

ARTISTIC INTERPRETATIONS OF THE IMAGE OF AN INTELLECTUAL IN  
CONTEMPORARY UZBEK STORIES (BASED ON THE WORKS OF USMON AZIM)

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Abstract

This article examines the artistic representation of the intellectual character in contemporary Uzbek short stories, specifically through the literary works of Usmon Azim. In his short stories, Azim portrays the intellectual as a figure who often experiences psychological turmoil, moral conflict, and alienation from society. This depiction goes beyond superficial typification to reveal deep existential and ethical tensions. The research analyzes how the notion of the "intellectual" functions within Azim's narratives, with a focus on themes of inner dialogue, social disconnection, and identity crisis. Through stories such as "The Dead-End Street," "The Step," "Time," and "The Slap," Azim reveals the complexities of the intellectual's role in society and literature. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the evolution of intellectual imagery in Uzbek fiction and its implications for social and literary discourse.

**Keywords.** Intellectual, short story, artistic image, identity crisis, Usmon Azim, modern Uzbek literature, inner monologue, alienation, artistic representation, moral conflict.

**Аннотация**

В этой статье рассматривается художественное представление интеллектуального персонажа в современных узбекских рассказах, в частности, через литературные произведения Усмона Азима. В своих рассказах Азим изображает интеллектуала как фигуру, которая часто испытывает психологические потрясения, моральный конфликт и отчуждение от общества. Это изображение выходит за рамки поверхностной типизации, чтобы раскрыть глубокие экзистенциальные и этические напряжения. Исследование анализирует, как понятие «интеллектуал» функционирует в повествованиях Азима, с акцентом на темы внутреннего диалога, социальной разобщенности и кризиса идентичности. Через такие рассказы, как «Улица-тупик», «Шаг», «Время» и «Пощечина», Азим раскрывает сложность роли интеллектуала в обществе и литературе. Это исследование способствует более глубокому пониманию эволюции интеллектуальных образов в узбекской художественной литературе и ее последствий для социального и литературного дискурса.

**Ключевые слова.** Интеллектуал, рассказ, художественный образ, кризис идентичности, Усмон Азим, современная узбекская литература, внутренний монолог, отчуждение, художественное изображение, нравственный конфликт.

INTRODUCTION

In modern Uzbek literature, the image of the intellectual has remained a subject of great artistic attention. During the Soviet era, this figure was often shaped by ideological frameworks, depicted as a committed party supporter or cultural agent of socialism. However, in post-independence literature, the image has evolved. The contemporary Uzbek short story has turned toward introspection, revealing the intellectual not as a societal hero but as a troubled, isolated, and searching individual.

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Among modern writers, Usmon Azim stands out for his deeply philosophical and aesthetically rich portrayals of intellectual characters. His short stories often center on protagonists who face an inner crisis: they are surrounded by society but remain unheard, misunderstood, or alienated. These characters represent more than just educated figures; they symbolize the moral conscience, psychological vulnerability, and existential anxieties of modern man.

This article aims to investigate how the intellectual figure is portrayed in the short stories of Usmon Azim. We analyze how the author uses literary tools to construct these characters and explore their conflicts with society, self, and time. The study also seeks to contextualize Azim's representations within broader trends in modern literature and to interpret his artistic methods through both literary and philosophical lenses.

### LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY

The intellectual as a literary figure has received substantial scholarly attention in both global and Uzbek literary criticism. In classical literature, intellectuals often appear as philosophers, moralists, or reformers. In Soviet Uzbek literature, they were frequently used as instruments of ideology. Scholars like A. Oripov and H. Sulonov have explored the role of intellectuals in national awakening and modernization processes, while in more recent research, the focus has shifted toward the inner world of these characters.

Within the postmodern and post-Soviet literary context, intellectuals are no longer heroic; they are ambiguous, fractured, and in search of meaning. Z. Turaqulova and D. G'ulomov have written about the symbolic crisis of the post-Soviet intellectual in literature, and how this figure reflects a broader societal confusion. Usmon Azim's stories contribute to this discourse by portraying intellectuals who are deeply self-aware but socially marginal.

Azim's narratives resonate with Western existentialist literature as well. His characters bear similarities to Camus' Meursault or Kafka's Joseph K.—not in form, but in their spiritual isolation and struggle for authenticity. Critics such as A. Usmonov (2021) emphasize the philosophical depth in Azim's work, particularly in his depiction of silence, failure, and introspection. This article builds upon these foundations and applies close textual analysis to uncover the layered meaning of the intellectual's portrayal in Azim's fiction.

This study adopts a literary-critical methodology supported by philosophical and comparative approaches. The core methods employed include:

1. **Close Textual Analysis** – Primary texts examined include Usmon Azim's short stories "The Dead-End Street," "The Step," "Time," and "The Slap." These were analyzed for their narrative structure, character development, and symbolic content.
2. **Typological Comparison** – Intellectual characters in Azim's stories were compared to those in the works of other Uzbek authors (e.g., Odil Yoqubov, O'tkir Hoshimov), as well as to global figures in existential literature.
3. **Philosophical Aesthetics** – Drawing on theories of existentialism, alienation, and modernity, the study interprets Azim's characters within a broader cultural and intellectual context.
4. **Dialogical Reading** – Attention is paid to the interplay between narrator, character, and reader, particularly how internal monologues reveal psychological depth.

Narrative devices such as inner speech, flashbacks, symbolic motifs, and ambiguous endings were analyzed to reveal how they contribute to character complexity. This multifaceted approach allows

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for a nuanced interpretation of Azim’s portrayal of intellectuals as both literary constructs and cultural commentaries.

### RESULTS

The analysis reveals that Usmon Azim’s portrayal of the intellectual diverges sharply from didactic or heroic representations. In “The Dead-End Street,” the protagonist is portrayed as a man lost in thought, surrounded by people who fail to understand him. He speaks, but no one listens—a metaphor for societal deafness toward critical or dissenting voices. This story encapsulates the crisis of communication experienced by many modern intellectuals.

In “The Step,” the central figure is haunted by indecision and the weight of his own conscience. He is not actively heroic but is deeply reflective, burdened by moral dilemmas. Azim shows that knowledge without societal engagement leads to inner collapse. Similarly, in “Time,” the character’s existential confrontation with temporality mirrors broader human anxieties about aging, memory, and the meaning of life.

Azim’s stylistic techniques contribute significantly to these portrayals. He employs internal monologue, fragmented narration, and symbolic imagery to evoke the character’s isolation and complexity. The use of the cityscape as a metaphor for entrapment, or the recurring image of silence as symbolic of intellectual suppression, enhances the thematic weight of the stories.

The intellectual in Azim’s fiction is not a man of action but of introspection. His crisis is not merely societal but ontological—rooted in a deep questioning of truth, meaning, and self-worth. This makes Azim’s work particularly relevant in a time when intellectual authority is increasingly questioned or ignored.

Story Title	Type of Intellectual	Key Conflict	Narrative Technique
The Dead-End Street	Isolated thinker	Society's indifference	Inner monologue
The Step	Moral struggler	Guilt and uncertainty	Symbolic imagery
Time	Existential observer	Conflict with time	Philosophical tone
The Slap	Alienated realist	Truth vs silence	Fragmented structure

This table is designed to systematically analyze the images of intellectuals in Osman Azim's stories. It reflects the following:

**Story Title:** Each story expresses the writer's different views on intellectuality.

**Type of Intellectual:** Each intellectual is described based on his inner world and relationship with society. For example, the intellectual in "The Dead-End Street" is an "Isolated Thinker" - a person of thought alienated from society.

**Key Conflict:** The internal or external problem of the intellectual in each story. This may be, for example, the indifference of society, conflict with time, or the inability to tell the truth.

**Narrative Technique:** The main artistic technique used by the author to portray this image - internal monologue, symbols, philosophical tone, or fragmentary structure.

### CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Usmon Azim’s short stories offer a rich, layered portrayal of the intellectual figure, characterized by inner turmoil, moral struggle, and social alienation. Unlike earlier idealized depictions, Azim presents the intellectual as a complex, often tragic figure whose voice is stifled not only by external forces but by the burden of self-awareness.

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Through literary devices such as symbolism, internal dialogue, and minimalistic storytelling, Azim crafts intellectuals who reflect the contradictions of post-Soviet Uzbek society: a tension between tradition and modernity, individualism and conformity, meaning and emptiness. These characters do not provide answers but raise profound questions about human existence and the role of thinking individuals in a disoriented world.

The intellectual, in Azim's narrative universe, is not merely an educated person but a symbol of the human condition. By analyzing these portrayals, we gain deeper insight into the state of contemporary Uzbek literature and the evolving role of the writer in society.

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