

**HUMAN AND SOCIETY RELATIONS THROUGH LITERARY IMAGES: A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF A. QAHHOR AND J. LONDON'S SHORT STORIES**

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Abstract: This article examines the theme of relations between the individual and society in the novellas/short stories of Abdulla Qahhor and Jack London, two prominent representatives of Uzbek and American realism. Through comparative analysis, the study highlights how both writers use characters as reflections of a broader social context, emphasizing conflicts, struggles, and moral dilemmas shaped by their environments. The methodology rests on the principles of realism and aims at truthful representation of human experience within social and historical conditions. Findings indicate that while London depicts the individual's survival against the forces of capitalism and nature, Qahhor's narratives reveal tensions between personal integrity and social pressure within Soviet realities. Taken together, their works demonstrate the universal artistic significance of realism in representing the dynamic interaction between human beings and society.

Introduction. The "individual and society" theme remains one of the central issues of world literature, as writers continually strive to depict the human condition within its broader social frame. Literature—especially within realist traditions—does not merely recount personal events; it embeds them in the dynamics of historical, cultural, and social change. This makes the study of characters and their social environments a key task of literary analysis. The aim of this article is to compare how Abdulla Qahhor and Jack London—leading figures of Uzbek and American literature—portray the individual's relationship with society through their short stories. By reading their works side by side, the study clarifies similarities and differences in how two distinct literary traditions reflect social reality.

Abdulla Qahhor (1907–1968), a leading figure of Uzbek realism, approached everyday life of the Soviet period critically, often exposing clashes between official ideology and human experience. His stories portray the struggles of ordinary people, using satire, irony, and psychological depth as artistic means. Jack London (1876–1916), an American realist and naturalist, wrote during a time of industrialization and social change in the United States. His stories often focus on survival, class struggle, and the harsh realities of capitalism. Together, the two authors speak powerfully for their respective societies, making their works valuable for comparative inquiry into the universal link between people and their social worlds.

Jack London: The Individual within Social–Economic Frames. Jack London's short stories consistently foreground the individual's position within a larger social and economic sphere. Whether laborers, adventurers, or drifters, his protagonists are not isolated figures but are closely tied to the class struggles of early twentieth-century America. In stories such as "A Piece of Steak" ("Murtad" in your text likely refers to other London pieces) or "The Law of Life,"

London portrays workers and marginalized people shaped by the demands of capitalism and the relentless fight for survival. The individual is frequently caught between personal desires and social forces, where communal ties, economic pressure, and the hardness of nature determine existence. Through such depictions, London underscores both human resilience and the limits imposed by class and social structure.

Abdulla Qahhor: The Individual within Soviet Social Realities. Writing within Soviet Uzbekistan, Qahhor portrays the person in constant relation with society. Unlike London's focus on capitalism and class, Qahhor addresses the contradictions and social problems of Soviet life. His protagonists are often ordinary people whose daily routines expose deep tensions in the political and social system. Poverty, inequality, and bureaucratic absurdities are central themes. In stories such as "O'g'ri" ("The Thief") and "Sinchalak," he shows how collective hopes, state policy, ideological ideals, and real hardships collide. His characters often embody quiet resistance, irony, or helplessness, reflecting the everyday struggles of individuals under a system that promised equality but often failed to deliver.

Characters as Mirrors of Society. Both London and Qahhor use characters as mirrors of the societies they represent, though from different historical and cultural positions. London's figures embody the American experience of industrialization, class conflict, and a Darwinian struggle for survival in both urban and natural settings. His protagonists frequently confront the forces of nature or capitalism directly; survival and self-reliance shape their identities. Qahhor, by contrast, situates his characters within the rigid structures of Soviet society, where social pressure, ideological control, and bureaucratic inefficiency shape individual destinies. In both, the protagonist is inseparable from the environment: society is not a backdrop but an active force shaping identity, conflict, and moral choice. Thus, the comparison shows that while London accentuates struggle with external forces—nature and capitalist society—Qahhor highlights inner conflicts produced by social contradictions and ideological constraints. Both demonstrate that the individual is never isolated but always in a dynamic, often problematic, relationship with society. Conflict is central to London's storytelling. His characters are often placed in extreme situations where survival is at risk. The tension between human and nature, human and society, or human and self generates the dramatic power of his tales. In "To Build a Fire," the hero's battle against the merciless Yukon cold is not only a physical contest but a psychological test of will and human frailty. Likewise, in "The People of the Abyss," conflict stems from the social reality of poverty and exploitation that strips individuals of dignity. London heightens these clashes through vivid description and stark realism, allowing readers to feel the intensity of human struggle.

Qahhor, though less focused on physical survival, concentrates on social and psychological collisions within the Soviet order. His characters face moral dilemmas, social hypocrisy, and bureaucratic absurdities that hinder personal growth. In "O'g'ri," conflict unfolds not only between the thief and society but also within the character's conscience, reflecting broader issues of justice and morality. In "Sinchalak," satire and irony expose the rifts between ideological slogans and lived reality, where individuals struggle to reconcile personal truth with collective expectations. Qahhor's conflicts are subtle yet deeply human, emphasizing tensions between official ideology and personal experience.

Both writers thus rely on conflict to build realistic, memorable characters. London shapes character through physical endurance and responses to extremity, revealing essence in moments

of crisis—courage, stubbornness, or tragic failure. Qahhor constructs character through irony, dialogue, and moral confrontation; his figures are not idealized but flawed individuals reflecting the complexity of Soviet society. In both literatures, conflict drives character development. Yet London's conflicts are often external—survival, class struggle, natural law—whereas Qahhor's are internal and social, exposing contradictions in a controlled, ideological society. These differences mark two complementary approaches to realism: one foregrounding struggle against external forces, the other critiquing social and moral conditions.

London's realism is inseparable from the social and historical conditions of early twentieth-century America: the Gold Rush, the rise of industrial capitalism, and widening inequality. As an adventurer and laborer, London witnessed firsthand the struggles of workers, sailors, and prospectors. The stark realities of economic exploitation, together with nature's relentless power, became central themes. Industrialization brought technological progress but widened class divisions, creating a society in which individuals were often crushed by systemic injustice. London's realism reflects this world by portraying characters whose survival depends on resilience amid confrontations with natural and social forces.

Abdulla Qahhor, conversely, wrote under Soviet censorship and ideological control. Literature in the USSR was often subject to the demands of "socialist realism," which expected works to promote official ideology and glorify the collective over the individual. Yet Qahhor skillfully used satire, irony, and fine psychological detail to expose contradictions of Soviet society. His stories depict ordinary people struggling against bureaucracy, hypocrisy, and poverty. Despite censorship, he succeeded in imbuing his works with a critical stance, making them not only mirrors of their time but also enduring explorations of human character under oppressive social conditions.

From a theoretical perspective, realism is often defined as the "truthful representation of life" (M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*). The principle emphasizes clear depiction of everyday experience, social relations, and human psychology without excessive idealization. In Western criticism, realism arose in the nineteenth century as a reaction against Romanticism, seeking to capture life as it is rather than as it ought to be. Uzbek literary thought likewise underscores realism's role. Writers such as Oybek and G'afur G'ulom emphasized literature's responsibility to reveal the truth of human experience, while Abdulla Qodiriy showed in his works how personal fate is inseparable from historical and social reality. In this sense, Qahhor's realism continues national traditions while resonating with global currents of critical realism. Placed within their historical and theoretical frames, London's and Qahhor's characters emerge not as isolated individuals but as products of their times, formed by capitalism, ideology, and societal demands.

Conclusion. The comparative analysis of Abdulla Qahhor and Jack London demonstrates that realism serves as a powerful artistic method for portraying the complex relationship between the individual and society. Shaped by the Gold Rush and the rise of industrial capitalism, London depicted characters struggling against nature and economic injustice. Writing under Soviet censorship, Qahhor revealed the contradictions of socialist society through satire, irony, and psychological depth. Despite divergent contexts, both authors stress the human being's inseparable ties to social and historical conditions. Their works encompass not only the struggles of their eras but also universal themes of survival, morality, and dignity. This study reaffirms

that realism— as a truthful mode of representation—remains relevant across cultures and continues to illuminate the enduring dialogue between the human being and society.

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