the works of both authors. The examined stories demonstrate various forms of psychological experience, including emotional dependence, economic anxiety, wounded dignity, excessive self-confidence, disappointment, and self-deception. These experiences shape the characters' actions and determine the development of the narrative. An important outcome of the research is the identification of psychological characterization as a key

element in the artistic interpretation of human experience. Through dialogue, psychological detail, inner conflict, and emotionally charged situations, both writers create convincing literary characters whose inner lives become the focus of the narrative. Their stories illustrate that external events acquire artistic significance primarily through their influence on the characters' psychological states. The study also confirms that Maugham and Kahhor employ different approaches to the portrayal of character psychology. Maugham primarily concentrates on individual consciousness, inner alienation, and personal psychological struggle, often revealing emotions through subtle irony and restrained narration. Kahhor, by contrast, presents psychological experiences in close connection with family relationships, social realities, and national values, frequently employing dramatic situations and social criticism. These differences reflect the distinct literary and cultural contexts in which the two writers worked. Furthermore, the comparative approach adopted in this study demonstrates the value of examining psychological representation across national literary traditions. The comparison of English and Uzbek short fiction makes it possible to identify both universal and culture-specific aspects of human psychology. Such an approach contributes to a deeper understanding of psychologism as a literary phenomenon and highlights the role of comparative literary studies in exploring the artistic representation of the human mind. In conclusion, the research confirms that psychologism functions not only as a means of depicting emotions and inner conflicts but also as an effective artistic method for interpreting human behavior and experience. The similarities and differences identified in the selected stories enrich our understanding of psychological poetics and emphasize the enduring significance of psychological characterization in both English and Uzbek short-story traditions.

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