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The Role of Conflict in Revealing the Hero's Psychological State

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Abstract: This article examines the literary function of internal conflict in the psychological construction of a character, with a focus on the works of Uzbek writer Abduqayum Yo‘ldosh. Through close analysis of the protagonist’s inner monologue in the novella “Sunbula’s First Saturday,” the study reveals how emotional ambivalence, moral hesitation, and inner contradictions reflect the protagonist’s personal growth and ethical awakening. The research demonstrates that internal conflict is not only a structural narrative device but also a psychological instrument for conveying deep emotional states and subjective reality. The paper draws on the concepts of psychological realism and literary psychology to highlight how internal struggles such as guilt, shame, and conscience form the backbone of character development in modern Uzbek prose.

Keywords: Internal conflict, psychological realism, moral dilemma, character development, Abduqayum Yo‘ldosh, Uzbek literature, inner monologue, catharsis, conscience.

Introduction: The role of conflict is essential in making a literary work engaging and in revealing the facets of a character. When a writer depicts landscapes and human portraits through words, they are not represented as static entities but rather as subjects in constant psychological motion. The characters in a literary work are in continuous action, and these actions often manifest as confrontations. Such confrontations may occur between individuals, between an individual and society, or within the individual’s inner world — in the form of internal psychological contradictions. In other words, conflict arises within the literary work. This leads us to the question: what is conflict?

Various definitions of conflict can be found in theoretical literature. Academic scholar I. Sulton defines conflict as follows: “Conflict is the clash of characters, ideas, and emotions portrayed in a literary work. A work without conflict lacks impact because it fails to vividly and consistently reflect the truth of life. Only through the confrontation of characters can the inner world of individuals be revealed. Conflict determines the direction of both the plot and the overall meaning of the work. A plot cannot be constructed without conflict, because at its core, the plot is the unfolding of a moving conflict.”[1:110].

T. Boboev defines conflict as follows: “Conflict is the direct confrontation between characters in a literary work, or the hero’s psychological struggle with their environment or with themselves. Conflict is the primary force that drives the plot forward. If we compare the plot to an automobile, then conflict is its engine; if the plot is the outer appearance, conflict is its inner flow. Through artistic plotting, the writer expresses the social conflicts of a given era, reveals their own attitude toward these conflicts, exposes the characters’ traits, and advances their aesthetic ideal.” [2:65].

Conflict functions as the engine of a literary plot; without it, the mechanism of the plot cannot be set into motion. Just as a traveler cannot reach their intended destination if their car engine fails or weakens midway through a journey, a writer, too, cannot fully realize their intended idea if the conflict within the narrative weakens or loses momentum over the course of events. Every literary work, in a positive sense, is a journey crafted for the reader’s soul. Along this journey, it is natural to encounter various events, good and bad individuals, ups and downs, and sharp turns.

If a plot is not built upon the basis of contradictions

between ideas, viewpoints, characters, or social groups, the work will lack emotional impact. Therefore, the vivid and consistent portrayal of life's truths depends on the essence and credibility of the depicted conflicts. At the same time, inner psychological clashes within a character contribute to a more convincing expression of the central issue and character development. [6:147-157].

Thus, it becomes evident from the above discussion that in literary fiction, conflict (opposition) is one of the most fundamental means of revealing a character's inner world. Contradictory situations play a special role in shaping a character, deepening their emotional experiences, and disclosing their psychological state. Conflict not only reflects the contradictory aspects of the human psyche but also serves to express the character's psychological experiences in a profound and convincing manner.

Moreover, conflict in a literary work represents the character's struggle either with their inner world or the external environment, and the tensions that arise between their aspirations, emotions, and thoughts. In prose, the dimensions of a character's personality can, by their own internal logic, be revealed through three types of conflict: conflict with the social environment, interpersonal conflict (between characters), and internal conflict (collision or inner contradiction).

Typically, all three types of conflict may be present in a prose work in one form or another, differing only in degree. In some cases, depending on the author's artistic intention, the protagonist is primarily in conflict with the surrounding society; in others, interpersonal clashes dominate. In works where psychological depth (artistic psychologism) is emphasized, internal conflict or collision takes the lead.

The wide use of conflict in world literature to explore the protagonist's inner world can be exemplified by Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment, where Raskolnikov's struggle with his own conscience presents a classic case of internal conflict, whereas Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea reflects an external conflict through the protagonist's struggle with nature.

In literary fiction, artistic psychologism and conflict are closely interconnected in the process of revealing a character's inner world. Without the presence of conflict, it becomes difficult to fully portray a character's emotional experiences. Particularly in works where artistic psychologism is approached deeply, internal conflict often emerges as the central idea. For this reason, in contemporary literary studies, conflict is examined as a fundamental element that defines the internal dynamics of a literary work.

Throughout life, humans are constantly exposed to collisions and contradictions. Whether we accept it or not, life itself is composed of various tensions and confrontations. The transference of this existential truth into literature is what literary theory defines as conflict.

Conflict is one of the key elements that ensures the narrative engagement of a literary work. It plays a significant role in helping the writer reveal the psychological essence of characters. As emphasized earlier, conflict arises from a character's confrontation either with another person, with society, or with their own thoughts and feelings. In short, whether in real-life processes or in fictional narratives, conflict plays an essential role in both development and resolution.

Moreover, from the earliest stages of human life, individuals take each step accompanied by internal and external contradictions. Good and evil, virtue and vice, light and darkness—these forces are in constant opposition and struggle. The reflection of such struggles is vividly depicted in literature. From ancient times, literary art has interpreted not only timeless dreams of humanity but also its eternal dilemmas, which are most often embodied through conflict in fiction.

Indeed, artists are capable of sensing and reflecting the beauty within the human soul. Regardless of the medium, all art is ultimately aimed at delivering aesthetic pleasure to the audience. In this regard, the contribution of literary artists is invaluable. Penetrating the most delicate corners of the human psyche and conveying the emotional depth of characters to the reader requires immense creative effort. Regardless of the length or genre of a work, a writer must clearly and effectively convey the intended message at the right moment.

One such writer who has deeply mastered all dimensions of human psychology and is capable of skillfully portraying his characters' inner worlds is Abduqayum Yo'ldosh. He laid the foundation of his literary creativity in the genre of the short story. Though regarded as the smallest form within epic genres, some of his stories carry a narrative weight equivalent to that of a novella or even a novel. Furthermore, as a writer who has thoroughly internalized lessons from his mentors in the fields of analysis and interpretation, his works have undoubtedly found their audience.

In A.Yo'ldosh's stories, certain conflicts may unfold over specific episodes and gradually disappear, while others begin from the very first part of the narrative, develop alongside the plot, and are ultimately resolved in the conclusion. In the course of this study, we will

attempt to analyze the following types of conflict:

1. Internal Conflict (Psychological): This type of conflict occurs within the mind of the protagonist. It involves the character's struggle with personal fears, doubts, or moral dilemmas. Internal conflict often revolves around difficult decisions, emotional turmoil, or processes of self-discovery.

2. Character vs. Character (Interpersonal Conflict): In this form of conflict, the protagonist faces opposition from another character or group of characters. It may include physical confrontations, verbal disputes, or social clashes.

3. Character vs. Nature: This conflict involves the protagonist struggling against natural forces such as weather, animals, or other environmental elements. The character must often confront and overcome obstacles posed by the natural world.

4. Character vs. Society: Here, the protagonist stands in opposition to societal norms, rules, or institutions. This conflict often addresses themes such as injustice, discrimination, and the clash between the individual and oppressive social structures.

5. Character vs. Supernatural Forces: In this type of conflict, the protagonist confronts powers beyond the natural world. It includes struggles with mythical beings, supernatural entities, or paranormal elements. Such conflicts are commonly found in folklore and fantasy literature.

6. Character vs. Technology/Machines: These conflicts arise when the protagonist battles machines, technology, or artificial intelligence. This type of conflict is widespread in modern and science fiction literature, reflecting anxieties about technological advancement and dehumanization.

7. Character vs. Fate: The protagonist struggles against a predetermined destiny or unchangeable future. This conflict frequently explores themes of free will, determinism, and resistance against fate.

As observed, the forms of conflict listed above are well established in literature. Several of these types of conflict can also be found in the works of Abduqayum Yo'ldosh, which constitute the object of our current research. His narratives reflect a range of tensions that illuminate character development through diverse modes of internal and external struggle.

For example, internal conflict unfolds within the protagonist's consciousness, in which the character wrestles with personal fears, doubts, or moral dilemmas. As discussed earlier, in the short story "Poincaré", the protagonist's psychological struggle is revealed through such an internal conflict. Similarly, in Abduqayum Yo'ldosh's novella "The Crocodile's Tears", psychological conflict takes precedence. The protagonist, unknowingly and due to his own negligence, causes the misfortune of a young woman, which becomes a source of deep moral anguish. The inner contradictions experienced by the character serve not only to reveal the intricacies of his personality but also to intensify the emotional tone of the narrative. Such internal conflicts—often revolving around difficult decisions, emotional disturbances, or the process of self-realization—are frequently encountered in Yo'ldosh's works.

In literary criticism, internal conflict is considered a key means of portraying the psychological struggle within a character's inner world. When examined through the lens of psychological realism and artistic psychologism, this concept encapsulates the clash between inner desires and moral principles, the process of self-identification, the torment of conscience, the conflict between personal interest and ethical duty, and the tension between emotion and reason.

In Yo'ldosh's novella "Sunbula's First Saturday", we witness the manifestation of the protagonist's internal conflict through his emotional monologue:

"Alas, what is the point in deceiving myself? Am I not waiting—not for the guest, but for the letter he brings? It is as if I expect compensation for the time I've wasted, for the nerve cells I've exhausted... But truly, which do I await more anxiously: the girl, or the letter? How petty and selfish I must be... The only thing left is for me to sneak into others' bedrooms and eavesdrop on their conversations… Shameful. Shameful, unbearably shameful.

No, it's not too late. I must abandon these devilish intentions of mine—I must do everything differently, absolutely everything. Now… now… let me think… Enough! That's it! I know what I must do: the letter must reach its rightful owner..."

This passage vividly reflects the moral and emotional turmoil of the character, illustrating the essence of internal conflict and its central role in building complex character psychology. [7:52].

The narrator finds himself in a morally questionable situation that is personally familiar to him. Throughout the narrative, he continuously analyzes his own behavior, exhibiting a tendency to either justify or condemn himself. His internal monologue is shaped by conflicting thoughts and develops over three distinct stages:

Stage One: Desire and Doubt. Within the narrator's inner world, two opposing forces come into conflict. On the one hand, he is awaiting the arrival of a letter, revealing that his interest is directed more toward the

letter than toward the girl herself. On the other hand, he recognizes this as a morally inappropriate position and feels ashamed of his own inclinations. This situation gives rise to an existential conflict. The narrator (an editor) begins to reflect on his inner experiences and becomes aware of his own ethical shortcomings.

Stage Two: Self-Denial and Moral Anguish. Upon realizing his desire for the letter, the narrator expresses a wish to renounce it. He blames and morally condemns himself, referring to his own intent as a "devilish motive." This represents a clear case of conscience-driven suffering. His internal utterance, “Shame, shame, how shameful…” vividly illustrates his remorse and his psychological self-punishment. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this process can be explained through Freud’s concept of the super-ego—the part of the psyche that evaluates actions against moral standards. The protagonist criticizes himself based on his internalized values, leading to deep internal conflict.

Stage Three: Moral Transformation and Resolution. Eventually, the narrator acknowledges his fault and decides to change his perspective. He seeks to realign his actions with his moral compass, realizing that the letter must reach its rightful recipient. This marks the beginning of a cathartic process, through which he experiences purification and spiritual renewal.

From a psychological standpoint, this final stage of the narrator’s internal conflict closely resembles Carl Jung’s concept of individuation—a process in which an individual becomes aware of unconscious desires, renounces them, and restores their moral identity.

The narrator’s internal conflict compels him to reevaluate his moral standards. Rather than succumbing to base desires, he chooses the path of spiritual elevation. This process illustrates his psychological development, the overcoming of internal barriers, and his striving for moral integrity and personal growth.

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