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The Role of Servants in English and Uzbek Literature and Their Artistic Expression in Novels.

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A B S T R A C T
This study examines the role of servants in English and Uzbek literature, focusing on their artistic representation in novels. Servant characters often function not only as background figures but also as key narrative devices that reveal social hierarchy, class relations, and moral values within their societies. In English novels, particularly those of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, servants are portrayed as mediators between social classes, offering insight into domestic life and power structures. Similarly, in Uzbek literature, servant figures reflect traditional social norms, loyalty, and the dynamics of authority and dependence within families and communities. Through comparative analysis, this paper explores how authors from both literary traditions use servants to enhance realism, develop plot, and convey ideological and cultural meanings. The study highlights the artistic techniques employed in portraying servants and underscores their significance in understanding broader social and historical contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

English society has a deep-rooted institutional structure of servitude, which is based on a form of social relations based on the traditional "master–servant" model since the time of feudalism. In the Middle Ages, servants worked in palaces, large manor-type noble estates, monasteries and churches, as well as on large farms, and they constituted the largest category in the labor market of that time. Since land ownership and control over the means of production were determined by strict class boundaries, servitude was seen as a mechanism for managing social order and discipline rather than an economic relationship. As the studies of William Blair and Timothy Minns note, the master managed order in his household through servants, and the stability of family morality and social norms was ensured precisely through their work. By the 17th and 18th centuries, the English service system had become more complex in terms of its internal hierarchy: professional roles such as butler, footman, maid, cook, and housekeeper were formed, and they became specialized categories managing various aspects of the household.

During the Victorian era, this system became even more prevalent, with the norm of having at least two or three servants in every middle-class family; this led to the depiction of servants in literature in many different forms and approaches.

In English literature, the typology of the servant image can be divided into groups such as the loyal servant, the comic servant, the intelligent advisor or mediator, the rebel or seeker of equality, the witness-observer, and the servant with hidden power. Each type was directly related to the socio-economic context, cultural values, and aesthetic approach of a particular historical period. In the early stages of English literature, the images of servants were often presented as individuals who were absolutely loyal, honest, and selfless to their master. A vivid example of this is the character of Kent in Shakespeare's tragedy "King Lear", who, by putting the value of his master above his own interests and not abandoning him despite his mistakes, is shown as a personification of the "ideal of loyalty". Although servants appear as background characters in Jane Austen's novels, particularly Pride and Prejudice, their presence makes the reader aware of the rigid stratification system of English society, the constitutional hierarchy within the household, and the social structure based on the principles of property.

This typology became an expression of English moral values such as loyalty, dedication to duty, and humility. In Renaissance comedies, servants are often depicted as comic figures, and they become a major source of humorous solutions to dramatic conflict, social satire, and laughter. Through the characters of Dogberry in Much Ado About Nothing or Malvolio in Twelfth Night, Shakespeare makes a subtle and humorous critique of social order and bureaucratic injustice. This type of servant acts as a comic side of aristocratic seriousness, an artistic mirror of the absurdities of the social hierarchy. In 18th-century English comedy, servants take on a more active and intellectual image, often depicted as the masterminds of the plot, the creators of intrigue, or the wise agents who guide the characters on the right path. In works such as Sheridan's The School for Scandal or Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer, servants appear as active characters who expose social inequalities and attempt to correct their masters' wrong decisions before society.

After the Industrial Revolution, a new type of servant emerged in English literature - a rebel, a fighter for his rights, demanding equality. Mellors in D. H. Lawrence's novel Lady Chatterley's Lover is one of these characters. Mellors marks a new stage in the image of the servant as a person who resists the spiritual crisis of the aristocracy, realizes his own worth, and demands ownership of his body and labor. This approach shows that the servant is not a figure completely dependent on the master, but, on the contrary, has the potential to resist him. In Victorian prose, servants often had the function of "witness-observer". They became figures who knew the secrets, relationships, internal conflicts, and hidden dramatic currents in the house. Nelly Dean in Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights participates as the main narrator of the entire work, demonstrating the epistemic superiority of the servant over the development of events. This typology interprets the servant as the "invisible historian" of the social system.

In 20th-21st century English literature, the image of the maid has become more psychologically complex, becoming a complex character associated with themes such as personal self-awareness, psychological trauma, isolation, and finding one's own worth. In feminist literature, the image of the female maid is observed against the background of issues such as exploitation, sexual violence, economic dependence, and patriarchal control. In the works of Margaret Drabble and Jeanette Winterson, the image of the female maid has become a key poetic device reflecting gender inequalities. In modern Britain, many domestic servants are immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe, which has shaped the transnational interpretation of the image of the maid; cultural alienation, labor exploitation, disenfranchisement, and the trauma of migration have become widely covered in literature.

Through the images of servants, English literature deeply analyzes the main problems of society - the rigidity of the class system, the differences between the aristocracy and the lower class, labor exploitation, gender inequality, restrictions on personal freedom, and the conflict of needs and desires.

In this sense, the image of the servant is not only a supporting character in English literature, but also one of the most functional and dynamic images, revealing the internal mechanisms of society, exposing the foundations of hierarchy and domination, and being an artistic mirror of historical changes.

In the Uzbek socio-cultural history, the image of a servant was formed as an important structural link of society, not only a person performing economic tasks, but also a mirror of social relations, a carrier of cultural codes, and an intermediary subject between the family and the external social environment. Although in literary interpretations the servant is often depicted as a “representative of the lower class”, his social role, psychological state, and functional tasks have changed significantly at different historical stages, acquiring a more complex content. The concept of the “third man” used in modern literary criticism is also associated with this process of complexity and corresponds to an expanded sociopsychological interpretation of the image of the servant. The “third man” is considered as an intermediary figure who maintains the balance between the two central characters, reveals the real conflict or reveals its hidden layers; This role was often assigned to representatives of lower socio-legal status, including servants.

The type of servant is a social institution that has existed since ancient times in the history of Central Asia. Mahmud Kashgari, in his work “Devonu lug‘otit turk”, introduces concepts such as “slave”, “servant”, “young man”, showing that this institution is deeply rooted in Turkic societies. During the Timurid era and the Bukhara Emirate, servants were usually divided into two large groups: the first were palace servants who were close to the state administration, and the second were household servants who were engaged in household, land work, livestock breeding or child rearing. While palace servants sometimes had a relatively high status as a “serving elite”, household servants were assessed within the “lower class”; this stratification later directly influenced the formation of images of servants in Uzbek literature. The main social functions of the servant — acting as an intermediary between the householders and the outside world, carrying information, performing ritual practices, and playing an important role in revealing the psyche of the protagonists as a psychological observer — determined his functional content in literature and laid the foundation for the concept of the "third man."

The image of the servant in Uzbek literature has changed over the course of historical periods. In the works of Alisher Navoi, servants are often depicted as comic, sometimes figurative intermediaries, conveying messages between heroes, knowing secrets, but not directly interfering in the center of the story. All these images stem from their social status; although they are important for the real dynamics, they are not at the center of the novel or epic, but act as intermediaries who give its development a light, sometimes comic tone. In the stage of realistic literature, in particular in Abdulla Qodiriy's novel "Bygone Days", the image of the servant became psychologically deeper and developed as an artistic figure showing the internal crises and class inequalities of society. Through the loyalty and honesty of the servants of the Otabek house, or the living under fear, deception and political pressure of the servants in the khan's palace, the author illuminates the "invisible layers" of the social system.

In Soviet literature, the term “servant” was abandoned for ideological reasons; however, characters performing the function of a servant continued to be portrayed as “worker,” “servant,” or “collective farmer.” The main poetic function of the servant image during this period was to glorify labor, promote class equality, and deny servitude as a relic of the old society. However, in folk folklore, servant characters retained their status and continued to live on in various forms in fairy tales, epics, and comedic stories. In post-independence literature, the image of the servant began to be reinterpreted in a new sociocultural context. The images of the domestic servant, the person trying to escape economic dependence, the victim of gender inequality, or the migrant woman working as a domestic servant abroad proliferated. Through such interpretations, literature reveals contemporary forms of social stratification, the psychological isolation of servants, the mechanisms of exploitation, and the weakly protected position in the new labor market.

The concept of the “third man” in literary criticism corresponds precisely to this functional expansion of the image of the servant. The “third man” does not directly intervene in the development of events, but observes the hidden dynamics between them, mediates the emergence or resolution of conflicts, indirectly determines the decision-making process and, as a witness to secrets, makes it possible to understand the

internal mechanism of the real structure. The servant naturally appears in this role, since he is located between the owners of the house and the outside world, deeply observes internal processes, but is not completely involved in them; his presence often creates a balance between the interests of two opposing sides as a "silent figure". Thus, the image of the servant in Uzbek literature has risen to the level of a complex artistic figure that reveals the "invisible layers" of the social system, deepens or softens conflicts, and carries cultural codes.

In modern Uzbek literature, the interpretation of the image of a servant has become significantly more complex, moving away from the previous large typological patterns. First of all, the psychological portrait of servants has deepened, they are no longer depicted as a type performing the same tasks, but as individual characters, distinguished by their personal traumas, internal conflicts, aspirations for social justice and the search for new life opportunities. This process is especially evident in the images of female servants, since in literature they are often associated with exploitation, economic dependence, vulnerability to violence in family or labor relations; this serves to highlight gender inequality and structural problems. The phenomenon of migration also plays an important role in the modern formation of the image of the servant: in works about women working as domestic servants in countries such as Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkey, the image of the servant is reinterpreted in a new socio-cultural space and is revealed in connection with the problems of adaptation, alienation, exploitation, and identity crisis. All this makes the image of the servant one of the central figures of social criticism, because through literature, class differences in society, the tension between rich and poor, injustice in labor relations, and structural inequalities are revealed more precisely through the lives of servants. In this way, the image of the servant is being formed in modern Uzbek literature not only as a supporting character, but also as a complex artistic figure with a strong socio-aesthetic load, illuminating deep problems in society.

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