



## THE ROLE OF THE CHARACTER SYSTEM IN THE NOVEL GENRE

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**Abstract.** The article discusses in detail the issues of studying the plot and the character system of the novel genre. It also examines the term "novel," its terminological meanings in dictionaries, and the types of novels. Furthermore, previous studies conducted on the plot and character system of the novel are comparatively analyzed.

**Keywords:** Novel genre, history of the novel, plot, character system, artistic image, character and imagery.

In literary studies, there are many scientific-theoretical opinions and debates regarding the issue of literary modes and genres. At the same time, the classification consisting of epic, lyric, and dramatic modes is significant due to its scientific justification. However, the literary scholar Bahodir Sarimsoqov also expresses an opinion about a fourth literary mode and scientifically substantiates it. If one pays closer attention to the scholar's views, it becomes clear that this is not simply a hypothesis. However, we are far from debating literary modes, firstly, due to space (length) constraints, and secondly, because this issue does not fall within the scope of our research problem.

When classifying works belonging to the epic genre into specific literary genres, certain established principles are inevitably observed. For example, when discussing the novel as a genre, attention is paid to its considerable length, its comprehensive representation of reality, its coverage of an extensive period in the protagonist's life, its portrayal of the lives of diverse individuals and characters, and the presence of multiple interwoven plotlines.



English dictionaries of literary studies, including The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms, A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory, and The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, provide extensive information on the term novel and its various types. In English literary scholarship, the term novel is used to denote this genre. According to The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms, its etymology derives from the Latin word *Romanus*, meaning “related to Rome,” and the term entered the English language through French as *roman*, developing in connection with the words *romance* and *Romanism*. In contrast, A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory emphasizes that “the emphasis on things being ‘new’ or a ‘novelty’”. And it was used in contradistinction to ‘romance’.” Furthermore, the dictionary explains that the word originates from the Italian term meaning “tale” or “piece of news,” signifying “story,” “tale,” or “news.” It also notes that in both French and Spanish the term was used in the sense of “collection” or “plurality,” and that it was initially applied to the stories in Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. It is evident that these views expressed in literary scholarship complement one another. More importantly, the perspectives concerning the genesis of the genre are largely consistent, suggesting that the formation of the novel in its modern sense dates back to the Renaissance period.

Overall, substantial scholarly research has been conducted on the novel as a literary genre. In particular, the plot and the system of characters have been examined extensively in major monographic studies. For instance, in his study of *O‘tkan kunlar* (Bygone Days), Uzoq Jo‘raqulov provides a thorough analysis of the novel’s plot and characters. The scholar expresses his views on the national and foreign novelistic traditions that Abdulla Qodiriy followed as follows: (1) prior to Qodiriy, the novel, in its full sense, did not exist in the history of Uzbek literature; (2) there was no established tradition of novel writing; (3) the novels of the Arab writer Jurji Zaydan, being confined to narrowly domestic themes, could not have served as a model for *O‘tkan kunlar*; (4) classical folk narratives and traditional epic poems were “entirely different phenomena in terms of both form and content”; and (5) by the twentieth century, the European novel



had developed along the path of decadence and had moved beyond the 1,500–1,700-year-old traditions of ancient Greek literature, making it impossible for Qodiriy's novel to follow such modern literary traditions. The very spirit of the novel was incompatible with them. It is evident that the scholar does not deny the relationship of O'tkan kunlar to the traditions of world novel writing; rather, he emphasizes that the novel was written primarily on the basis of Eastern and national literary traditions. Moreover, Jo'raqulov's conclusions are consistent with the views expressed by U. Normatov and B. Karimov. U. Normatov raises the legitimate question of why, although there had been many attempts to write novels in the history of Uzbek literature before Qodiriy, none of them came close to *Bygone Days* (O'tkan kunlar). He explains the reason as follows:

“The following may be identified as the principal generic characteristics of the realist novel:

The presence of a mode of thinking specific to the novel, along with broad intellectual and philosophical scope.

A new conception of the individual's life.

An objective, mirror-like representation of the individual's life, fidelity to the truth of life, and the supremacy of truth over the writer's personal inclinations and views.

The first work in Uzbek literature that fully satisfied these requirements was Qodiriy's novel *Bygone Days* (O'tkan kunlar).”

Indeed, the scholar's observations are well founded, as this novel fully embodies the artistic potential of the novel as a literary genre. Moreover, it also reflects the influence of the traditions and achievements of the European realist novel.

The earliest ideas about the concept of the image can be found in the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle's work *On the Art of Poetry*. In this work, he states that the primary cause of the emergence of the artistic image is mimesis—the artistic representation or imitation of reality. “An artistic image is an aesthetic category that reflects and transforms reality through methods unique to art. As the artistic representation of a real person, an image is an animated poetic model that comes into being through the



depiction of an existing object's life journey-unfolding within a specific time and space-and through a system of events. An artistic image should not be confused with the real object it represents; it differs from reality by virtue of its conventional and symbolic nature and constitutes the work's internal illusionary world."<sup>1</sup>. It appears that the central issue emphasized in the image is the artistic representation of reality and its poetic embodiment within a particular time and space.

The Russian literary critic V. G. Belinsky wrote:

"...There is not a single accidental or superfluous element in it. Every part is subordinate to the whole; everything is directed toward a single purpose. Together, all its parts create a unified beauty, integrity, and individuality."<sup>2</sup>, – According to another Russian scholar, L. I. Timofeyev, it is "a generalized, yet simultaneously concrete, representation of human life, created through artistic imagination and possessing aesthetic value."<sup>3</sup> – leads to the conclusion that.

Literary scholar Bahodir Sarimsoqov expresses the following view about the artistic image:

"An artistic image is created anew as a result of the creator's worldview and aesthetic ideal transforming reality, life observations, and impressions. Accordingly, the essence of an artistic image lies in the fact that reality is turned into an artistic generalization and is reflected or expressed through unique individuality. Therefore, the generalized nature of an artistic image embraces reality more broadly and more deeply than its direct representation in its original form"<sup>4</sup>. It seems that the scholar views the image more as a generalization.

Another literary scholar, Dilmurod Quronov, states: "A literary image is a reflection of reality (the things, events, and so on within it) that has been seen through the eyes of the artist and creatively reworked on the basis of an ideal, expressed in a

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<sup>1</sup> Абулхайр М. Навоий асарларининг изохли луғати. –Т.: “ЎзМЭ”, Биринчи жилд. – Т., 2000. – Б. 78.

<sup>2</sup> Белинский В.Г. Адабий орзулар. – Т.: Ғафур Ғулов номидаги адабиёт ва санъат нашриёти. 1977. – Б. 101.

<sup>3</sup> Тимофеев Л.И. Основы теории литературы. – М., 1959, – С. 53.

<sup>4</sup> Саримсоқов Б. Бадиийлик асослари ва мезонлари. – Т.: “Bokmany print” нашриёти, 2022. – Б. 7.



form that can be emotionally perceived. Certainly, in this reflection we can find many familiar traces of reality; however, this is no longer the very reality that we know, but rather an entirely new existence – an artistic reality.”<sup>5</sup>. – He puts forward the idea that. “Thus, it would not be wrong to say that an image is a unique poetic phenomenon that has slightly deviated from real existence and reality, strives toward ideality, and has been artistically reworked. In general, a literary image is created based on the writer’s worldview and expresses the author’s aesthetic ideal within the world of a literary work”<sup>6</sup>.

Another literary scholar, U. Jo‘raqulov, in his monograph “Qodiriy and the Concept of the Novel”, puts forward the idea that the historical basis characteristic of the plot and characters of the novel “Bygone Days” (O‘tkan kunlar) is the account of the events related to Adam (peace be upon him) in the Holy Qur’an. The images of the lover, the beloved, and the rival (adversary) in the novel, as well as the roots of the “first encounter,” “separation,” and “union” motifs in the plot structure, are compared with the Qur’anic narrative and analyzed according to their content and form.

As a result of his analyses, he proves with a number of arguments that “Bygone Days” takes the “first plot” of the Qur’an as the basis for its artistic expression. The scholar writes about this: “The plot of the novel consists of a system of artistic motifs called the ‘first encounter,’ ‘separation,’ and ‘union.’ If these motifs in the European novel are constructed on the basis of chance, in Qodiriy’s novel, ‘destiny’ is understood as the force that governs the entire fictional reality of the novel. The components of the plot, the trials encountered by the characters on the path of their fate, and the struggles between good and evil, faith and satanic forces are manifested in this form”<sup>7</sup>.

Furthermore, the scholar analyzes not only the traditional lover-beloved-rival triad in the system of novel characters, but also the images of parents, friends, servants,

<sup>5</sup> Quronov D. Adabiyot nazariyasi asoslari. – T.: Akademnashr, 2018. – B. 135.

<sup>6</sup> Ziyayeva Y. Mustaqillik davri o‘zbek romanlarida “Oshiq-mashuq-raqib” obrazlarining poetik takomili – Filol.fanlari bo‘yicha falsafa d-ri...diss. – T., 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Жўрақулов У. Қодирий ва роман тафаккури. – Тошкент: Nurafshon business, 2020. – Б. 10-11.



co-wives, and universal characters. The literary scholar states: “The system of characters in the novel is formed by the interconnected actions (in activity and speech) of many personages. There is not a single character in the novel who does not serve a specific purpose or who remains in the position of a vestigial element. Even Akrom Hoji, who is mentioned at the beginning of the novel, and Pirnazar the executioner, who appears in one of the final chapters, have been assigned a definite role by the author”<sup>8</sup>.

Another literary scholar, Suvon Meli, expresses the following opinion in his article “The Principle of Triad in the Structure of O‘tkan kunlar”: “There are many characters in the novel O‘tkan kunlar, but three of them are the leading protagonists, namely Otabek, Kumush, and Yusufbek Hoji. The overall idea and artistic structure of the work are realized through these characters. This triad in the structure is a strong and solid triad. It carries on its shoulders the two main themes that stand at the center of the work – love and affection, and concern for the nation and homeland”<sup>9</sup>.

According to the literary scholar Bahodir Karimov: “The talented writer benefited from Uzbek, Russian, and world literature, from folk oral creativity, and from the living language of the people. There is no doubt about this. In my opinion, one aspect of the root of this enrichment goes back to the ‘Baburnama’. Therefore, there is a need to compare the poetic connection between the ‘Baburnama’ and ‘Bygone Days’ with each other”<sup>10</sup>. Continuing his views, the scholar makes a typological comparison of these two great miraculous works in terms of the creative use by Qodiriy of the word “ko‘ch” – family, wife – from “Boburnoma”, portraits (“Description of Appearance” section), naturalistic depictions (“Steps, Footsteps” section), viewpoints related to the philosophy of life (“The Value of the Soul – the Meaning of Life”), the high level of artistic mastery (“The Status of I‘joz” section), artistic time and space (“Measurement of Time” section),

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<sup>8</sup> Ko‘rsatilgan manba. – B.178.

<sup>9</sup> Мели С. Сўзу сўз. – Т.: “Шарқ” НМАК бош тахририяти, 2020. – Б. 81-82

<sup>10</sup> Карим Б. Абдулла Қодирий феномени. – Тошкент: INFO CAPITAL GROUP, 2019. – Б. 200.



interior depiction (“Floral Scenes” section), character psychology (“Feasts of Boza” section), compositional structure (“Headings” section), and other aspects”<sup>11</sup>.

It can be seen from the above-mentioned number of studies that scholars have carried out significant research on the novel’s plot and system of characters. In recent years, comparative-typological studies in literary criticism have also become more active. In particular, novels that are large and complex within the system of epic thinking and require a high level of responsibility from researchers are being studied from a comparative perspective on a broad scale.

In conclusion, it can be stated that significant works have been carried out on the novel genre, which is the largest among epic genres, particularly in terms of its plot and system of characters. These studies have mainly been conducted on the basis of works belonging to a single nation. It should be especially emphasized that, despite the large number of studies conducted, there is still a need for comparative-typological research of world and national novels.

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<sup>11</sup> Қаранг: Карим Б. Абдулла Қодирий феномени. – Тошкент: INFO CAPITAL GROUP, 2019. – Б. 198-229.



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