



Article

The Conceptual Foundations of Image Poetics in Prose Fiction (Based on the story “The Lonely Relic of Summer”)

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Abstract: Literary fiction serves as a medium for expressing the inner and outer worlds of individuals through artistic images that reflect an author's aesthetic worldview and philosophical meditations. In prose, the image functions not only as a depiction of reality but also as an ideologically and aesthetically charged phenomenon, as demonstrated in Khayriddin Sultan's story “The Lonely Relic of Summer.” While studies address symbolic and psychological imagery in literature, there is limited research on multi-layered narrative techniques that blend philosophical depth, generational fate, and symbolic detail in Uzbek prose. This study analyzes the conceptual foundations of image poetics in prose fiction through the characterization, symbolic details, and narrative structure in Sultan's story. The analysis reveals how the author conveys human existence, loneliness, and fate through psychological depth, symbolic details, and unconventional narrative perspectives, including the personification of inanimate objects like the gun. Generational tragedy, spiritual solitude, and moral integrity emerge as central themes, while dynamic portraits and symbolic legends enrich the narrative. The work highlights the innovative use of symbolic and psychological detail, multi-perspective narration, and integration of philosophical reflections to expand the expressive potential of Uzbek prose. This study underscores the importance of symbolic and psychological depth in literary narratives, suggesting that nuanced image poetics can deepen emotional engagement and philosophical resonance in contemporary fiction.

Keywords: Image Poetics, Uzbek Prose, Khayriddin Sultan, Symbolic Detail, Psychological Detail, Generational Tragedy, Narrative Technique, Philosophical Fiction

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1. Introduction

The essence of literary fiction lies in expressing the internal and external world of a person through artistic images. The image, as a central construct in a literary text, reflects the author's aesthetic worldview, philosophical meditations on life, and individual artistic thinking. In literary studies, the poetics of the image refers to the structure of the image, its formation mechanisms, semantic layers, and symbolic, psychological, and aesthetic functions. In prose, this becomes even more important, as the image is not merely a tool for depicting reality but functions as an ideologically and aesthetically charged artistic phenomenon[1].

In Khayriddin Sultan's story “The Lonely Relic of Summer,” the purpose of human existence and one's attitude toward life are revealed through deep philosophical reflection. The characters do not conform to the traditional criterion of “activism” —they do not fight social ills or expose corrupt leaders. Instead, they attempt to comprehend the essence of being through their personal lives, internal experiences, and spiritual searches. For them,

life is a lifelong meditation, silent suffering, and a journey parallel with existence itself. Their struggle is not with the external world but with their own hearts. This inner battle intensifies the psychological drama of the characters[2].

The character Adash Karvon is shaped within this artistic and philosophical framework. He appears in the story at a critical juncture in life—having lost the dreams he had cherished and his only son, the bearer of his lineage. Through Adash Karvon and Oynisa's grief, the author powerfully depicts the deepest tragedy in human life: the loss of a child. This tragedy is not merely a personal sorrow but encompasses the essence of being, the resistance and submission to fate, and the harsh reality of life[3].

2. Materials and Methods

The methodology of this study is grounded in a qualitative literary analysis of Khayriddin Sultan's story "The Lonely Relic of Summer," employing a close reading approach to explore the conceptual foundations of image poetics in prose fiction. The analysis involves a systematic examination of the text to identify the structural, semantic, symbolic, psychological, and aesthetic dimensions of the literary image. Particular attention is given to the ways in which character portrayal, symbolic detail, and narrative perspective contribute to the philosophical and emotional depth of the work[4]. Through interpretive reading, the study dissects how the author integrates multi-perspective narration—such as presenting events through human and inanimate viewpoints—to expand the psychological and philosophical layers of the narrative. Symbolic and psychological details are analyzed not only as descriptive tools but as integral elements shaping the reader's perception of the characters' inner worlds. The methodology also considers intertextual references, metaphoric structures, and cultural-historical contexts to understand how the work reflects and reinterprets themes of fate, loneliness, and moral integrity. Interpretations are supported by insights from established literary theorists, ensuring that the analysis is framed within recognized scholarly discourse. This approach enables a holistic understanding of the interplay between content and form, revealing how Sultan's artistic strategies enhance the aesthetic and ideological resonance of the text. By blending textual analysis with theoretical grounding, the study aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the narrative's poetics and its contribution to modern Uzbek prose[5].

3. Results and Discussion

The concept of fate in the story is not presented as a simple deterministic force but as a mysterious power unfolding through spiritual and generational dimensions. Adash Karvon's life appears preordained even before his birth—as if loneliness and loss, inherited from his ancestors, had already determined his fate. His grandfather, Sahib Karvon, lost eleven of his twelve children. His father, Mirza Karvon, had only one son—Adash. Adash, in turn, had one son, Nasibbek, born when he was nearly fifty. This recurring generational pattern is not accidental; it conveys the inescapable law of predestined fate[6].

Thus, the author interprets loneliness not merely as a psychological state but as a generational, ontological tragedy. This solitude is the silent cry of existence, a test for the human soul, yet a path to spiritual maturity. Throughout the story, Adash Karvon remains alone in confronting his life, his ancestors, and his destiny. However, within this solitude lies the deepest and purest meaning of humanity[7].

According to literary scholar I. Hasanov, the primary cause of Adash Karvon's tragedy is divine destiny, followed by the writer who "bestowed" such a fate upon him. Loneliness, in this case, is a spiritual state that leads one to a profound understanding of life's meaning through the experience of separation. In "The Lonely Relic of Summer," the author introduces Adash Karvon in this very state—living with pain, memories, and spiritual turmoil. At such moments, the cemetery becomes a natural refuge for him, a place

that seems to contain silence, memory, and eternity. Through this image, the author interprets solitude as a spiritual experience born from life's trials[8].

Adash Karvon repeatedly visits the cemetery: "He came here when his father died, when his mother died, when his relatives died, when acquaintances and strangers died – and each time, he quietly returned home, burying a piece of his heart in the cold soil. Eventually, his heart crumbled piece by piece, turning to stone." When his only son Nasibbek dies, his emotional devastation reaches an unbearable peak. Earlier losses – of his parents and grandmother – were bearable because he viewed himself as their continuation. But Nasibbek's death severed this thread. What once gave meaning to his existence had now vanished. With the loss of his son, not only his future but his soul becomes orphaned[9].

This moment, at the philosophical and psychological core of the story, shows how devastating the loss of a child can be. Through Adash Karvon, the author captures not only the anguish of fatherhood but also the meaninglessness of existence and the subtle yet merciless boundary between life and death. A child is the purpose of life, the final link to it. When this link breaks, a person becomes an orphan not only in life but in spirit. Hence, this tragedy transcends the personal and becomes universal[10].

Later in the story, as Adash returns from exile bearing heavy emotional wounds, he learns from Naim that Oynisa has never stopped waiting for him. This moment deeply stirs Adash's soul. For a man who has spent twenty years in a labor camp, endured the harshest trials of life, and lost faith in dreams and dignity, the realization of such loyalty brings a profound spiritual awakening. Oynisa's loyalty is not only a personal salvation for Adash but a symbol of his regained humanity and dignity[11].

To portray Oynisa's fidelity, Khayriddin Sultan does not rely on ordinary narrative techniques. He elevates the image through symbolic and legendary layers. The legends about Iskandar's mirror and the daughter of the Roman Caesar are not merely historical inserts but symbolic reflections of Oynisa's inner strength and purity. These legends serve as metaphors that reveal the deep layers of a woman's heart[12].

Nasibbek's death is the dramatic core of the story. It is recounted from three different perspectives: Sattor, Adash Karvon, and finally, the gun itself. This multi-angled approach reveals the author's sophisticated artistic vision and his effort to depict reality as multilayered and contradictory. Sattor's version attempts to justify his actions from a subjective point of view. Adash Karvon offers an emotional perspective shaped by loss and memory. Neither fully captures the essence of the event[13].

At this point, the author uses an unusual yet artistically powerful device: he turns to the gun's perspective – an object without will or consciousness but directly involved in the incident. The gun is endowed with human-like qualities: it trembles, senses innocence and guilt, and reacts emotionally. For example, when the girl first touches the gun, it experiences a human-like response: "Her palms were soft like cotton – I had never felt such innocence". This personification allows the gun to express emotions and ethical awareness[14].

The most powerful moment comes when the gun, a tool for killing, tries to help Nasibbek. This paradox – an inanimate object displaying moral impulse – reveals the philosophical dilemma at the heart of human tragedy. Why did Nasibbek not hear its internal cry? Why does human awareness always come too late?

This technique allows Sultan to move beyond traditional realism into a realm of psychological and philosophical fiction. The gun becomes a lyrical character and a dramatic force, revealing new dimensions of artistic expression in Uzbek prose.

In prose, the effectiveness of a literary work often depends on the use of detail – particularly symbolic detail. According to literary critic E. Dobin, symbolic detail surpasses descriptive detail in conveying artistic depth. While descriptive detail broadens the narrative, symbolic detail encapsulates its essence in a compact and meaningful form[15].

Sultan masterfully uses psychological details to depict his characters' inner worlds. In portraying Adash Karvon, he does not rely on conventional methods like describing appearance or clothing. Instead, the character's psychological portrait is revealed through internal turmoil, memories, and emotions. Adash's external appearance is sketched only briefly upon his return to Tashkent, when he sees Naim at the station. This fleeting image reflects the physical and emotional toll of exile.

Rather than describing the character's outer appearance directly, the author gradually reveals his inner nature through monologues, thoughts, and psychological transformations. Adash Karvon's portrait is not confined to a single paragraph; it is dispersed throughout the text, embedded in the narrative's emotional and philosophical layers.

These psychological details—gestures, facial expressions, silences—help uncover hidden or shifting emotional states. I.V. Strakhov calls these “dynamic portraits,” which depict the constant change in a character's emotional condition. There is no strict boundary between external and psychological detail; rather, they blend to form one of the most nuanced layers of literary imagery. An external gesture, like a look or a hesitant movement, can become a window into a character's soul.

For example, Adash Karvon's refusal to escape exile is not a mere physical act but a manifestation of inner moral integrity. His view of his relationship with Oynisa as sacred—a kind of spiritual bond—shapes his decision. This reveals not a dissonance between external behavior and internal thought but a conscious moral stance rooted in responsibility.

His adherence to moral principles—faith, loyalty, and honor—emerges not through direct description but through his actions and decisions. These qualities are closely linked to his religious upbringing, worldview, and ethical framework. As someone educated in a madrasa, Adash is portrayed as humble, sincere, and spiritually grounded. His serenity, depth of thought, and moral clarity reflect the ethical values of the Uzbek people and their long-standing cultural traditions.

A powerful detail can illuminate a character's entire spiritual world. Abdulla Qodiriy once remarked that including the smell of linseed oil in a scene from *Days Gone By* made the setting more believable—highlighting how a small detail can reveal much about the whole. In literature, detail is not decoration—it is the essence of the image.

Writers cannot capture reality in its entirety, but a single symbolic detail can convey the whole. When choosing such a detail, the author relies on the reader's imagination and experience to complete the picture in their mind. This process of making the partial seem complete is called “concretization” in literary theory.

In creating “The Lonely Relic of Summer,” Khayriddin Sultan reinterprets life events and societal issues through his own aesthetic lens. He employs diverse literary devices to reveal the central idea and the characters' internal states. Sometimes, he gives voice directly to the character; other times, he expresses his position through events, conflicts, or character contrasts.

Dialogues, reflections, depictions of nature, emotional breakdowns, or awakenings—all contribute to the deeper layers of artistic thought in the story. The compositional system unites all these elements to convey the central idea. Structure, narrative flow, language, and the interconnection of scenes determine the effectiveness of the work's artistic and ideological expression.

In sum, the structural and narrative cohesion of a literary work enables the author to fully articulate their ideas. The sequence of events, use of imagery, dialogue, and symbolism all contribute to the harmony between content and form, enriching the work's aesthetic and philosophical value.

4. Conclusion

Khayriddin Sultan's "The Lonely Relic of Summer" demonstrates how the poetics of the image in prose can serve as a profound vehicle for exploring human existence, fate, and moral integrity. Through the character of Adash Karvon, the narrative delves into loneliness not as a mere emotional state but as a generational and ontological condition, shaped by loss, heritage, and spiritual trials. The story's multi-perspective structure, including the unconventional personification of the gun, allows the tragedy of Nasibbek's death to be seen through emotional, philosophical, and symbolic lenses, enriching the narrative's complexity. Symbolic and psychological details replace superficial description, revealing characters' inner worlds through gestures, memories, and moral decisions. The integration of legends, philosophical reflection, and carefully chosen details elevates the narrative beyond realism into a layered artistic expression that blends individual suffering with universal human truths. Ultimately, the story affirms that solitude, grief, and fidelity—when conveyed through refined literary devices—can illuminate the deepest dimensions of humanity, while the harmony of form and content ensures that these themes resonate with enduring artistic and philosophical significance.

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