

# MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC – METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL



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### FROM ORIGINS: COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS INTO THE NOVEL IN AMERICAN AND UZBEK LITERATURE (JAMES FENIMORE COOPER AND ABDULLA QODIRIY)

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#### ABOUT ARTICLE

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**Abstract:** This article presents a comparative study of the development of the novel genre in American and Uzbek literature through the works of James Fenimore Cooper and Abdulla Qodiriy. It explores how both authors, despite operating in distinct historical and cultural contexts, contributed to shaping the narrative structure, thematic focus, and artistic expression of the novel in their respective literatures. Cooper's works are examined in relation to the political and spiritual dimensions of American independence, the formation of national identity, and the tension between nature and civilization. Qodiriy's novels are analyzed within the framework of the Jadid movement and early 20th-century socio-political transformations in Uzbekistan, highlighting the moral, spiritual, and social dilemmas reflected in his characters. The study emphasizes the enduring significance of both authors in understanding the evolution of the novel, the interaction between literature and society, and the role of literary works in shaping cultural and national consciousness.

**Introduction.** The novel, as a literary genre, has undergone significant evolution in both American and Uzbek literatures, reflecting the unique historical, social, and cultural contexts of

each society. This comparative study aims to trace the developmental stages of the novel genre in these two traditions, highlighting key works and their contributions to the literary landscape.

In American literature, the novel began to take shape in the early nineteenth century. James Fenimore Cooper's "The Last of the Mohicans" (1826) is often regarded as one of the earliest significant American novels. Set during the French and Indian War, it explores themes of frontier life and the clash between European settlers and Native American tribes. This work laid the groundwork for the American novel by incorporating national themes and settings. As the century progressed, American novelists began to delve deeper into social issues. Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Scarlet Letter" (1850) examined themes of sin, guilt, and redemption in Puritan New England. Herman Melville's "Moby-Dick" (1851) offered a complex narrative exploring obsession and the human condition. These works marked a shift towards more introspective and morally complex narratives. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the rise of realism and naturalism. Authors like Henry James and Theodore Dreiser depicted the lives of ordinary people, focusing on social and economic forces shaping human behavior. This period also introduced modernist techniques, with writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner experimenting with narrative structures and perspectives.

In contrast, Uzbek literature experienced a different trajectory in the development of the novel. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked the beginning of novelistic traditions in Uzbekistan. Abdulla Qodiriy's "Bygone days" (1925), is widely regarded as the first full-length Uzbek novel, marking a crucial turning point in the development of modern Uzbek literature. Set in the pre-revolutionary Kokand Khanate, the novel provides an extensive and vivid depiction of social life, customs, and traditions of the period, reflecting both the everyday realities and the larger historical context of Uzbek society. Qodiriy meticulously portrays the hierarchical structure of society, illustrating the contrasts between the wealthy elite, middle-class merchants, and the common people, thereby highlighting issues of social stratification and inequality.

The novel also addresses the cultural and ideological transformations taking place in the early twentieth century, such as the increasing influence of Russian colonial administration, the spread of modern education, and the gradual emergence of a reformist intelligentsia. Through its detailed character development, including protagonists who grapple with moral dilemmas, personal ambitions, and social responsibilities, "Bygone days" (O'tkan kunlar) not only narrates individual lives but also serves as a mirror of collective societal consciousness.

**Main part.** According to The Shorter Oxford Dictionary, novel is “a fictitious prose narrative of considerable length in which characters and actions representative of real life are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity” (cited in Rees, 1973, p.106). Another definition by an anonymous author states that a novel is “a piece of prose fiction of a reasonable length”. Both the definitions highlight the word ‘prose’ meaning the common or ordinary spoken form of language without the presence of poetic rhythmic structure. [1]

One of the figures who made a significant contribution to the novel genre in foreign literature is James Fenimore Cooper. In many respects Cooper was the founding father of the novel in America. Although other writers had earlier aspired to the role, he was the first popularly successful American novelist, the first in the land of opportunity to prove that fiction could afford a citizen of the republic with a career.[3,3]

In his works, he vividly depicted the American plains, wild forests, and frontier territories. His narratives explore themes of nature and humanity, as well as the relations between American and European settlers. Cooper’s numerous novels, short stories, travelogues, and works in other genres played an invaluable role in bringing American literature to international prominence. Before Hawthorne, he wrote historical romances, including one set in Puritan New England. Before Melville, he wrote sea-going fiction in which the ocean provides a setting at once realistic and symbolic. Before James, he wrote international novels. Before Twain, he wrote the kind of tale in which, at the end, the hero lights out for the territory. Before Howells, he wrote American romans de societe. In these instances it would be harder to measure the precise extent of Cooper's influence, though it is certain that each of these subsequent writers had read Cooper.[3]

Abdulla Qodiriy is recognized as a writer who played a significant role in the development of the novel genre in Uzbek literature and laid the foundation for the historical novel. He is one of the prominent representatives of Jadid literature, promoting the ideas of national independence and occupying a distinguished place in the advancement of Uzbek journalism and prose. Abdulla Qodiriy was a masterful writer who elevated Uzbek prose to high literary standards, infusing our written language with the lively rhythms of the people’s speech. Boldly entering the ranks of world-renowned novelists, he laid the foundation of Uzbek novelistic tradition as a skillful and insightful artist. A great-hearted figure, he regarded the enlightenment of a nation oppressed by tyranny as a practical mission and devoted all he had to this cause. Until the final moments of his life, he remained a freedom-loving intellectual, breathing the spirit of liberty.[11]

Abdulla Qodiriy's masterpieces, the historical novels "Bygone days" (1926) and "A scorpion from mehrab" (1929), are among the first works in Uzbek literature to explore historical themes. Qodiriy's interest in historical subjects is explained by his desire to understand the past of his people, his patience and diligence, and the heroic struggle of the nation for freedom and independence. One distinctive feature of "A scorpion from mehrab" published in Russian in 1961, is the author's ability to vividly and sincerely depict the life and history of the Uzbek people, capturing the color and spirit of the era, and portraying the characters' personalities within the conditions of the 1840s.

In this innovation, Abdulla Qodiriy laid the foundation for the refinement of the Uzbek historical novel. In "A scorpion from mehrab", he significantly enriched the traditions of truth-oriented narrative, contributed to the psychological development of characters, introduced new methods for expressing the inner world of individuals, and demonstrated the transformation of characters' behavior. This novel provides an authentic depiction of the social and moral life of Turkestan society at the turn of two centuries. Furthermore, his novels exemplify the fusion of traditional narrative forms with modern literary techniques, blending elements of oral storytelling, historical chronicles, and psychological insight. By doing so, Qodiriy establishes a uniquely Uzbek voice in the novelistic genre, demonstrating how national literature can reflect local realities while engaging with broader literary trends. In comparison to contemporary American novels, which often focus on individualism and the exploration of personal identity, "Bygone days" emphasizes communal life, historical continuity, and the ethical responsibilities of individuals within society, offering a distinctive perspective on the social and cultural functions of the novel as a literary form.

James Fenimore Cooper and Abdulla Qodiriy, who laid the foundations of the novel genre in their respective countries, made invaluable contributions to their national literatures. In the creation of literary works, other American writers were also inspired by Cooper's novels, often using them as models for their own writing. Forty-five years after the founding of the United States, James Fenimore Cooper introduced themes unique to the new nation, laying the foundation for authentic American literature. His novels not only continued the tradition of creating national literary characters but also demonstrated the distinct historical experiences and destiny of the American people. Cooper produced works across various genres, including historical, social, utopian, satirical, and sea novels, many of which featured Native American characters as central figures. In his narratives, he sought to depict the tragic fates of the continent's indigenous populations while critically examining both their positive and negative traits.[7,97]

The early phase of Qodiriy's literary activity was closely linked with the Jadid movement. Previously, Jadidism was often interpreted as a reactionary phenomenon, and this perspective dominated many studies. For instance, Aliyev described the movement as "the Turkestan Jadids were revolutionary enemies supporting the interests of the local trading bourgeoisie," while I. Sultonov characterized it as "a manifestation of the counter-revolutionary nationalist ideology of the young Uzbek bourgeoisie." Such views repeatedly appeared in research, leading to a one-sided understanding of Jadidism.[9,12]

In understanding the inner world of the characters and the emotional depth of Abdulla Qodiriy's novels, memories and recollections about the author play a revealing and guiding role. In his first novel, "Bygone Days", the character Yusufbek Hoji embodies the unparalleled image of a progressive and highly enlightened statesman who pursued the path of justice based on the religious-Islamic beliefs of his time, depicted with extraordinary artistic skill. After the completion of "Bygone Days", in 1920 and before the publication of "Mehrobdan Chayon" (The Scorpion from Mehrab), nearly a decade of turbulent events brought about profound contradictions in Qodiriy's life, fate, and spiritual, moral, and creative spheres.[10,56] In my view, Qodiriy's ability to intertwine the socio-political realities of his time with the psychological depth of his characters demonstrates not only his literary mastery but also his profound understanding of human nature. The portrayal of Yusufbek Hoji as a morally upright and enlightened figure reflects Qodiriy's commitment to progressive ideals and justice. Moreover, the turbulent decade between Bygone Days and Mehrobdan Chayon highlights how personal and societal challenges shaped his creative vision, resulting in a rich and multi-layered narrative universe that continues to resonate with readers.

The main themes of James Fenimore Cooper's works created during this period are closely connected with the political and spiritual aspects of American independence. In his writing, he paid particular attention to issues such as liberation from colonialism, the formation of national identity, and the construction of a new society. His works artistically depict the impact of the War of Independence, Americans' pursuit of freedom, and their struggle to establish a new social order. At the same time, Cooper extensively explored the conflict between nature and civilization, the life and culture of Native Americans, and the process of Westernization. Although political independence was achieved through the Revolutionary War, Cooper believed that the country still needed to struggle for spiritual freedom. According to him, the enemy remained England; however, it is not difficult to interpret this struggle as extending from the fight against British rule during the Revolution to the earlier conflicts against the Federalist dominance in Cooperstown.[3,122]

James Fenimore Cooper's works of this period provide a profound depiction of Americans' political and spiritual struggles for independence. His writings pay particular attention to the formation of national identity, liberation from colonialism, and the construction of a new society. At the same time, Cooper extensively examines complex social and cultural issues, including the conflict between nature and civilization, the life and culture of Native Americans, and the process of Westernization. Although political independence was achieved through the Revolutionary War, Cooper emphasized that the nation still needed to strive for spiritual freedom. This perspective enabled his works to artistically convey not only historical events but also the human psyche and the internal contradictions of society.

Lets see thier contribution to the novel genre in the table:

	Key Aspects	James Fenimore Cooper	Abdulla Qodiriy
1	Period	Early to mid-19th century	Early 20th century – 1930s
2	Primary Genre	Historical and adventure novel	Historical novel
3	Famous Works	<i>The Last of the Mohicans</i> (1826), <i>The Deerslayer</i> (1841)	" <i>Bygone days</i> " (1926), "A scorpion from mehrab" (1929)
4	Themes / Subjects	American colonial history, natural environment, independence, national identity, human-nature relationships	Social and historical development of Uzbek society, national consciousness, struggle for freedom and independence, history and moral values of the people
5	Narrative Features	Adventure-driven, dramatic scenes, vivid depiction of nature, focus on individual hero	Based on historical events, social and moral issues, psychological depth, transformation of characters' behavior
6	Impact and Legacy	Inspired American writers; helped shape national novel traditions	Laid the foundation of Uzbek historical novel; contributed to the development of Uzbek prose and journalism
7	Approach	Individualism, national identity, interaction between humans and nature, adventurous storytelling	National history, collective consciousness, social and moral struggles, ethics grounded in historical events

8	<b>Innovations</b>	Combined historical and adventure elements, dramatized character traits and natural settings	Introduced psychological depth, truth-oriented narrative, new methods to express inner life, showed development of characters' personalities
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This comparative analysis underscores how the novel can serve as a medium to reflect both individual and collective experiences within distinct cultural and historical frameworks. Cooper's works exemplify the American emphasis on personal identity and frontier life, while Qodiriy's novels demonstrate the Uzbek focus on historical memory, social transformation, and national identity, illustrating the adaptability and universality of the novel as a literary form.

**Conclusion.** The comparative analysis of James Fenimore Cooper and Abdulla Qodiriy demonstrates that, despite differing historical and cultural contexts, both authors played a pivotal role in shaping the novel genre in their respective literatures. Cooper's works reflect the political and spiritual struggles of Americans for independence, emphasizing the formation of national identity, the pursuit of freedom, and the challenges of constructing a new society. His exploration of the conflict between nature and civilization, as well as the life and culture of Native Americans, highlights the broader societal and cultural dimensions of his narratives.

Similarly, Qodiriy's novels reveal the profound influence of the Jadid movement and the socio-political transformations of early 20th-century Uzbekistan. Through characters such as Yusufbek Hoji, he combines moral and spiritual ideals with a keen awareness of social realities, portraying the tensions and contradictions of his time. His ability to intertwine personal, moral, and societal dimensions in his narratives established a rich and multi-layered literary world that continues to resonate with readers.

Overall, the study illustrates that both Cooper and Qodiriy, while operating in different cultural and historical landscapes, contributed significantly to the evolution of the novel as a literary form. Their works not only reflect the socio-political and spiritual concerns of their eras but also offer enduring insights into human nature, social order, and the role of literature in shaping national consciousness.

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