

HISTORICAL STAGES OF THE BETRAYAL MOTIF IN UZBEK SHORT STORY WRITING

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Abstract

This article analyzes the historical stages in the development of the betrayal motif in Uzbek short story writing on the basis of a chronological and poetic approach. It examines the moral and didactic interpretations of the betrayal motif in folklore and classical written literature, its social and educational content in Jadid-era short stories, its psychological deepening in the short stories of the 1960s–1980s, as well as its internal, subtextual, and symbolic manifestations in independence-period and contemporary literature. The study reveals the evolution of the betrayal motif from a moral-normative phenomenon to an issue of personal choice and conscience. The article aims to identify the stable semantic core of the betrayal motif in Uzbek literary thought and to trace its poetic transformation.

Keywords

betrayal motif, Uzbek short story, motif poetics, moral values, Jadid literature, psychological realism, everyday realism, internal conflict, problem of conscience, open ending, contemporary short story.

In literary studies, the concept of a motif represents one of the main semantic cores that structure the content of a literary work and serves to express social, moral, and spiritual issues through artistic images. One of such stable and multilayered motifs is the motif of betrayal. Betrayal reflects one of the most painful points of human relationships, demonstrating the testing of fundamental values such as loyalty and trust. In Uzbek literary thought, the betrayal motif has been formed and refined throughout historical development in close connection with the social and moral norms, religious and philosophical views, and aesthetic demands of different periods.

Uzbek short story writing constitutes a particularly suitable genre for tracing the evolution of the betrayal motif. This is due to the short story's concise form, psychological depth, and its ability to reveal life situations through precise and expressive details. From folklore to classical written literature, from Jadid-era narratives to Soviet-period psychological short stories, and further to independence and contemporary literature, the betrayal motif has become richer in content and more complex in form. This article examines the historical stages of the betrayal motif in Uzbek short stories using a chronological-analytical approach, analyzing its development from moral-didactic interpretation to psychological and poetic transformation.

The roots of the betrayal motif in Uzbek literary thought are closely connected with moral-normative concepts formed in folklore. In fairy tales, epics, and legends, betrayal is often interpreted as a grave offense against collective values. In folk tales, the abuse of trust, the disclosure of secrets, and the breaking of promises function as key plot-driving elements. Characters who commit betrayal inevitably face punishment or social rejection. In epic works, including *Alpomish*, betrayal is interpreted not only as a personal act but also as an offense against tribal and communal interests, while loyalty is elevated to the level of a supreme moral ideal.

In classical written literature, the betrayal motif is presented within more complex moral, religious, and philosophical layers. Betrayal is often explained through human submission to

desire and the weakening of faith. Under the influence of Islamic worldview, betrayal is evaluated as a sin deserving inevitable punishment within the framework of divine justice. In works such as *Farhod and Shirin*, loyalty and faithfulness are glorified as supreme virtues, while betrayal is sharply condemned as behavior contradicting these values.

The triad of betrayal–sin–punishment performs a didactic function in both folklore and classical literature. Through this model, readers or listeners are provided with a moral lesson: betrayal is interpreted not only as a personal tragedy but also as a source of social and spiritual corruption. The concept of punishment is based on the principle of artistic justice and serves to restore the balance between good and evil. Thus, in folklore and classical sources, the betrayal motif is established as a stable moral-normative model in Uzbek literary thought.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, during the formation of Jadid literature, the betrayal motif in Uzbek short stories was closely connected with processes of social awakening. For Jadid writers, betrayal was primarily linked to the fate of the nation, liberation from ignorance, and the choice of a path toward progress. In the short stories of this period, betrayal often manifests itself in indifference, passivity, and adherence to outdated thinking. Turning away from education and resisting innovation are evaluated as forms of betrayal of national interests. The issue of betrayal of the homeland and national ideals is sharply raised, especially in the context of colonial conditions, through characters who sacrifice national values for personal benefit, position, or comfort. The authorial attitude toward such characters is uncompromising.

The opposition between personal interest and enlightenment constitutes one of the central conflicts in Jadid short stories. Enlightened characters advocate education and progress, while opposing figures prioritize their own comfort, prestige, or material gain, remaining indifferent to the future of the nation. Such indifference and self-interest are artistically interpreted as betrayal. In Jadid prose, the betrayal motif is often presented in a publicistic tone with explicit authorial judgment. The short story functions not only as a literary work but also as a social appeal and educational signal, aiming to reinforce concepts of national awakening, responsibility, and conscience.

In Uzbek short stories of the 1960s–1980s, the betrayal motif moves away from overt social and ideological interpretations and becomes deeply embedded in the psychological world of the individual. Betrayal is no longer portrayed primarily as an external event but as an internal conflict, a struggle between conscience and desire. Writers focus on the causes of betrayal, the emotional suffering it produces, and the inner justification and remorse experienced by characters. The problem of conscience comes to the forefront, as characters attempt to justify their actions while being tormented by their inner voice. This internal dialogue and psychological struggle mark the deepening of the betrayal motif.

During this period, betrayal is often depicted within family and friendship relations and revealed through everyday situations. Distrust between spouses, envy among friends, emotional infidelity, or silent forms of betrayal are portrayed against the background of ordinary life. These betrayals are frequently conveyed without dramatic events, through subtle details that intensify the emotional impact. Psychological depth is achieved through internal monologue, silence, gestures, and minor artistic details. While external action is minimal, internal experiences are complex, and betrayal becomes a point of moral trial or psychological collapse.

Everyday realism serves as the main poetic foundation of the betrayal motif in this period. Events unfold in ordinary domestic settings, and this very ordinariness intensifies the tragic essence of betrayal, presenting it as one of the most painful moral problems of human existence.

In the independence period of Uzbek short story writing, the betrayal motif acquires fundamentally new content and poetic dimensions. Changes in the system of values play a decisive role in its reinterpretation. While betrayal in earlier periods was evaluated largely according to social or ideological criteria, during independence it is increasingly associated with personal choice, inner responsibility, and moral freedom. In a context where old norms are eroded and new ones are not yet fully formed, betrayal is often depicted as a result of moral

vacuum, loss of trust, and the dominance of individual interests. With the introduction of market relations, material benefit becomes a leading factor, and human relationships are subjected to severe testing. Short stories portray indifference toward close relationships, friendship, and family ties for the sake of money, status, or convenience as one of the most widespread forms of betrayal. Authors tend less to condemn and more to explain betrayal, seeking to uncover its roots as a sign of broader moral crisis.

Personal choice and moral responsibility become central issues in independence-era short stories. Characters are no longer merely victims of external pressure but independent individuals responsible for their decisions. Betrayal arises at the point where conscience collides with self-interest. The widespread use of open endings and the relativization of authorial judgment are important features of this period's poetics. Authors often refrain from issuing definitive verdicts, encouraging readers to draw their own conclusions and emphasizing the complexity of betrayal as a human phenomenon.

In contemporary Uzbek short stories of the 2000s–2020s, the betrayal motif becomes even more internalized and undergoes poetic transformation. Inner betrayal—betrayal of one's own dreams, beliefs, and conscience—emerges as a key concept. Characters may appear outwardly loyal, yet internally experience moral defeat through passivity, fear, or self-denial. In love and marital relationships, betrayal is reinterpreted in modern terms, linked to the pragmatization of emotions, distance, and the passage of time. Migration, separation, and alienation are depicted as factors that erode intimacy, with betrayal manifesting not necessarily as physical infidelity but as emotional estrangement. Minimalism, symbolism, and subtext become the primary expressive means, with silence, implication, and unspoken words functioning as the strongest artistic signs of betrayal.

Throughout its historical development, the betrayal motif in Uzbek short story writing has preserved a stable semantic core while undergoing significant thematic and poetic changes. In folklore and classical written literature, betrayal is primarily interpreted as a moral-normative phenomenon within a didactic model closely linked to sin and punishment. In the Jadid period, it is sharpened within the context of national awakening and enlightenment. The 1960s–1980s mark a stage of psychological deepening, focusing on internal conflict and conscience. In independence and contemporary literature, the betrayal motif becomes increasingly internalized, associated with personal choice, moral freedom, and spiritual uncertainty. Thus, the betrayal motif continues to function as a significant artistic indicator reflecting the evolving relationship between society and the individual in Uzbek literary discourse.

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