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Article

Comparative Typological Features of Hunter Figures in Karakalpak, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz Prose

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Abstract: This article compares representations of hunters in K. Allambergenov's *Quslar qaytqan kún*, E. Aydabosyn's Ulima, M. Magauin's *Shaqan-Sheri*, and Ch. Aitmatov's *Tawlar qulaǵan máhál*. The analysis examines hunting motives, attitudes towards animals, ethical restraint, and changes in characters' positions. Ecohumanist and destructive orientations describe ethical positions, while transformation refers to changes in those positions over the course of the narrative. The findings show that hunting expertise does not necessarily entail responsibility towards animal life. A destructive orientation is defined by the violation of ethical limits in the pursuit of personal interests, rather than by the pursuit of material gain alone. Parakhat and Shakan follow distinct paths of ethical reassessment, while Arsen moves from private misgivings to active resistance. The proposed approach distinguishes a character's position in a particular episode from the trajectory of that character's development across the work.

Keywords: Comparative Literature, Hunter Figure, Typology, Motivation, Ecohumanism, Destructiveness, Character Transformation

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1. Introduction

In prose about hunting, a character's expertise does not fully determine their attitude towards animals. The same knowledge and skills may serve either to protect animal life or to exploit it excessively. A typology of hunter figures therefore cannot rest solely on the number of animals taken, displays of courage, or the outcome of a hunt. The central questions concern why a character hunts, under what circumstances they choose restraint, and how they respond to the consequences of their actions. Cartmill's historical study shows how hunting and attitudes towards wild animals have shaped cultural ideas about nature [1].

E. A. Khudenko's study of the hunting motif in M. Prishvin's prose offers a relevant starting point for a typological analysis of hunters [2]. Khudenko relates hunting to the process of acquiring knowledge and distinguishes the models of the "fortunate hunter" (udachlivyi okhotnik) and the "wayward hunter" (neputevyi okhotnik). Rather than transferring these models unchanged to other literary traditions, the present study uses them as a point of comparison for examining the relationship between a character and the natural world.

S. M. Mamayusupova's study of Shukur Kholmirzayev's short stories likewise connects hunter figures with folkloric conceptions and ethical evaluation [3]. This approach helps clarify a character's attitude towards nature. Yet an ethical assessment of particular actions must be distinguished from the character's development over the course

of the narrative: a character may act destructively in one episode and subsequently reassess that conduct.

The aim of this study is to compare hunter figures in selected works of Karakalpak, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz prose in terms of their motives, ethical positions, and narrative transformation. It examines the relationship between ecohumanist and destructive orientations and the process of character transformation. These concepts are used to explain changes in conduct and outlook rather than to assign characters to fixed, mutually exclusive categories. The conclusions apply to the selected texts.

2. Materials and Method

The corpus comprises the figures of Shegir Mergen and Parakhat in K. Allambergenov's novella *Quslar qaytqan kún* (The Day the Birds Returned) [4]. It also comprises Ulima, Tikenbas, and Qizilbet in E. Aydabosyn's Ulima [5], and Shakan in M. Magauin's novel *Shaqan-Sheri* [6]. Finally, it includes episodes concerning the organisation of a hunt and resistance to it in Ch. Aitmatov's novel *Tawlar qulaǵan máhál* (When the Mountains Fall) [7]. The English renderings in parentheses are descriptive glosses of the titles. Arsen is not a professional hunter; his inclusion allows a comparison of the ethical choices made by a character involved in organising a hunt.

The comparative-typological analysis uses four criteria: motivation for hunting; recognition of the animal's worth; the exercise or rejection of restraint; and the reassessment of an earlier position. Structural-semantic analysis traces how motives become actions and how narrative turning points affect a character's position, an approach rooted in Greimas's structural semantics [8]. The unit of analysis is an episode in which a choice, an act of resistance, or a reassessment becomes evident. The comparative framework follows the general principles of literary comparison set out by Wellek and Warren [9]. The study also draws on ecocriticism, which Glotfelty defines as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment [10]. Buell's criteria for environmentally oriented texts, notably the presence of the nonhuman environment as more than a framing device, guide the reading of landscape and animal imagery [11]. Garrard's survey of the tropes of pastoral, wilderness and animals informs the interpretation of animal figures [12].

In this article, an ecohumanist orientation denotes recognition of the value of animal life and the deliberate restraint of hunting activity. This understanding is consistent with Leopold's land ethic, which extends the community of moral concern to include animals, soils and waters [13]. It also echoes the argument that the capacity of animals to suffer grounds their claim to moral consideration [14]. A destructive orientation is identified where personal interest or an overriding desire takes precedence over responsibility towards living beings. Transformation refers to a change in the character's position within this relationship. Thus, the first two concepts describe ethical orientation, whereas the third describes its dynamics. A character's statements are not equated directly with the author's position, and typological similarities are not taken as evidence of literary influence.

3. Results

In the selected texts, motivation for hunting alone does not provide a sufficient basis for evaluating a character. In *Quslar qaytqan kún*, Parakhat initially turns to hunting to help his sick elder brother [4, p. 17]. Although he recognises the bird's beauty, he decides to shoot it because he believes that pheasant meat will benefit his brother. His initial motive is therefore not cruelty. As his interest in marksmanship grows, however, the direction of his conduct begins to diverge from that original purpose.

For Shegir Mergen, hunting is a source of livelihood and personal gain. Yet material benefit alone is not sufficient to identify a destructive orientation in his attitude towards nature. The decisive signs in the novella are his concealment of evidence of his hunting activities, his evasion of game wardens, and his initiation of the boy into the same practices

[4, p. 17]. His fear of losing his livelihood as Parakhat becomes more proficient reveals the priority he gives to personal advantage over the fate of the animals.

Ulima clarifies this distinction [5]. Ulima also sells the products of hunting; treating the pursuit of income as the sole criterion of destructiveness would therefore obscure important distinctions within the text. What distinguishes him from Tikenbas and Qizilbet is his concern for the survival of animal offspring and his acceptance of limits on hunting. When he refuses to shoot a female wolf, Ulima deliberately refrains from exercising the skills at his disposal.

As experienced hunters, both Shegir Mergen and Ulima influence younger people. They differ, however, in the principles they transmit alongside their practical skills. Shegir teaches the boy to conceal evidence of hunting activities, whereas Ulima values principles such as choosing which animals to shoot, sparing females with offspring, and avoiding excessive killing. The comparison shows that expertise does not in itself determine ethical conduct: its ethical significance depends on the purposes it serves.

Ulima's position extends beyond verbal instruction. After the wolf cubs have been harmed, he holds himself responsible for failing to prevent the violence [5]. His sense of guilt reveals a responsibility that reaches beyond actions in which he personally participated. His attempt to protect the wolf at Arasan, in turn, translates a commitment to preserving animal life into action. An ecohumanist orientation is thus established by the character's choices under pressure rather than by the way he describes himself.

In the Kyrgyz material, the hunting business in *Tawlar qulaǵan máhál* reveals a wider network of material interests [7, pp. 155–157]. The anticipated profits matter not only to an individual organiser but also to the local community. Although Arsen understands the damage that the enterprise may cause to nature, he becomes involved in his elder brother's business as an interpreter. He cannot therefore be described as consistently opposed to the hunt from the outset. There is a conflict between his private misgivings and his practical involvement.

A comparison of Shegir's concern for his livelihood, the harm inflicted on animals in Ulima, and the organisation of hunting in *Tawlar qulaǵan máhál* shows that destructive conduct does not arise from a single motive. It may arise from the pursuit of personal advantage, disregard for animal offspring, or accommodation to the expectations of a community anticipating profit. The shared feature is the subordination of animal life to human interests; the differences concern the motives and social circumstances that sustain it.

Transformation unfolds differently in Parakhat and Shakan. Parakhat's initial enthusiasm changes when he witnesses the suffering of the pheasant he has wounded [4]. The bird's "weeping" directs his attention to a suffering creature rather than to quarry. Philosophical discussions of the animal's gaze and of human responsibility towards it offer a useful parallel for reading this moment [15]. His purpose in returning to look for the bird the following day has also changed: he now seeks to rescue it. The episode signals transformation because compassion alters the direction of his actions.

Shakan's transformation follows a different trajectory. Family tragedy turns hunting into an instrument of revenge [6, p. 120]. Yet when he encounters an orphaned tiger cub, he cannot fully sustain his determination to destroy every tiger. His decision to feed the weakened cub and then take it with him shows that compassion can emerge within conduct driven by vengeance. This episode alone does not establish a completed transformation, but it marks the beginning of a departure from his earlier position.

In a later encounter, the fact that the tiger leaves Shakan unharmed prompts him to reassess his conduct further [6, p. 120]. He recognises that he has extended his vengeance against one animal to all tigers. Whereas Parakhat's turning point begins with the suffering of a bird he has wounded, Shakan's involves a reconsideration of actions pursued over a prolonged period. In the first case, compassion prompts a different choice; in the second, the basis of revenge itself is called into question.

Arsen's development is not identical to either trajectory. He is not a hunter overcoming his desire for revenge against animals, but a participant in a hunting enterprise who moves towards active resistance. His demand that the snow leopards be left unharmed coincides with his efforts to protect human life and thwart a hostage-taking plan [7, pp. 154–155]. This transformation cannot therefore be reduced to a change in environmental attitudes alone. What matters is the conversion of earlier misgivings into action.

The comparison also distinguishes character development from narrative outcome. Parakhat's attempt to rescue the bird, Shakan's reassessment of revenge, and Arsen's resistance arise under different circumstances. A change in ethical position does not ensure that events will turn out as the character intends. The wounding of Arsen and Jaabars shows that an ethical choice does not automatically lead to a favourable outcome [7, p. 170]. This distinction exposes the limitations of a typology based solely on success or failure.

4. Discussion

The analysis clarifies the scope and limitations of using ecohumanism, destructiveness, and transformation to examine hunter figures. Ecohumanist and destructive orientations can be compared as contrasting ethical positions. Transformation, by contrast, describes movement between positions or a revision of an earlier outlook. The three concepts should therefore be understood as related analytical dimensions rather than as fixed, mutually exclusive categories.

Shakan makes this distinction particularly clear: some of his actions are destructive, while his overall narrative trajectory is characterised by transformation. Parakhat's initial intentions also differ from Shegir's, yet under Shegir's influence he becomes absorbed in hunting before reconsidering his conduct. Separating a character's position in a particular episode from their development across the work allows the analysis to retain these internal contradictions.

An ecohumanist position should not be equated with the complete renunciation of hunting. Ulima continues to hunt, but judges its legitimacy in relation to the animal's condition and the need to protect its offspring. His position is expressed through restraint rather than rejection of hunting itself. Ortega y Gasset similarly treats hunting as a practice governed by ethical limits rather than as mere killing [16]. Similarly, destructiveness is identified not by the pursuit of profit as such, but by the conduct a character permits in its pursuit.

The Kyrgyz material also clarifies the boundaries of the comparison. Aitmatov's earlier novel *The Place of the Skull*, in which hunters and wild animals are likewise placed in a morally charged confrontation, suggests a continuity of concern in his work [17]. Since Arsen is not a professional hunter, his involvement in the hunt cannot be equated directly with Shegir's or Shakan's hunting experience. Nevertheless, his involvement in the hunt, his recognition of the value of animal life, and his reconsideration of his own role make him relevant to the typological comparison. The distinction between a hunter figure and a character participating in a hunting narrative is therefore maintained.

The selected works do not encompass all representations of hunters in the three national literatures. The findings should therefore not be generalised into claims about national character. The comparison instead examines how different narratives give literary form to a shared ethical problem: the relationship between the ability to hunt and responsibility towards living beings.

5. Conclusion

In the selected works of Karakalpak, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz prose, the typological features of hunter figures emerge through their motives, attitudes towards animals, capacity for restraint, and ethical reassessment. Comparing Shegir Mergen's personal

interests, Ulima's deliberate restraint, the different trajectories of Parakhat and Shakan, and Arsen's active resistance shows that hunting expertise alone does not determine a character's ethical position.

Ecohumanism and destructiveness describe the ethical orientation of a character's conduct, while transformation describes changes in that orientation. Considering these dimensions together makes it possible to account for conflicting tendencies within a single character and to trace their development through the narrative. Typology thereby moves beyond fixed classifications of "good" and "bad" hunters to become an analytical tool for examining the relationship between motivation, choice, and change.

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