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MA Thesis in Persian Studies

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From a Slave to the New Soviet (Wo)Man: (Socialist?) Realism in Sadriddin Ayni's Ƣulomon

August 2015

Word Count: 20103

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Cover: An illustration from the 1935 Tajik edition of Ƣ*ulomon* (p. 843). The kolkhoz cotton field. Hasan tries to apologise to Fotima for taking as a wife a kulak girl instead of her. Fotima responds: “Hasan, these words of yours are not words which a *komsomolist*[1] would speak to a *komsomolistka*. Go and speak these womaniser’s words to daughters of *boj*s.”[2]

[1] A member of the Soviet youth organisation, the Komsomol. *Komsomolistka* is the female counterpart.

[2] *Boj,* i.e. a rich man and owner of a large estate.

On Transliteration and Translation

Unless stated otherwise, all translations are my own. For Persian and Arabic words in the text and in the titles of the works cited, I have used the transliteration guidelines of the International Journal of Middle East Studies.[3] As for Tajik sources published before 1930, I have followed the IJMES guidelines for Persian; Tajik words and sources published between 1930 and 1940 (when Tajik was officially written in an adapted Latin script) are left in the original; Russian and Tajik words and sources written in the Cyrillic script (post-1940) are transliterated according to the guidelines of *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*.[4]

[3] Avilable at: http://ijmes.chass.ncsu.edu (accessed 30 July 2015).

[4] Available at: http://www.iranicaonline.org/pages/guidelines (accessed 30 July 2015).

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INTRODUCTION: Socialist Realism - Disambiguation

Socialist realism is a confused concept. It appears weighty and clearly defined like an edifice build in the Stalinist 'Empire style' of the 1930's, but its contours tend to blur as one gets closer to examine it. Some, like the Polish poet and Nobel-laureate Czesław Miłosz, see it primarily as just one of the many tentacles of the totalitarian Soviet state, and hold it "directly responsible for the deaths of millions." [5] While an emphasis on the repressive, political aspects of socialist realism may be useful in some contexts, I do not see it as the objective of this study. This, rather, represents an attempt at withholding moral judgement, as long as it is possible, in oder to benefit of a more theoretical discussion of the genre or, as some have argued, the 'literary system' of socialist realism.[6]

However, even those who are willing to discuss socialist realism, in a 'depoliticised' fashion, as a theory and practice of a particular kind of literature, tend to disagree on the definition. To some extent, this is a problem of perspective, for socialist realism can be viewed 'from above' as well as 'from below.' Those who, like the Slavicist Edward Możejko, chose the former viewpoint, tend to understand socialist realism as a normative *doctrine* with an important philosophical dimension, anchored in clearly articulated ideas of beauty.[7] The body of Soviet discussions of the aesthetics of socialist realism is enormous; so enormous, in fact, that one scholar has called it "mere hairsplitting," and refused to deal with it altogether. Although I would not dare to condemn Soviet scholarship in the same vein, official Soviet pronouncements, made between 1932 (when the term was used for the first time) and the collapse of the union in 1991, will not be the focus of this inquiry. A reader interested in the picture of socialist realism in Soviet scholarship should consult the available literature.[8]

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[5] Czesław Miłosz, introduction to *On Socialist Realism*, by Andrej D. Sinjavskij (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), p. 10.

[6] Unless otherwise noted, 'socialist realism' should be understood as reference to *Soviet* socialist realism.

[7] Edward Możejko, *Realizm socjalistyczny: teoria, rozwój, upadek* (Cracow: Universitas, 2001), p. 95.

[8] Western accounts of Soviet scholarship on socialist realism include: Caradog V. James, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1973); Max Hayward, and Leopold Labedz, eds., *Literature and Revolution in Soviet Russia 1917-1962* (London: Oxford University Press 1963); Hans Günther, *Die Verstaatlichung der Literatur: Entstehung und Funktionsweise des sozialistisch-realistischen Kanons in der sowjetischen Literatur der 30er Jahre*, (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1984), Edward Możejko, *Der sozialistische Realismus: Theorie, Entwicklung und Versagen einer Literaturmethode* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1977).

Not all official statements on socialist realism carried the same weight. Most important (because of their constant repetition by Soviet officials) were those recorded in the statutes of the Union of Soviet Writers, as drafted at the conclusion of the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers held in Moscow in 1934. At the Congress, socialist realism was declared the "basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism, which requires from the artist a truthful and historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development." The alleged objective of this "creative method" was "ideological change and education of the workers in the spirit of socialism."[9]

While disagreeing over the origins and definitions, non-Soviet scholars seem to agree that, from the very outset, socialist realism was premised upon the principle of *partyjnost'* ('party-mindedness' or 'partisanship'). The centrality of the concept was rationalised by reference to Lenin, who, in one of his early articles,[10] asserted that the Party was to assume a vanguard position vis-à-vis the rest of society, and lead the working class towards communism. Thus, loyalty to the Party was tantamount to serving the bright future of the proletariat, and writing along Party lines meant ushering the advent of communism. One respected scholar calls *partyjnost'* the *sine qua non* of socialist realism and sees it as "a code word signalling the radical reconception of the role of the writer that is so central to socialist realism."[11] The party-minded conception of literature entailed, as it were, a collectivisation of writing: the writer was seen as an instrument, an "engineer of human souls," a performer of tasks, rather than an originator of texts. Therefore, to accuse socialist realist literature of schematisation and ideological bias is to misunderstand its origins and intended function; already on the declarative level, socialist realist literature was programatically and unashamedly *tendencious*.[12]

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[9] *Pervyj Vsesojuznyj S''ezd sovetskikh pisatelej: Stenograficheskij Otchet* (Moscow: 1934), p. 712. (my translation)

[10] Vladimir I. Lenin, "Partyjnaja organizatsija i partyjnaja literatura," *Novaja Zhizn',* November 12, 1905. English translation can be found in: *Lenin: Collected Works*, vol. 10, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), pp. 44-49.

[11] Katerina Clark, "Socialist Realism in Soviet Literature," in *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature,* ed. Neil Cornwell (London: Routledge, 2001), p. X. p. 175

[12] Régine Robin, *Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 55.

If *partyjnost'* defined the new art as *socialist*, its *realism* was construed, in more aesthetic terms, in opposition to the old, "critical realism" of the nineteenth century. Soviet theoreticians clearly distinguished between the two, claiming that the old realism was not so much 'wrong' as it was 'defective;' nineteenth-century realist authors depicted only what appeared to be firmly established in society and, therefore, immovable; the task of the new realism was different: it was to "depict reality in its revolutionary development."[13] According to Andrej Sinjavskij, the author of one of the most important critiques of socialist realism, depicting the revolutionary development required seeing reality in the light of the ideal, "presenting what should be as what is,"[14] or, quite frankly, misrepresenting the 'real.' This tendency resulted in a cacophony of elevated, declamatory style used to describe the life of the lower class: kolkhoz workers speaking pure pathos in a *comme il faut* variety of standard Russian became the staple of Soviet novels.[15] Sinjanvskij, like Robin (although for other reasons), saw the incurable defect of socialist realism in the conflict between the *idealism* of socialism - which saw a world of plenty - and the *typicality* of realism - which postulated a world of necessity.[16]

The alternative way into socialist realism leads through conceptualising it as a literary phenomenon, as researched and described by non-Soviet writers and scholars. Seen 'from below,' socialist realism is a label given to a theoretical *model* based on close readings of the socialist realist 'classics,' with *some* attention given to what Katerina Clark has succinctly called 'rhetoric,' i.e. Party decrees and statutes, as well as statements by Soviet politicians, theoreticians, and practitioners of the literary craft.[17] In this view, socialist realism is, first and foremost, a literary practice which, of course, has absorbed to a variable degree Soviet dogma and theory. It is this non-Soviet conception of socialist realism that provides the primary vantage point from which this literary phenomenon will be considered here. The following is a summary of two most recent Western perspectives on the topic.

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[13] *Pervyj*, p. 4.

[14] Sinjavskij, *On Socialist Realism*, p. 76.

[15] Ibid., p. 90.

[16] Sinjavskij, *On Socialist Realism*, p. 91. Cf. Robin, *Socialist Realism*, p. 74.

[17] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 8.

CHAPTER ONE: Western Models of the Socialist Realist Novel

Trying to bypass the theoretical writings of Soviet scholars, Katerina Clark, the author of a major study of socialist realism, offers, what she calls, a “strictly pragmatic approach.” Clark defines socialist realism as a highly conventionalised literary *practice*, with marked preference for the novel over all other genres. The conventions of Soviet literature are, according to Clark, derived from the lists of “exemplars” (Russian “obraztsy”), which were publicised at every Writers’ Congress in order to guide Soviet authors in their creative work; as such, they came to function as Socialist Realism's “patristic texts.”[18] Clark links the emergence of socialist realism to the eclipse of the system of values and metaphors which domiated during the first Five Year Plan (1928-1932). The period had its specific ethos, shaped by the two grand enterprises of the Soviet State - the collectivisation of agriculture and industrialisation; the hero of the Five-Year-Plan novel was “little man” of the everyday: the factory worker or kolkhoznik, and his prosaic and practical task.[19]

The spirit of egalitarianism so characteristic of the Five-Year-Plan period began to crack in June 1931, when Stalin gave his speech at the Congress of Soviet Managers, in which he postulated abolishing the system of equal wages allegedly compromising individual productivity.[20] This slight move proved to be a harbinger of a change which soon put the entire ensemble of the Five-Year Plan values up for review. Articles and speeches by literary personages criticised the ideological poverty resulting from the obsession with technology, statistics, and practical tasks. The new society ceased to be portrayed as a machine in which all are united as brothers for an all-out industrial effort. Instead, the Soviet elites began to look for an alternative paradigm which would give expression to the heavy voluntarist colouring of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, on the one hand, and rationalise the leading role of the Party and its leaders, on the other. In other words, the quest was for a narrative that would encompass change and historical development,

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[18] A core group which, as Clark argues, "is cited with sufficient regularity to be considered a canon" includes M. Gorky's *Mother* (1906) and *Klim Samgin* (1925); D. Furmanov's *Chapaev* (1928); A. Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood* (1924); F. Gladkov's *Cement* (1925); M. Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don* (1928-32) and *Virgin Soil Upturned* (1932); A. Tolstoy's *The Road to Calvary* (1922) and *Peter the First* (1927-34); N. Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered* (1932-34); and A. Fadeev's *The Rout* (1927) and *The Young Guard* (1946).

[19] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 91.

[20] "New Conditions - New Tasks in Economic Construction," in Joseph V. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House,1954), https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1931/06/23.htm.

establish hierarchies and legitimise the status quo, as well as show genuine heroes (*bogatyri*) and their struggle for the construction of socialism.

In the arts, this alternative paradigm was labelled “socialist realism.” In 1934, the First Congress of Soviet Writers published the first list of exemplars, which resulted in most novels being “written to a single master plot, which itself represents a synthesis of the plots of several of the official models (primarily Gorkij's *Mother* and Gladkov's *Cement*).”[21] The master plot is, by far, the most important contribution of Clark’s analysis of the Soviet novel. It is a timeless “highly generalised essence,” and it finds its fullest expression in the **production novel**.[22] However, for Clark, the master plot of the Soviet novel is not merely a literary phenomenon, for it codifies all the major categories and values of Soviet culture.[23] Clark goes so far as to equate the master plot with socialist realism as such, arguing that a Soviet novel is socialist realist only so far as it replicates the master plot.[24]

A major point put forward by Clark is that, contrary to the established viewpoint, class struggle is not a consistent leitmotif of Soviet novels. Rather, the masterplot is organised according to the other grand narrative of Marxist-Leninist theory, i.e. the working-out of the so-called spontaneity/consciousness dialectic. In this case, “spontaneity” stands for actions which are “either sporadic, uncoordinated, even anarchic (such as wildcat strikes, mass uprisings, etc.), or can be attributed to the workings of vast impersonal historical forces rather than to deliberate actions;” on the other hand,“consciousness” means political awareness (read: party-mindedness), which results in actions that secure advancement towards the end-station of communism. As such, the dialectic is a force that drives societies through “a series of increasingly higher order syntheses (‘leaps forward,’ or ‘revolutions’)” until the conflict between the natural responses of the people and the best interests of society are resolved in communism.[25]

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[21] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 4. She adds: "The Soviet writer did not merely copy isolated tropes, characters, and incidents from the exemplars; he organised the entire plot structure of his novel on the basis of patters present in the exemplars."

[22] Ibid., p.5.

[23] Ibid., p.9.

[24] Ibid., p.6.

[25] Ibid., p.16

Clark shows that the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic represents a Leninist innovation with respect to Marxist 'orthodoxy,' and "a natively Russian version of the dynamic known to Western thinking as the nature/culture opposition."[26] Historically speaking, the decision made by Lenin in favour of consciousness/culture proved decisive for the subsequent development of Soviet literature: it provided a Leninist justification for the societal model predicated on the leading role of the Bolshevik Party. In this model, literature was to teach lessons in the working-out of the dialectic by encoding them in biographical terms. The result was a "socialist *Bildungsroman*," in which the positive hero, mentored by a paternal figure renounces all visceral, anarchic, and self-centred actions in favour of those that are ordered and disciplined (such as fulfilment of a Party-assigned plan). The hero achieves a kind of "individual revolution," and, assuming the likeness of his mentor, attains to an extrapersonal identity. So, argues Clark, events follow the prescribed pattern in all Stalinist novels, "whatever the context, whatever the year."[27] Soviet novels thus defined become quasi-parables for the working-out of Marxism-Leninism in history and myths for maintaining the status-quo (i.e. the vanguard position of the Bolshevik Party).

The Production Novel

As already mentioned, it is the production novel which, in Clark's model, exhibits the most formulaic plot pattern, and is thus the epitome of the Soviet socialist realist novel. Other types are listed too, notably the historical novel, the novel about war or revolution, the novel about villains, and the novel about the West. The definite article is used consistently, which suggests that the author views texts that belong to these subgenres as sharing some important structural and thematic features. Unfortunately, Clark does not explain in any detail what these features are. Instead, Clark concludes that they are generally much less conventionalised than the production novel, while still insisting that "all involve, minimally, a 'road to consciousness' pattern and usually a 'task' as well."[28] The production novel is by far the most common type, however, and its master plot will be summarised here briefly as it highlights the central issues raised by Clark in her monograph.

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[26] Ibid., p. 20.

[27] Ibid., p.10.

[28] Ibid., p. 255.

Inspired by the model developed by Vladimir Propp for the Russian fairy tale,[29] Clark argues that the plot of the production novel is comprised of six sections, each of which has one or more possible "functions." Clark points out that the order of the sections may vary, and presents them in one that is most conventional:[30]

I Prologue

In the prologue the hero finds himself in a relatively small and compact microcosm of the novel (a factory, a kolkhoz, an army unit or a provincial town, to name a few examples), often returning after a long absence.

II Setting Up the Task

(a) The hero understands that things are not going according to the plan in the locale; this often means that some state-given task is not being dealt with or is being accomplished at a lax tempo.
(b) The hero comes up with a scheme for improving the state of affairs, which, incidentally, happens to be in accord with the ideas of the state or the local people.
(c) The hero's plan runs against the the local careerist bureaucrats, who believe the plan is utopian in terms of technical feasibility, manpower and supplies, and more importantly (but, as we know, incorrectly) that the runs counter to the orders from above.
(d) The hero mobilises the people by addressing them at a mass meeting or in smaller circles and, proving a great orator, manages to convince them to follow his plan.

III Transition

(a) Work on the hero's project begins
(b) The project encounters obstacles which can be either prosaic (problems with supplies, manpower, bureaucratic corruption, worker apathy) or heroic (natural disasters and class enemies).
(c) The hero experiences problems in private life. Most often, it implies problems with women.

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[29] Vladimir Propp, *Morfologija skazki* (Leningrad: Akademia, 1928).

[30] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp. 256-260.

(d) The hero makes a journey beyond the microcosm in search for help from more experienced or powerful allies.

IV Climax

(a) In the face of some heroic obstacles the hero's task seems impossible to accomplish.
(b) Around the time of the hero's encounter with the obstacle, an actual, symbolic, or near death occurs, and it usually involves the hero himself (though some lesser characters may act as his surrogate)
(c) The hero doubts in his skills and his project ("Perhaps my opponents were right, perhaps I pushed things too far, perhaps I am responsible for X's death")

V Incorporation (Initiation)

The hero speaks to his local mentor, and this gives him strength to carry on with the task.

VI Finale (Celebration of Incorporation)

(a) Completion of the task.
(b) A ceremony or a feast to mark the task's completion (speeches and rejoicing).
(c) Resolution of the love plot and other emotional problems
(d) The hero realises his past selfish impulses and transcends them, thus acquiring an extrapersonal identity (this often has to do with the resolution of the love plot)
(e) A funeral or commemoration of the tragic victim of the obstacles occurs.
(f) A reshuffling of personnel in the locale follows; some are purged or dismissed, others promoted or transferred. The hero is often promoted to the post formerly held by his mentor.
(g) The theme of rebirth and of the glorious time ahead of the future generations is introduced in speeches, or in some other form (such as the birth of a child).

As becomes clear from Clark's presentation of the master plot, the positive hero (*polozhitel'nyj geroj*) stands at the centre of the diegesis. He (or, very rarely, she) provides the biographical stuff that furnishes the otherwise universal and timeless road-to-consciousness pattern. It is this conceptualisation of the Soviet novel as an initiatory scenario which allows Clark to compare the positive hero to the traditional heroes

(*bogatyri*) of the Russian folk tale; the Soviet hero as well as his folk counterpart engage in epic struggles against brute, elemental forces, accomplish the seemingly impossible, and have a strong affinity to nature. And they remain positive heroes so long as they successfully graduate from the apprenticeship scenario that leads them from the state of youthful spontaneity to full consciousness and maturity in political as well as private life.

Robin's Critique of Clark's Model

However, it is this neat simplicity of Clark's master plot and its main figure, the positive hero, which Regine Robin finds dubious. The author of *Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic* finds Clark's masterplot a much less consistent element of socialist realist novels than Clark would have it. Robin rejects the major point of Clark's and insists that the quest-for-self/path-to-consciousness is not the primary objective of the Soviet positive hero. She views the transformation of self not as a goal in actantial terms, but as a mere by-product, a natural consequence of the hero's (often heroic) effort to fulfil the task in the domain of the public (e.g. successful fulfilment of some plan or construction of a factory).[31] The hero of the socialist realist novel, she argues, is neither the problematic hero of the *Bildungsroman*, with a goal in personal life, nor a depersonalised allegory with aspirations confined exclusively to the collective sphere. Rather, the positive hero exists in a “fissure” between his human specificity and the heroic universalism of his struggles.[32]

Moreover, Robin question the very usefulness of Clark's analysis in terms of the apprenticeship/initiatory scenario, arguing that it fails to show what is *unique* to the genre.[33] Corollary to this, Robin reminds us that “there is no *one* Stalinist period Stalinist period from 1929 to 1956,” and offers a periodisation of Soviet cultural history that, in her view, cannot be dispensed with. Thus, the 1920’s are a period when “the positive hero is being sought and begins to emerge with some difficulty,” and the writers slowly abandon the thematics of the Civil War in favour of that of construction and collectivisation. The 1930’s are marked by the emergence of socialist realism as a formula and nearly all works fall under its label; the problematics of the “building of socialism” continue to feature prominently; in the second half of the decade, fiction (like its positive hero) evolves toward

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[31] Robin, *Socialist Realism*, p. 259.

[32] Ibid., p. 258

[33] Ibid., p. 257.

arealism, allegorisation, and greater ideological puritanism, and this pattern continues until the end of Stalin's reign.[34]

The Five Nodal Vectors of the Socialist Realist Novel of the 1930's

Questioning the possibility of explaining the whole of the Stalinist period with a single theoretical model, as Clark has allegedly done in *The Soviet Novel*, Robin limits her analysis to a limited number of novels written in the 1930's. She reads the novels through the lense a modified version of the actantial model originally developed by Algirdas Greimas (which, she claims, has superseded that of Propp).[35] Robin asserts to have found the 'common denominator' of the Soviet socialist realist novels of the 1930's, which she calls the "five nodal vectors of monology that are necessary and sufficient to inscribe a novelistic text in the category of the genre:"[36]

(1) The socialist realist novel postulates an egalitarian relation among actants; the actants that work towards a shared goal do so freely, out of their own volition; it follows that there is essentially no coercion/vassalisation among the actants devoted to the same cause.
(2) Following on from that, "what interests the subject (i.e. the positive hero) is not the manipulation of others, but the transmission of a **know-how** in such a way that the others can do what he does and become autonomous." Thus, the socialist realist novel has an important didactic purpose and presents itself "first of all as a quest for the **savoir faire** needed for effective action."
(3) In accord with the above, the socialist realist novel "postulates an initial competence. Everyone can do what the positive hero does, but people do not know that they are capable of it. They have to become conscious of their own competence in order to be able to act with clarity and effectiveness."
(4) Having discovered their innate competence, the positive hero and his helpers see with clarity the task to be accomplished. The task (the "object" in Greimasian terms) must be clearly defined.

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[34] Ibid., p. 255.

[35] Ibid., p. 261.

[36] Ibid., pp. 264-65.

(5) The positive hero is bound by a social contract to accomplish the task and he will not waver because of some obstacles in his private life. He is bound to follow the collective, in which he is to affirm his identity and his values, and perhaps even transform himself.

In addition, Robin argues that the positive subject-hero must explicitly recall them, comment on them, or represent them. The omniscient narrator may or may not affirm the positive hero's actions and reinforce his speech, but he may *never* challenge the five vectors; the narrator is forbidden from riddiculing the positive hero or being in any way cynical about his actions.

Teleological to the bone, the novel of the 1930's makes it certain that the new world will win out in the end. It postulates a horizon without a lack, a world of plentitude. The conclusion emphasises the **forging of the new man**, and recalls the social task that has been accomplished, which usually involves a anthropogenic transformation of the physical world (landscape, nature). The battles to be fought by the positive hero may be long and painful but they are important, for, in their course, mentalities, old customs, relations between the genders and generations (parents and children) are transformed. The constructive denouement highlights the hero's identity aquired in the process of his personal transformation, his reconciliation with the community, and a reconquest of dignity and social utility of the positive characters. The ending leaves no doubt about who has got the upper hand and that they deserve it.[37]

It needs to be pointed out that both Clark and Robin formulate their theoretical models of Soviet socialist realism on the basis of a limited number of Soviet novels written *in Russian*. This limited scope of the novels under scrutiny poses some problems: the Soviet Union was a multiethnic and multilingual state, a union of national republics, each of which had its own official language and an officially endorsed culture. As Terry Martin has convincingly argued in *The Affirmative Action Empire*, until mid-1930's, Moscow pursued a policy of promoting the minority cultures premised on the belief that great-power (i.e. Russian) chauvinism was a greater danger to the existence of the multinational state than local nationalism.[38] The policy of *korenizatsija*, which promoted minority cultures,

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[37] Robin, *Socialist Realism*, p. 265.

[38] Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 156.

languages, local Bolshevik elites, and industrial workforce at the expense of Russians, was reviewed after 1933, and then in 1935 replaced with the rhetoric of the “Friendship of Peoples” (*druzhba narodov*).[39] The latter was meant to emphasise the familial bonds between the individual Soviet nations as well as appeal to the now disenchanted Russians by granting them a position of honour as as an *older* brothers of the minorities. Thus, as we see, the respective positions of Russians and non-Russians were kept intentionally unequal thoughout the 1920’s and 1930’s, which is the period when Ayni grew and matured as a Soviet writer and wrote his Ој*ulomon*. And if the statuses of Russians and non-Russians were unequal, so were those of their cultures and literatures. This problematic would, therefore, invite a study of socialist realism from the perspective of one of the minority literatures, which would not only help counterbalance the ‘Russian bias’ in the scholarship of socialist realism, but also help determine to what extent the minority cultures managed to become “national in form and socialist in content.”[40] It is with such hope that I will analyse Ој*ulomon*, a major work by Sadriddin Ayni, the arch-literatus of Soviet Tajikistan.

[39] Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, p. 167.

[40] Ibid., p. 182.

CHAPTER TWO: Sadriddin Ayni and Socialist Realism

The life and literary activities of Sadriddin Ayni have been the subject of several studies, most of which (for obvious reasons) were published on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain. Here, rather than recounting biographical information which can already be found elsewhere,[41] I would like to highlight the writer's links to the institutions of Soviet literature and his involvement in the 'socialist realist project.' It is worth studying Ayni's writings in this context not only because the information available on the topic in English is scarce, but also because Ayni was the only prominent Jadid intellectual to have survived the Stalinist purges of the late 1930's. Accordingly, it worth trying to answer to the question why Ayni was spared the plight of other prominent Central Asian authors, such as his Uzbek counterpart Abdurrauf Fitrat.

It becomes clear from even a brief study of the Soviet sources that Ayni's Soviet biographers, while mentioning (and censuring) his infatuation with Jadidism, largely downplay its significance. Thus, Ayni is said to have supported the Jadids solely due to their "progressive" ideas of modern schooling, and *not* because of the movement's supposedly panturkic orientation. As has been alleged, after the Revolution of 1917, Ayni was quick to realise that he had misplaced his trust with the Jadid movement, and upon learning about the Bolsheviks and their cause, he immediately dissociated himself from the Jadids and welcomed the advent of the 'Red October.'[42]

Indeed, his revolutionary poems, especially *Surud-i Azadi (Marsh-i Ḥuriyyat)* and *Ba Sharaf-i Inqilab-i Uktabr*[43] suggest that Ayni identified with the Bolshevik cause quite early on. Moreover, unlike other Jadid writers, who after the fall of the Manghit regime began to write exclusively in Turkic, he not only continued to write in Persian, but even made it his

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[41] Soviet biographical works include: Iosif S. Braginskij, *Zhizn' i tvorchestvo Sadriddina Ayni* (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1959); Jurij I. Babaev, *Sadriddin Ayni: ba munosibati ruzi tavalludash* (Dushanbe: 1968); Muhammad S. Asimov, and Kamol S. Ayni, eds., *Kniga zhizni Sadriddina Ayni* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1978). Informative but still Soviet-biased are Jiří Bečka, *Sadriddin Ayni: Father of Modern Tajik Culture* (Naples: Instituto Universitario Orientale, 1980) and the chapers on Ayni in Jan Rypka, ed., *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968). Non-soviet studies are scarce, see *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, s.v. "ʿAYNI, SADR-AL-DIN," by Keith Hitchins, accessed on 30 July 2015, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ayni-sadr-al-din.

[42] Iosif S. Braginskij, *Zhizn' i tvorchestvo Sadriddina Ayni* (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1959), pp. 67-72.

[43] Sadriddin Ayni, *Namuna-yi Adabiyat-i Tajik* (Moscow: Chapkhana-yi Nashriyat-i Markazi, 1925), pp. 569-575.

first language of artistic expression. His commitment to the language (now called Tajik) apparently only strengthened when in 1924 the Tajik Autonomous Republic was created. On request of the Republic's government[44] Ayni edited the first anthology of “Tajik” (not “Persian”!) literature, *Namuna-yi Adabiyat-i Tajik*, thus making a major contribution to the construction of modern Tajik identity in the Soviet mould. In the introduction to his anthology, Ayni mildly criticises the cultural and linguistic hegemony imposed on Tajiks by Soviet Uzbek authorities, hopes to make Tajiks aware of their own cultural heritage, and intends to convince his fellow countrymen that of the Soviet authorities' unwavering support for the cultures of formerly oppressed nations.[45] Finally, he pledges his loyalty to the regime by extolling the freedom (and sustenance) granted to men of lettres by the Soviet state:

> در این عهد، شاعران و محرران با کمال آزادی، از غیر مجبوریت کسی بعالم انسانیت یاکه بقوم و ملت خود خدمت میکنند. مزد را بایدوشاید از حکومت میستانند. علاوه بر این، از بندگی و مداحی کردن بیک شحص مستبد که این شیوه عار و ننگ انسانیت است فارغ و آزای هستند.

In this age, poets and writers, completely free from the coercion of others, serve the whole humanity or, otherwise, their own people. As for their reward, they receive it [in the just amount] from the government. In addition, they are free from bondage and praising despots, which is a disgrace to humanity.

Certainly, statements like this helped Ayni mark himself out as an ardent supporter of the new order. It remains to be judged by the reader to what extent these words are Ayni's own encomium (*maddāḥī*) to the Soviet authorities. In any case, the mildly anti-Uzbek rhetoric used by Ayni in the introduction to the anthology is used by Ayni's later biographers[46] to de-emphasise Ayni's involvement in the Jadid movement and stress his resolute resistance to 'Uzbekisation' of his fellow Tajiks.[47] It may well be the case that for this reason alone Ayni avoided attracting the label of an “enemy of the people” in the late 1930's.

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[44] Ibid., p. 6.

[45] Ibid., p. 4.

[46] which, though published in the West, must have borne the Soviet stamp of approval.

[47] Jiří Bečka, “Tajik Literature from the 16th Century to the Present,” in Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, p. 548.

No less important are the form and content of the works written by Ayni in this period. Here, several key issues introduced in the above discussion of socialist realism need to be addressed in the context of Ayni's oeuvre: To what extent did Ayni participate in the institutions of Soviet literature? Did he write 'party-mindedly'? Did he write according to the masterplot as identified by Clark? Are the five nodal vectors of monosemy, as proposed by Robin, present in his novels? In the following, I will focus on these questions and try to determine the extent to which Ayni was a Soviet socialist realism writer.

The Past and the Present

Keith Hitchins rightly notes that Ayni's literary focused on the past.[48] Two of his 'non-fiction' works, the Persian *Taʾrikh-i Amiran-i Manghitiya-yi Bukhara* and the Uzbek *Bukhara Inqilabining Taʾrikhi,* testify to Ayni's strong historiographical outlook. At the same time, several of his 'fiction' works deal to different degrees with the pre-revolutionary past. These include *Jalladan-i Bukhara*, *Sarguzasht-i Yak Tajik-i Kambaghal ya ki Adina*, Ҷ*ulomon*, *Margi Sūdxūr*, *Qahramoni Khalqi Tojik Temurmalik*, *Iseni Muqanno*, and *Eddoshtho*. Despite this marked preference for historical subjects, it would be a grave mistake to say that Ayni wrote solely about the pre-revolutionary past, and to oversee what he wrote about the post-revolutionary Soviet present. For, as we shall see, it is in his writing about the present latter that Ayni attained to the ideals of a Soviet writer in greatest measure.

Thus, for instance, in *Dakhunda* and Ҷ*ulomon*, the climactic episodes are set in contemporary Soviet Central Asia and are marked by enthusiastic mood not to be encountered in the episodes set before the October Revolution. This suggests that Ayni did manage to fulfil the major task of a socialist realist writer, which was to inscribe the new Soviet order in fiction as "progressive, rational, and beautiful, in contrast to prerevolitionary society, which was seen as not only oppressive and exploitative but tradition-bound, superstitious, and fetid."[49]

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[48] *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, s.v. "ʿAYNI, SADR-AL-DIN"

[49] David L. Hoffmann, Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 11.

Though not a Party member himself, Ayni nevertheless participated in the Party-sponsored institutions of Soviet literature. He was present at the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers, during which he was praised by other Soviet writers as well as praised the Soviet establishment himself. Asked to give a speech to the plenum, he began in the following manner:

> Comrades! Warmest greetings to the Congress of Soviet Writers from an old man who has become a youth again! Yes, Comrades, I am an old man who has been rejuvenated in our days! I have been working in literature for some 40 years; I have witnessed the feudal days of Bukhara, the period of Jadidism, and I have participated in the literary life of that period. Yet in that age, I did not manage to produce any significant work. Everything in my oeuvre that desires attention was written after the October [Revolution]. That is why I said that from an old man I had grown into a youth again; the dictatorship of the proletariat has returned my youth to me.[50]

Like his later biographers, Ayni downplays the significance of his 'youthful infatuation' with Jadidism and his frequenting of Jadid-run literary salons. On the other hand, using some of the Bolshevik 'key words' ("the dictatorship of the proletariat," "October"), Ayni emphasises how much the Bolshevik state has given him, and by doing so he proves himself to be a loyalist intellectual.

While trying to wipe out all of his own pre-revolutionary works, Ayni is not writing off all of the pre-revolutionary Tajik literature; rather than rejecting the pre-Soviet literary heritage wholesale, Ayni boasts of the many centuries of its recorded existence in Central Asia and provides a list of famous poets to substantiate his claims. While acknowledging the value of Tajik literary heritage, he asserts: "We are writing our Soviet literature under the guidance of the Communist Party, and we are making critical use of this literary heritage."[51] He also stresses the potential of Soviet Tajik writers to inspire the "oppressed toilers of the East."[52] This suggests that, at least officially, Ayni perceived Soviet literature not as something imposed on Tajik literati, but rather as something that they too were

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[50] *Pervyj*, p. 533.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., p. 534.

shaping, though, of course, with a critical awareness of their long literary tradition.[53] It is noteworthy that, in his speech, Ayni is has not used the term 'socialist realism' at all.

In order to find out more about Ayni's attitude towards socialist realism *per se*, we have to look into an article which he published in *Pravda* on 18 July 1951. Entitled "Mudryj Uchitel'" ("A Wise Teacher"), the article was written in honour of the unquestionable master of Soviet socialist realist literature, Maksim Gorkij. It is filled with paternal-filial rhetoric and thus in keeping with the Soviet biographical conventions of the time, which required that lives of men be made fit into two formulaic patterns. As a result, a Soviet Man could either be a "father" or a "son."[54] Thus, the father of the Soviet people *par excellence* was Stalin; Gorkij was the father of Soviet literature and, perforce, the father of Soviet writers; Ayni begat Modern Tajik literature and the Tajik novelists of the "second generation,"[55] etc. It is worth quoting a few passages from the article in order to appreciate the degree of Ayni's loyalty to that 'living institution,' and the "master of socialist realism:"

> It is not sufficient to call Gorkij a great writer and the founder of Soviet literature. He was at the same time a genuine father, teacher, and mentor of Soviet literati ...
>
> Gorkij exhorted Soviet writers to thoroughly study the people's mode of life, and to always mix in with the masses .
>
> The oeuvre of this great writer is a great example of how to write for the people. You read his works and are amazed at the depth of his knowledge of life and his ability to touch the innermost strings of the people's soul. And that is why the images he uses in his works are so typical and his characters so relatable for the people ... You read [his books], and it is as though you saw and talked with Gorkij's heroes yourself. That explains the colossal influence Gorkij has had on the literary creativity of Russian Soviet writers (and of all writers), and his great contribution to bringing about the blossoming of contemporary Russian literature and the literatures of all the nations of the Soviet Union. Just as the Russian writers, we, the writers of the sister Soviet republics, as well, consider Gorkij our great teacher.
>
> I became truly familiar with Gorkij's works for the first time in 1930. He had a great impact on me back then. I immediately realised how many were the shortcomings of my own works. That is why the first editions of *Odina* and *Dokhunda* are so different not only from the second editions

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[53] This seems to harmonise with the contention of some scholars who, like David Hoffmann, view the shape of Soviet culture as determined in equal measure by general directives from above and the cultural producers (artists, researchers) themselves, see Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, p. 5.

[54] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp. 123-128.

[55] Sotim Ulughzoda, Jalol Ikromi, Rahim Jalil, History of Iranian literature, pp. 572-577.

of these books, but also from *The Slaves*, *The Usurer's Death*, *The School*, and other works that I wrote later. They differ not only in language, which became neater, simpler, more precise, but also with respect to devices, means of representation, subject matter, and the use of folklore.

...

The multinational Soviet literature treads the path which had previously been trod by Gorkij. It is permanently growing and developing. And so the great Gorkij, with his beneficial, life-affirming influence, will live eternally in Soviet literature as the pioneer and master of socialist realism.[56]

Despite such declarations of loyalty to the Soviet literary establishment on Ayni's part, it has been argued that the writer "refused to join in the adulation of Stalin or to turn out production novels as prescribed by party ideologues."[57] Unfortunately, the first part of this proposition does not bear close scrutiny. In Part V of Ƣ*ulomon*, Stalin's name appears frequently and consistenly oozes an aura of an übermensch. It is uttered with great piety by the protagonists and is used by them to drive the point home when arguing with the villains. Whenever Stalin's name appears, it serves as a 'social discourse marker:' it introduces truths which are to be accepted and lived out by the characters as well as the reader if they want to be 'good' Soviet citizens. The positive value of the social discourse introduced by the name "Stalin" is additionally emphasised by the reactions of the novel's villains, who tend to find it rather 'unpalatable.' This is particularly the case in the exchange between the naive (but well-meaning) Normurod and the fake activist Hamdam, when they argue about the benefits of diligent work:

- The thing is - said Normurod proudly - if you listen to someone who's a bit more experienced than you, and act according to his advice, you will definitely become a successful person. You can't accomplish a task by shaving your beard, combing your hair, and dressing up; if, however, you conscienciously do the job that you've been assigned, you will hear "Well done!" from everyone, and your wage will rise too. You must have heard that Comrade Stalin has prohibited paying equal wages to everyone, and that now both the quality of the work and the ability of the worker will be taken into account on payday.
- Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed - answered Hamdam-fūrma with joy; but somewhere inside he felt some kind of grief about the last words of Normurod.[58]

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[56] Sadriddin Ayni, "Mudryj Uchitel'," *Pravda*, 18 July, 1951,169.

[57] *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, s.v. "ʿAYNI, SADR-AL-DIN."

[58] Sadriddin Ayni, Ƣ*ulomon: Rumon* (Samarkand: Naşrdavtoç, 1935), p. 782.

While this passage may not point to any “adulation” of Stalin, it does show how the author ‘inscribed’ the leader in the text as an absolute authority. Normurod is a thoroughly positive character, if only a bit of a ‘hothead.’ Despite his advanced age he is a member of the Soviet pioneers and wholly devoted to the kolkhoz; as a result, he is a ‘reliable’ character, i.e. he ‘speaks truth.’ It is not so with Hamdam, whose actions and declarations are false. The former speaks about Stalin with fondness; the other, hearing the name, is dumbfounded and grief-stricken. Thus, the name “Stalin” emergest as a measure of ‘right’ and ‘wrong,’ and an important element of the Manichean value system that informs Part V of Ayni’s novel.

Clearer examples of adulation are found at the very end of the novel. It is there that, following a successful investigation of the local Political Department, the villains (Hamdam and Qutвija) are finally identified and arrested. With them, the remnants of the exploiting classes are gone; dekulakisation is completed. Here, the enthusiastic mention of Stalin's name is again followed by social discourse; all this is fit into a ‘one-breath exclamation,’ which results in what may be called ‘stylistic clumsiness,’ if not downright grotesque:

- Long live our great leader, comrade Stalin, and his initiatives, one of which is the Political Department of Machine and Tractor Stations! - said Fatima; her words put the assembly on their feet and made them boil with excitement.[59]

Subsequently, the whole assembly shouts:

- Long live the Communist Party and its great leader, Comrade Stalin!
- Long live Lenin's comrade-in-arms and his continuator, the great Stalin!
- Long live the shock-brigadier of the Kolkhoz System, our great Stalin![60]

The novel’s conclusion leaves no doubt that Stalin belongs to a higher order of being than the rank-and-file Soviet citizens, and it makes it clear that it is Stalin who is to be thanked for the successes of the construction of socialism.

This elevation of Stalin above all other humans occurs in a most absurd manner in Chapter 8 of Part V, when after the establishment of the kolkhoz it transpires that the

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[59] Ibid., p.881.

[60] Ibid., p.882.

transition from individual agriculture to the collective farm entails many more difficulties than initially expected: the activists have not secured enough shelter and feed for the cattle; at the same time all sorts of counterrevolutionaries threaten the unity of the kolkhoz with their aggressive 'obscurantist' agitation and provocations. However, as the narrator assures us, Stalin intervenes in the darkest hour to sober up the community and secure the future of collective farming:

These acts of negligence had not escaped the sharp eye of Comrade Stalin. It was at that time that his historic article "Dizzy with Success"[61] was written and published. The article became a guiding star for the local workers, who had become 'dizzy with success,' running after "percents," and who even wanted to leap over the first stage of the kolkhoz movement (the farming association and the village farming cooperative) straight into the commune, without securing their achievements.[62]

Just like a good wizard in a tower, so does Stalin notice the problems of the little Central Asian kolkhoz from his window in the Kremlin castle! The narrator makes no mention of the administrative and security apparatus that was the "sharp eye" of Stalin; rather, the narrator holds, it is all thanks to the superhuman qualities of Stalin. It will not be an exaggeration to say that this passage amounts to what is otherwise known in folklore as "supernatural intervention:"[63] things are going badly, the hero seems doomed, but in the last minute he succeeds in accomplishing his task because of an intervention of a magical creature. Obviously, no magical creatures are allowed in the world of Ǒʅ*ulomon*: the author consistently fights the old superstitions. However, functionally speaking, Stalin's action comes close to its folk counterpart: being a genius (*dohī*), Stalin is able to see and do what normal humans cannot, and, when all seems doomed, comes to help the humans' fulfil their task.[64]

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[61] Joseph V. Stalin, "Dizzy with Success," *Pravda*, 2 March, 1930.

[62] Ayni, Ǒʅ*ulomon*, p.723.

[63] Propp, *Morfologija skazki*, p. 49.

[64] As Eden Naby has noted, supernatural intervention of Party and local Soviet authorities is a common theme of the short stories written in Uzbek and Tajik in the late 1920s: "The intervention by these Soviet institutions materialize as inexplicably and miraculously as did genies in traditional Islamic folk tales," see Eden Naby, "Transitional Central Asian Literature: Tajik and Uzbek Prose Fiction from 1909 to 1932," (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1975), p. 87.

It is impossible to establish to what extent giving this apotheosis of Stalin in *Oʻtkan kunlar* reflect Ayni's sincerely held beliefs, and to what extent it is simply paying the customary tribute to the leader of the Party. Without doubt, not everything expressed through the official channels (be it press, fiction, or conferences) should be taken at face value. However, even if some aspects of Ayni's 'panegyrics' to the people in power were somewhat 'tuned up' to the euphoric tone of Soviet rhetoric, it would be difficult to argue that they are attributable solely to cynical calculation on Ayni's part. In the final analysis, we do not know what transpired in the man's mind, and only his words (chosen surely with the awareness of the censor's watchful eye) are left to help us navigate it. What becomes clear from the passages analysed above, however, is that by magnifying Stalin and inscribing in his novel the social discourse promoted by the Bolshevik Party, Ayni's work is party-minded and thus fulfils a major (albeit not conclusive) requirement of socialist realist fiction.

CHAPTER THREE: Ƣ*ulomon* and Western Scholarship

Having identified the party-minded element in Ƣ*ulomon*, we must now confront Ayni's work with the theories of the Soviet novel and socialist realism summarised above. In the light of the theoretical models of Clark and Robin, it becomes clear that *partyjnost'*, though an essential condition of all socialist realist writing, is not tantamount to socialist realism itself. As a result, although we are dealing in Ƣ*ulomon* with a party-minded piece of literature, the question remains as to whether we can call it a *socialist realist novel*. This fairly complex issue is better analysed as two separate but related issues: Is Ƣ*ulomon* a novel, and if so, is it socialist realist?

Since the full title of Ayni's work reads Ƣ*ulomon: Rumon* ("The Slaves: A Novel"), it may seem contrary to logic to question that it is a novel at all. However, if we bear in mind that labels such as *rumon* and *povest'* (usually translated respectively as "novel" and "novella") were adopted by modern Central Asian writers from Russian and other European languages, we should be less ready to assume that they unproblematically and accurately reflect the generic status of Central Asian literary texts. The situation is all the more complex when taking into account that in European literary criticism itself the definition of the novel as a genre is not unproblematic either.

Ƣ*ulomon*: Major Themes and Characteristics

Ƣ*ulomon* comprises 882 pages[65] of prose, albeit with poetic interpolations interspersed fairly equally across the five Parts of the book. The vast majority of these poetic interpolations comprise (quasi-)folk songs and aphorisms, although their content changes (as do other elements) around the Revolution of 1917. Before the action reaches the Soviet period, singing helps the oppressed live through the hardships; as a result, many songs are 'traditionally' melancholic, and the narrator shows much sympathy for them:

The air oozes a delightful fragrance,
Is it coming from Qarshi, from my companion?
Like a zephyr, I go from meadow to meadow
So I may see her and my pain subsides.[66]

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[65] In the 1935 Tajik edition quoted here.

[66] Ayni, Ƣ*ulomon*, p. 181.

However, in the period of the “construction of socialism” (as represented in Part V), such sad, grief-filled songs are no longer appropriate. Ayni puts a commentary on this type of folk culture into the mouth of one of the protagonists, who, on hearing one of the sad songs, declares:

> Our era is the era of the construction of socialism, of the socialist assault [*huçumi sosijolistī*], and of class struggle. Melodies and songs left from the period of the emirs, which correspond to the sorrowful and dismal circumstances of that period, do not befit this era. What we need are songs and melodies that instil delight, ardour, and boldness; songs which will lead us to triumphs and victories, which will then sing our triumphs and victories, and, in short, will befit our triumphs and victories.[67]

It is difficult to determine precisely the year in which the action begins. A 1950 Russian translation of Ƣ*ulomon*[68] provides exact dates in the subtitle of each Part (I 1825-1878; II 1915, III 1917-1920, IV 1920-1923, V 1927-1934); the dates seem to correspond to the events of each of the Parts, but they have no counterpart in the 1935 Tajik edition.[69] The action of the novel takes place, among others, in the steppes of present-day Turkmenistan, in the city of Bukhara and the Samarkand valley, but for the most part it set in the vicinity of the town of Ƣiçduvon and the river Çilvon.

What is striking about Ayni’s work is the sheer number of threads, episodes, and characters. The history of Central Asia as seen from the perspective of the oppressed social groups (slaves, landless peasants, farmhands, and shepherds among others) provides the grand unifying force which connects the many threads into a logical whole. Ayni makes this history even more tangible and relatable by involving four generations of a fictional slave family (Hasan, Neqadam, Ergaş, and Hasan) in a procession of historical events. The most important of these events serve as the action’s turning points and include: the Russian Conquest of Bukhara in 1868, the abolition of slavery ten years later, the emergence of Central Asian Jadidism, the Revolutions of 1905, 1917 and 1920, the

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[67] Ayni, Ƣ*ulomon*, p. 841.

[68] Sadriddin Ayni, *Raby: Roman*, trans. Sergej Borodin (Moscow: Sovetskij Pisatel’, 1950).

[69] There are many more divergencies between the 1935 Tajik text of Ƣ*ulomon* and its 1950 Russian translation. Especially interesting is the elaboration of the theme of the “Friendship of the Peoples” and the concomitant emphasis on the positive influence of Russian workers on their Central Asian counterparts, cf. Ayni, Ƣ*ulomon*, p. 437; and Ayni, *Raby*, pp. 253-55.

establishment of a republic in Bukhara, the “voluntary annexation” of the republic by the Soviet Union, the collectivisation of agriculture, the emancipation of women, and the final elimination of the exploiting classes (dekulakisation). The last three are processes, rather than single events and provide the historical backdrop of the climactic Part V of Oʻ*ulomon*.

Due to the timespan and complexity of Oʻ*ulomon*, it is impossible to identify a single protagonist: there are, rather, many protagonists of equally many stories. Consequently, the individual positive hero as identified by Robin and Clark in their Russian socialist realist novels does not appear in Ayni’s work. Still, if one had to indicate the positive hero of Oʻ*ulomon* as a whole, it would have to be the oppressed class *as a whole*.

The book’s timespan together with its firm anchoring in the historical setting of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Central Asia makes Ayni’s work too complex and historically specific to be usefully analysed in Proppian terms, along the lines presented by Clark in *The Soviet Novel*. Robin’s no less restrictive system of the five nodal vectors does not do us a better service. Both models of the Soviet novel are too restrictive in their simplicity to be usefully applied to Ayni’s long and ramified narrative. It seems that Ayni’s work *as a whole* does not resemble the apparently shorter, less complex, and more conventionalised Russian socialist realist novel studied by Clark and Robin.

Part V: The Construction of Socialism, the Socialist Assault, and the Class Struggle

If Oʻ*ulomon*, as a whole, cannot be analysed in terms put forward by Clark and Robin, the same is not true of the individual Parts, which often form fairy independent units. This is especially the case with Part V, which could (with minor adjustments) function as a single, independent narrative. Most characters, including the protagonists (Hasan and Fotima) and the villains (Hamdam and Qutвija) are only introduced in this Part. Moreover, Part V is set in one of the kolkhozes of the Oʻiçduvon region in Uzbekistan, which forms a small of compact microcosm in line with the microcosms of novels studied by Clark. Finally, Part V is set during the critical years of the first Five Year Plan, which corresponds to the timespan of a typical “production novel.” Set wholly in the Soviet realities, Part V lends itself therefore particularly well to a comparison with the Russian novels written studied by Clark and Robin.

Arguably, Part V has two complementary subtexts, i.e. two equally important organising principles that drive the action toward the denouement. Neither of them is the spontaneity/ consciousness identified by Clark as the most important shared characteristic of all Soviet novels. First, Part V deals with the challenges of the land and water reform and the collectivisation of agriculture, which began in Central Asia in 1926 and 1928 respectively. In the novel, as was the case in history, the developments in agriculture are directly linked to the effort of Soviet authorities to increase cotton production and make the Soviet Union self-sufficient in this respect.[70]

The second narrative subtext is the emancipation of Central Asian women during the the state-sponsored campaign known as the *hujum*, an "assault 'on the moldy old ways' of female inequality and seclusion;"[71] Inaugurated on 8 March 1927, it lasted well into the 1930's. This emancipatory campaign is referred to explicitly by Hasan in the passage quoted above (p. 27), and implicitly by the attention given by the author to the issue throughout Part V. The two central subtexts 'fuse' in the climactic and final intrigue devised by a woman, Qutвija, that failed to transcend the old notions of femininity and reinvent herself in the Soviet mould. Her intrigue is meant to bring about the personal downfall of her husband Hasan, an activist and Komsomol member, on the one hand, and to sabotage the kolkhoz cotton production plans, on the other. In what follows, I shall demonstrate how these two issues reflect on the question of the generic status of Oʻ*ulomon* and the specifics of figurative language, which represent a departure from the literary conventions of the classical period.

[70] Ayni, Oʻ*ulomon*, pp. 793 and 822. Fotima 'preaches' about the importance of the state cotton production plans and the role of the kolkhoz in fulfilling it.

[71] Northrop, Douglas, *Veiled Empire*, p. 5.

Оʻ*ulomon* as a Novel

In his essay *Epos i roman*,[72] Mikhail Bakhtin argued that the novel is, in a sense, impossible to grasp in a single definition, because it is a developing genre, has no canon of its own, and "is ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms to review." An uncomfortable genre, it eschews teleology and always leaves something to be desired. These last two characteristics given by Bakhtin would automatically exclude from the genre the socialist realist novels, which, as has been demonstrated above, postulate a world of plenty and show strong inclination to teleology. Since the limits of space do not allow a more in-depth analysis of this otherwise fascinating issue, I will focus here on the elements of self-examination and challenging the established forms. As Bakhtin argues:

> The novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them.[73]

A key issue in Bakhtin's discussion of the novel is the notion of 'parody.' I will use the term, as, I believe, does Bakhtin, in a very broad sense; thus, parody (or 'travesty') means using established codes (be they literary forms or cultural values) in a new, often surprising context, thereby infusing them with new meaning. This process may or may not produce a comic effect, but it always challenges or questions the established modes of expression.

As becomes clear from the title of his essay, Bakhtin defines the novel in juxtaposition to the epic. His discussion of the difference between the genres is, without doubt, pertinent to the question of the generic affiliation of Оʻ*ulomon*; for, as we know,[74] it was the age-old epic which lost most to the new, ascendant genre of the novel. In the literatures of Iran and Central Asia too, the process of 'novelisation' was accompanied by a decline of verse forms, such as the *masnavi,* in which many of the Persian epics had been written. Well-versed in classical Persian lettres and standing at the crossroads of tradition and modernity, Ayni must have composed his *rumon* with the awareness of the thousand-year

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[72] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Epos i roman," in *Voprosy literatury i estetiki*, no. 1 (1970). An English version appears under the title "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel," in Michael Holquist, ed., *The Dialogic Imagiantion: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), pp. 3-40. All references are to the latter.

[73] Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," p. 5.

[74] *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (4 ed.)*, s.v. "Novel," accessed 9 June 2015.

old tradition of Persian epics, such as the *Shahnama* or the romances of Nizami (if only his awareness was critical).[75]

Bakhtin observes that, unlike the epic, the novel "is not structured in the distanced image of the obsolete past, but in the zone of direct contact with inconclusive present-day reality."[76] The epic, on the other hand:

> is the national heroic past: it is a world of "beginnings" and "peak times" in the national history, a world of fathers and of founders of families, a world of "firsts" and "bests" ... . The epic, as the specific genre known to us today, has been from the beginning a poem about the past, and the authorial position ... the reverent point of view of a descendent.[77]

Oʻ*ulomon* can also hardly be called an account of national history, so far as 'national' stands for 'ethnic.' In general, Ayni rarely uses national labels, and hardly ever in relation to his protagonists. In fact, if we were to treat Oʻ*ulomon* as a national epic, it would be a particularly ill-conceived one: That is because, before appearing in Tajik in 1935, the work was first published in Uzbek under the title *Qullar* (1934).[78] Which national past should it then narrate: Uzbek or Tajik? As a matter of fact, it could cautiously be argued that, by de-emphasising the element of ethnicity and giving extra prominence to the theme of class struggle, Ayni wanted to write an account of the history of the people (Russian *narod*; Tajik *xalq*), rather than that of a nation (Russian *natsija;* Tajik *millat*); an account that would provide a reminder of the shared experience of oppression, regardless of the nationality of the oppressed. In this sense, Oʻ*ulomon* tells a story of the "beginnings" of a community of a new type, i.e. one defined in terms of class membership rather than ethnicity. In doing so, it not so much resembles the epic, as it travesties its 'tribal' chauvinism.

Moreover, with all the similarities to the old epic (the quasi-historical framework; the multiplicity of episodes and characters; the pointing to the origins of a community), Ayni's

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[75] Incidentally, Ayni has engaged with Firousi's epic in one of articles, see Sadriddin Ayni, "Dar borai Firdavsi va Shohnomai u," in Ayni, *Kulliet,* vol. 11, pp. 7-50.

[76] Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," p. 39.

[77] Ibid., p. 13.

[78] According to one of the participants of the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers, the Uzbek version of Oʻ*ulomon* was written by Ayni for a competition announced by the Council of People's Commissars of the Uzbek SSR. The competition was to encourage Uzbek writers to engage in a "battle" with the "backwardness" or "lagging behind" of Uzbek prose. See *Pervyj*, p.133.

work does not show the reverence towards the past[79] referred to by Bakhtin. For Ayni, the past may well be the time of the "firsts," but definitely not the time of the "bests;" rather, it is a time of the most vulnerable and the most cruel. In fact, most of the episodes in the pre-October parts of the book tell the tale not of the "peak time," but of the nadir of individual freedom and dignity. Moreover, even though things are constantly improving for the former slaves in Parts IV and V, the real 'zenith' of their freedom seems to be a thing of the future. This condemnation of the past, and the concomitant valorisation of the (socialist) present and (communist) future is itself a parody of the reverent attitude towards the past that lays at the hear of the epic worldview, and as such an important argument in favour of the 'novelty' of Ayni's work.

Another hugely important parodying innovation on Ayni's part is his treatment of the theme of love, which represents a significant departure from the classical models set in Persian epic romances (such as Nizami's *Layli and Majnun*) and the large corpus of lyric love poetry. To give but one example, whereas in the earlier classical poetry affliction was an ineluctable fate of the lover,[80] for Ayni it has no real value; more than this, it is implicitly falsified in an exchange between Hasan, the protagonist of Part V, and his *kulak* fiancée, Qutвija. Hasan tells the girl the three conditions on which he is willing to marry her, including breaking all ties with her kulak parents, revealing their secrets to "the people," and renouncing her bourgeois ways (*odathoji meşcanī*). Qutвija, who wants to be with Hasan not out of love but out of cold calculation, responds "with coquetry" (*işvakorona*):

For you, for your black eyes and eyebrows, for your moon-like face, for your strong hands and arms, and for your categorical and sharp words, I am ready to throw myself into a boiling pot, burning fire, a blazing furnace, and a roaring sea![81]

Qutвija's plan of ruining Hasan and the kolkhoz renders these words null and void, and rids them of their conventional meaning and function (i.e. expressing genuine desire). Such treatment of the theme of affliction is part of a wider reconception of love as an emotional state. It is highly conspicuous that the words *işq* and *muhaввat* are used only to

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[79] which, for Ayni, means the pre-Soviet past.

[80] Ali A. Seyed-Gohrab, *Laylī and Majnūn: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing in Niẓāmī's Epic Romance (*Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 23.

[81] Ayni, Oʖ*ulomon*, p. 769.

denote the feelings between Qutвija and her two 'lovers:'[82] Hasan and Hamdam. Thus, in the first exchange between Qutвija and Hamdam,[83] the girl tells Hamdam about the feelings Hasan harbours for her; she asserts that Hasan's *muhaввat* is sincere (*samimī*) and comes from a pure heart of a youth (*az qalвi çavoniji soф*).[84] When Qutвija and Hamdam meet for the second time,[85] she relativises *muhaввat* and considers it an inferior motive compared to ideological integrity. When Hamdam reveals that it is his love for her beauty that inspires him to sabbotage, the girl chastises him:

> It's these words that show your your impotence and shortcomings ... . Hasan has fallen for my black eyes, black eyebrows, black hair and my black mole no less than you. But when we talk about the kolkhoz, the kulaks, the Party and the Komsomol, he forgets his love completely. He says: "I love both you and the kolkhoz, but if you are not happy with the kolkhoz, I cannot be happy with you." If you were as firm and unwavering in bringing destruction to the kolkhoz as are people like Hasan Ergaş in strengthening it, you could succeed. But if you do all this only because of my black eyes and my black eyebrows [and] my ... you can't successfully accomplish this task.[86]

Thus, Qutвija states that both the love of the Soviet order and the desire to overthrow it are stronger than human *muhaввat*.

The third manipulation of the conventions of the classical literature occurs in Ayni's use of the traditional imagery associated with the female beauty. Undoubtedly, this has to do with the dynamics of the hujum referred to above, and the concomitant reconception of the ideals of femininity. The classical attributes of beauty and ways of referring to the beloved are used solely in relation to Qutвija or, as in one of the passages quoted above, by Qutвija in relation to Hasan. When the girl meets her other 'lover,' Hamdam, for the first time, she is described very poetically, the poetical element being all the more visible as it contrasts with the rather dry, matter-of-fact narration in the rest of Part V, and, as we shall see later, with the new ideal of feminine beauty embodied by Fotima.

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[82] I am using quotation marks, because Qutвija does not seem to love any of them genuinely. See Oʻ*ulomon*, pp. 764 and 796.

[83] Ayni, Oʻ*ulomon*, pp. 792-802.

[84] Ibid., p. 795.

[85] Ibid., pp. 824-836.

[86] Ibid., pp. 833-34.

Thus Qutвija is referred to by the narrator with the poetic *sohiвçamol*;[87] her coming is described in a way that is very common in classical verse, i.e. using metonyms of body parts and attributes that were considered pleasant and attractive and made the lover even more mad, rather than referring to the whole person:

It did not take long until the soft noise of delicate feet was joined by a rustle of a new silk Bukharan shirt. The beautiful scent of rose oil that followed these elegant noises made the street fragrant like a perfumery.[88]

'Sensual' words like *nozuk* (tender, elegant, delicate), *вūji xuş* (fragrance, scent), and *şohi* (silk) belong to the conventional repertoir of classical poetry. And it is no accident that the modernising author is applying them in his description of a "class enemy." These are precisely the "bourgeois ways" that Hasan wants Qutвija to leave; pleasant though they be, they represent no value, contribute nothing to the effort to achieve cotton self-sufficiency for the Soviet Union. This is especially obvious when, on Hasan request, Qutвija tries to work for a day picking cotton. Her delicate hands are not used to dealing with thorny cotton, and she is in fact so passive and useless that the narrator refers to her as a "display mannequin" (*monandi hajkalhoji e'loniji magazinhoji liвosfurūşī вa daraxt takja karda*).[89] Her evil character implicates, as it were, the classical ideals of (feminine) beauty by linking them to uselessness, and thereby exposing them as utter futility.

This is all the more clear in the light of the new ideal of beauty, embodied by the heroine of Part V, Fotima. If in the case of Qutвija the old ideal match the "old moldy ways," so does the new ideal fit into the new consciousness and societal needs. It is physical strength and its attributes that seem to fascinate the author of Ƣ*ulomon* in the new Soviet woman. Fotima is a success story of the Soviet emancipatory campaigns in Central Asia: she cast the veil as one of the first and wears Russian-style clothes; her hair is short (whereas long hair used to be preferred in the classical tradition); her hands are warm, strong, and muscled (*dasti garmi purzūri candirmuşak*[90]) as is the rest of her body:

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[87] Ibid., p. 791.

[88] Ibid., p. 792.

[89] Ibid., p. 825.

[90] Ayni, Ƣ*ulomon*, p. 758.

Ruddy and clear like a fat gold fish, her forearms were picking cotton bolls and ... strangely, they were a heart-ravishing spectacle; amidst the branches cleared of bolls, her forearms worked in a quick and regular manner just like coupling rods of a locomotive. Indeed, Fotima was working like a machine.[91]

It could be argued that, comparing Fotima to a locomotive, Ayni reveals himself as drawing on the peculiar poetic of the first Five-Year-Plan (1928-1932), during which Stalin and, together with him, large sections of Soviet society were infatuated with a vision of building an industrial utopia, "mechanising" the human, and mastering the unconscious:

[E]verything should be scientifically planned, mechanised, and large-scale ... Indeed, it was often claimed, especially in fiction, that human psychology could be changed by putting people to work at machines: inexorably, the machine's regular, controlled, rational rhythms would impress themselves on the "anarchic" and "primitive" psyches of those who worked with them.[92]

Fotima is not working with a machine, but even more: she is working like one. Her party-minded self perfectly matches her sturdy appearance and diligent, Stakhanovite manner of work match. The purity of her "Komsomolist conscience" (*vuçdoni komsomolī*) is confirmed by the fact that she is the only one who manages to discern the trickery behind Qutвija's marriage to Hasan, and to see through the intrigues of class enemies. The connection between her appearance and 'spiritual' qualities is made explicit when one of the positive characters of Part V, Sodiq, speaking to his wife about the advantages of emancipation, declares:

Having cut her hair and joined the Komsomol, this girl is more eloquent than the elders and understands the intrigues of the landlords and mullahs better and earlier than anyone else.[93]

These travesties of the age-old classical tradition are an attempt to coin a new Soviet Tajik poetics that would be appropriate for inscribing in the text the new Soviet Man and the New Soviet (Central Asian) Woman. While the parody of established literary conventions allows us to consider Oʇ*ulomon* a novel, the 'socialist' content of the travesties renders Part V of Ayni's *rumon* a party-minded narrative. While displaying many features

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[91] Ayni, Oʇ*ulomon*, p. 838.

[92] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p.94.

[93] Ayni, Oʇ*ulomon*, p. 735.

associated with socialist realist writing, Οι *ulomon* may not be considered a socialist realist novel as defined Clark and Robin.

CHAPTER FOUR: Realist Text in Oʻ*ulomon*

The purpose of this chapter is to counterbalance the characterisation of Oʻ*ulomon* as a socialist realist novel argued in the previous chapter. Focusing on an episode found in the very beginning of the novel, I would like to show that some of the features of realist writing are indeed present in Oʻ*ulomon*, notwithstanding the predominantly socialist93 character of Part V. The six opening chapters (which I will refer to as the Story of Qilic-Xalifa) lend themselves to closer analysis particularly well, because they make up a whole narrative unit, a short story with a beginning, middle and end. At the same time they serve as an exposition for the novel itself, familiarising the reader with the main issues at stake (class exploitation) and the cruel character of the world in which the novel is set. What follows is a fairly detailed summary of the chapters, which will serve as a point of departure to a more in-depth analysis of realism in Oʻ*ulomon*.

1

In the central building of the rabot, an old man, Qilic-Xalifa, is praying, clearly distraught. A group of riders enter the camp and are greeted by Qilic-Xalifa's first wife, Qumribibī, who then enquires their leader - Abdurahmon-Sardor - about the plundering expedition her husband has sent towards Astarobod.[94] She fears for the lives of her two sons who were leading the expedition. Knowing nothing about their fate, Sardor answers the woman rather curtly and proceeds to meet Qilic-Xalifa. The old man and his guests exchange lengthy greetings, as the custom dictates, and Xalifa offers his guests tee, bread, mashed poppy heads, and a water pipe. Being a Sufi, he initially refuses to smoke, and instead preaches about the deceitful nature of this world (*bevafoiji dunjo*) and the importance of the world to come (*baroji bandaji mū'min lozim budani davlati oxirat*). Not before long, however, Xalifa joins in with the smoking and moves on to more worldly topics; he cannot understand what may have caused the calamities that have befallen his house. The old man has lost all of his cattle, which was the main source of wool for his carpet-weaving business. As a result of the prolonged drought he is slowly running out of food. Qilic-Xalifa recalls the better days with a degree of nostalgia, but assures his interlocutors that he is grateful for what he has. He is confident that his sons will come back with some booty. In the meantime, the effects of tea, tobacco, and opium make themselves felt; Sardor now

[94] Today's Gorgan in Iran.

addresses the old man somewhat uncivilly, blaming their shared misery on Xalifa's religious seclusion (*gūşnişinī*). Sardor says he is ‘broke’ and asks Xalifa to find a way out of the misery. Qilic-Xalifa admonishes Abdurahmon never to become despondent and tells him to go to Hirot, which has reportedly been left unguarded due to a prolonged feud between Afghan prices. Abdurahmon is satisfied with the prospect and, with Qilic-Xalifa's blessing, his men leave for Hirot.

2

In a seemingly abandoned garden near Hirot a plentitude of fruits are ready to be picked. The garden's owners, however, are afraid to leave their house. Last year the family lost almost all their men, who, were ambushed by Turkmen while working in the garden, and then taken to unknown places. One day, a caravan passing by the village brings some good news: there have been no sightings of Turkmen within the distance of a three-day journey. The owners rejoice at hearing this, and the head of the family, Hasan, decides to go to the garden next morning. In the garden, women and children start working, but Hasan is absent-minded; he feels remorse for making a rushed decision to leave the village; he fears that Turkmen marauders may be lurking around and recalls the events of last year, when he failed to be on watch for the enemy, and fled the garden instead of fighting at his brothers' side. Now, he wants to think up a defence plan in advance. He leaves the garden without letting the women know about his concerns and goes to another orchard in order to discuss possible precautionary measures with his neighbours. He warns his neighbours and makes the following suggestion:

> Should we, in the time of adversity, surrender to fear or do something imprudent, we shall all be taken captive. My advice is: whichever of us is attacked first should shout and the rest should come to his help. Then, all of us men shoud unite and bar the enemy's way, so as to let women, girls and young children escape. Even if, acting this way, not all of us manage to escape, at least not all of us will die or be taken captive. However, should each one of us resist on their own or flee, we shall certainly all fall into the hands of the enemy.[95]

Hasan volunteers to keep watch in the desert on that day, and everyone is happy with this idea.

[95] Ayni, Ԛ*ulomon*, pp. 29-30.

In the desert, having checked all the conceivable hideouts, Hasan ascends a high hill and takes a look on the desert from above. He is confident that there are no Turkmens around and lies down. His previous fears and concerns subside; with his courage inflated, he fantasises about resisting ten men single-handedly. He laughs at his earlier concerns and watches the desert less carefully. Suddenly a black shadow passes before his eyes. Hasan freezes:

A while passed and there was no sign of the enemy. Slowly and cautiously Hasan got up and approached the brink of the hill ... But then he understood that this black thing was just a raven, which had risen from the ground as he approached. Hasan calmed down and spitted for good luck.

Hasan scolds himself for surrounding to unfounded fears and resumes his watch. But soon he is ambushed by more fearsome an enemy - hunger. Unable to find anything to eat or drink, Hasan decides to go back to the garden for lunch.

3

To everyone’s relief, Hasan enters and begins to chat with his sister-in-law Ra'no about her son's (Rahimdod) achievements in fruit picking. Clearly impressed, Hasan invites the boy to share his lunch, but before they manage to taste the food they hear an owl hooting. The women take it for a bad omen. Then, to his horror, Hasan spots a row of Turkmen hats behind the garden's wall. He is petrified:

Seeing this, Hasan froze. Nothing was left of the bravery he had shown before the coming of the enemy, nor was there anything left from the plan of resistance he had devised...[96]

After a while he hears a voice from behind. A single (!) Turkmen tells them to tie each other's hands and be quiet. Having lost all hope for redemption, Hasan musters all his courage and asks the Turkmen to tie their hands himself, which the man agrees before leaving the garden. After half an hour the Turkmen comes back and brandishes his sword, clearly trying to terrorise the workers even more. Rahimdod screams and the Turkmen cuts his ear to show that he means what he says. As he leads the captives outside, where two other Turkmens are waiting with their captured neighbours. Hasan realises the 10 hats were placed on the wall only to scare them, and that thanks to that psychological trick alone as few as three Turkmens managed to capture as many as twenty people.

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[96] Ibid., p. 35.

4

In Qilic-Xalifa's ʀaʙot Bibi-Corgul, who has recently been divorced by Xalifa but allowed to stay in his household in exchange for weaving carpets, is struggling to get her work done. Asked by Camanʙooɳ, another wife, about the cause of her distress, Corgul reveals that she expects Xalifa to expel her any day and begins to cry. Camanʙooɳ consoles her (at the same time trying to justify Xalifa) by reminding her how dearly he had bought her. Corgul points out that, unlike Camanʙooɳ, she does not have children, two of her babies having died in infancy. Then Qumribivī summons Camanʙooɳ. When the woman comes up to her, the old woman seems distraught:

Deep pensiveness - perhaps even anguish - was written all over the face of the old woman who had called her. Covering her forehead with her hand, the old woman was looking at the ground, as if unaware of the coming of Camanʙooɳ, who she had just summoned. After waiting for the motionless old woman to start the conversation, Camanʙooɳ looked at her, asking:

- So, Qumribivī, you called me... What's the matter? Is everything fine?
- When it comes to Xalifa, everything's fine - answered the old woman without removing her hand from the forehead... After a moment of silence she looked at Camanʙooɳ and added:
- But all my mind and desire is with my sons. There has been no news from them. And now, according to my rough count, they should have come back last week... Why haven't they sent a messenger? What's happened? Is it possible they have fallen into the hands of the Shi'is and been martyred? If that is so, which must hardly be, one of their companions would have survived and let us know...[97]

Qumribivī finally tells Camanʙooɳ why she has called her:

Right... I almost forgot, really. In disress caused by my sons' absence, I wasn't able to overlook the work. Yesterday, the old man reproached me saying [with dissatisfaction]: "Over the last few days the weaving work has been all but in regress. If it continues this way, they will finish all the grain from the storage without getting a single job done. From now on, don't give to any of the wives anything more than one loaf of bread! As for Corgul, we'll expel her after she's finished her job."[98]

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[97] Ibid., p. 48.

[98] Ibid., p. 49.

Qumrɪвɪвī tells Camanвooŋ to take over the supervising tasks and summons Xalifa's two youngest wives. As the girls enter, the old woman is looking through the clothes of her sons. The girls have no pleasure in taking to Qumrɪвɪвī, who is trying to make them feel remorseful about their laziness. They pretend not to listen and the old woman tells them to work more diligently if they do not want to taste Xalifa's revenge. She then discharges them; the girls curse Xalifa and Qumrɪвɪвī.

5

With no news from their loved ones, Qumrɪвɪвī, her daughters-in-law, and grandchildren struggle to remain calm. Only Qilic-Xalifa seems unmoved by their prolonged absence:

He had seen and experienced a lot; he had tasted the bitter-sweetness of this world; he had been through many adventures. At times he would take three days to finish a task which normally takes a week, but he had also seen such tasks ‘week's tasks’ taking whole months to accomplish. In any case, whatever he had undertook, sooner or later, he always brought it to a conclusion.

Xalifa is confindent about his sons' success. At last, something happens; Kumuş, one of the grandchildren, runs up to Qumrɪвɪвī to tell her that the watchman - Qanbarbobo - is running towards the raвot. She interprets it as good news and kisses the boy out of joy. Indeed, clouds of dust have been spotted. On hearing the news, Xalifa seems unimpressed and carries on with his prayer. Both Xalifa's sons and Abdurahmon come back with hundreds of sheep and several dozens of slaves.

In the raвot everyone is preparing to celebrate the success. Slaves are put into a pit normally used for keeping cattle. Qanbarbobo takes pity on them and gives them some mouldy bread. A bard (*вaxşī*) sings a song in praise of Qilic-Xalifa and his family and gets Rahimdod's sister, Zebo, as a reward.

6

The day after, Qilic-Xalifa manages to divide the booty smoothly and to keep everyone satisfied. It is time that the enslaved families were separated, which the narrator describes with plaintive words. Since a considerable number of the slaves are Sunnis and subjects of the Afghan ruler, selling them as slaves in Bukhara is illegal. Therefore the victors teach

them a dozen of sentences in Iranian Persian and the basics of the Shi'i faith. The change of identity is complete when the slaves receive their new names (Rahimdod becomes Neqadam). The slave merchants set out to the markets and Qilic-Xalifa retreats to his cell, entrusting his son Quşot with administration of the business. With so many sheep, Quşot needs a shepherd and sends for Turdī-Oσιo, who comes with his two sons to let his bile out. Turdī-Oσιo is angry with Xalifa for expelling him and his family in the middle of winter, which resulted in the death of his wife and daughter. Quşot makes light of this tragedy:

There is no harm in it! The one who is meant to die, dies, and the one who is meant to live on, stays alive.

Turdī-Oσιo struggles to suppress tears and attempts to negotiate terms of employment:

- I promised myself never to serve you again. But where is to find employment someone who, having served one master for 30 years, grew old and decrepit, and got expelled? That is why, after Qanbarвово left, I came back, dragging my sons along. Now, we will serve you honestly and conscienciously, but you, too, do something for us, so we don't starve to death!
- If we are full, you will be full too; if we starve, you will starve as well. Pray that good fortune may not depart from us. Also, do not tell stories like that to my father. He has now “left the worldly things” and “communes with god.” His prayer is effective. The holy men of yore used to say: “Do not seek gold but prayer - isn't prayer gold?” If, god forbid, you offend him, your world will end.
- No, boy, - said Turdī-Oσιo, - I have shared my sorrows with you because I treat you like one of my own children. Of course, I shall not reveal my pain to your father. I know him all too well. While I do not even hope for his intercession, I'm not afraid of his curse; I am afraid that I may insult him. If I do so, no wonder he expells me [again].[99]

Qilic-Xalifa's businesses are prospering again. He is now free to pass his days praying:

He asked “god” to multiply his sheep, give his children a long life, his servants “conscience” and obedience, his slave-merchants a safe journey, and for his slaves the opening of markets and wealthy purchasers...

[99] Ibid., p. 66.

Western Notions and Central Asian Literature

Realism is an elusive concept. Even if one limits the scope of analysis to realism construed as a particular mode of *representation in literature* (which will be the case here), it is necessary to specify what is meant by the term, for there exists no satisfactory definition of 'realism,' 'realist writing,' or 'realist novel.' Admittedly, these notions are problematic not only due to the multiplicity of possible definitions, but also because they have been elaborated by scholars of 'Western' intellectual background, and on the basis of their readings of 'Western' literature. Accordingly, applying such notions to the oeuvre of a Central Asian 'liminal' writer could criticised as 'cultural imperialism,' i.e. forcing foreign, homogenising, and culture-specific concepts on another (literary) culture by disguising them as universal to all mankind.[100] While acknowledging the problematics put forward by postcolonial criticism, I shall continue to use words such as 'novel,' 'socialist,' and 'realism' (as well as Western theoretical discussions of them) not in order to deny Central Asian literatures their singularity, but rather in order to provide a useful point of departure for elucidating their specific and unique characteristics. Undeniably, a certain degree of ideological bias will not be avoided; for this reason, I must content myself with the remarks of one of the first and most assiduous critics of ideological bias in scientific discourse, who once observed: "We have a very strong ideological consciousness of others, but we do not manage to find a kind of speech that would be free from any ideology, because it simply does not exist."[101]

Defining 'Realism'

As Erich Auerbach has authoritatively shown in his *opus famosum*,[102] a tendency towards realist-pose writing (artistic imitation of material reality, nature, social milieux, human emotions, among others) has been present throughout the history of Western literature. However, it was only in post-revolutionary France that the conditions necessary for the

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[100] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). Chakrabarty provides a learned and illuminating critique of the Eurocentrism of much of the scholarship which manifests itself in indiscriminate application of concepts informed by the specifics of (Western) European history to cultures which never shared the historical trajectory of Europe.

[101] Nadine Dormoy Savage, "Rencontre avec Roland Barthes," *The French Review 52*, no. 3 (1979): 432-439.

[102] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

emergence of a specifically *modern* type of realist writing arose.[103] It is this modern realism that I refer to in the title of, and throughout, this chapter.

Auerbach traces the origins of modern realism to the novels of Stendhal and Balzac, in which, for the first time in history, the *everyday* existence of characters of *low* social standing is *problematised*, i.e. treated with all *seriousness*. Such treatment was possible by inscribing the characters and their actions against a specific and unique historical background. Modern realism "organically connects man and history,"[104] and renders clear the connection between the characters' activities, ideas, physique, clothing, etc., on the one hand, and the moral and physical atmosphere which they breathe ("the precisely defined historical and social setting"), on the other.[105] For Auerbach, modern histori(ci)sm and modern realism are but two sides of the same coin.[106]

If Stendhal and Balzac are the founders of modern realism, Auerbach argues, it is with Flaubert that it reaches its mature form. Apart from the tendencies already mentioned, its distinguishing quality is the avoidance of moralising commentary of the author (or the narrator). Narration maintains "objective seriousness" in recounting events, in the belief that "every event ... interprets itself and the persons involved in it far better and more completely than any opinion or judgement appended to it could do."[107] Such objective seriousness, according to Auerbach, "seeks to penetrate to the depths of the passions and entanglements of a human life, but without itself becoming moved, or at least without betraying that it is moved." It has a voice of "a priest, a teacher, or a psychologist" rather than that of an "artist."[108]

As a result, the characters portrayed in the realist vein are neither completely likeable nor completely condemnable, neither tragic nor comic. More often than not, their apparently 'tragic' plight is attributable less to forces truly beyond their control (such as the physical

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[103] Ibid., p. 473.

[104] Ibid., p. 480.

[105] Ibid., p. 473.

[106] It is Auerbach's method of historicist analysis- "an idea that to understand anything it has to be seen both as a unity and in its historical development" - that postcolonial writers such as Chakrabarty would most likely find problematic. Cf. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, pp. 6-16.

[107] Auerbach, *Mimesis,* p. 486.

[108] Ibid., p. 490.

and social milieu they happen to be part of), and more to their own egotism and lack of discernment:

For, privately, each of them has a silly, false world, which cannot be reconciled with the reality of his situation, and so they both miss the possibilities life offers them ... each of the many mediocre people ... has his own world of mediocre and silly stupidity, a world of illusions, habits, instincts, and slogans ... .[109]

Magnifying the fragmentary and the imperfect, a realist work rarely offers an alternative. Susan Suleiman has shown in her study of some extreme cases of the realist novel that while a realist text always invites the reader to make moral judgements, it does not establish in the diegesis "a dualistic value system according to which all characters fall unambiguously into a positive or a negative category."[110] Realism is thus a questioning style, for it "offers partial solutions to complex problems, not definitive answers to fairly simple questions."[111]

Realism in the Story of Qilic-Xalifa

In the Story of Qilic-Xalifa, we see this realist tendency in Ayni's choice of subjects: neither the oppressors nor the oppressed belong to the higher classes, the order of shahs and emirs.[112] As a result, both sides of the 'conflict' inhabit a world of necessity, and not the world of plenty in which Part V of O٦*ulomon* is set. The lifestyles of both families are showed in detail; the prayers of Qilic-Xalifa, the preparation of wool threads and the weaving of carpets by his wives, the woeful living and working conditions of Turdī-Oσo, the garden jobs of Hasan and his family - all are presented as actions requiring some stamina and perseverance, and are recounted with attention and understanding for the craft. These everyday duties are shown not as 'natural' and 'obvious,' but are rather commented on and explained as necessary. Events and characters' actions are told with an acute awareness of the historical conditions of the time: If they want to survive the

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[109] Ibid., p. 489.

[110] Susan R. Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel As a Literary Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 59.

[111] Ibid., pp. 59-60.

[112] Arguably, Qilic-Xalifa (whose titles - *xalifa* and *o*σo - should not be taken as tokens of true nobility) and his family are positioned higher on the social ladder than the family of fruit-pickers from Hirot.

draught themselves, the Turkmen slave-hunters *have to* resort to their cruelties that cause the slaves to 'forget' their former Afghan, Sunni selves, because, *historically speaking*, a treaty between the emirs of Bukhara and Afghanistan forbade the sale of Afghan subjects in Bukharan slave-markets, etc. These actions are problematised and there is some tendency in Ayni's portrayal of characters in the Story to show both sides families as living under tragic and hopeless circumstances of feudalism. No one has heard of the Bolsheviks and class struggle; without even a glimmer of hope on the horizon, the narrator 'has no choice' but to problematise the pitiful condition of men and women under the old regime.

As a result, there are no truly positive characters in the Story. Hasan, whose actions and mental states are given much attention, drowns in his "silly, false world:" his fantasising about fighting ten men on his own causes him to neglect his watchman tasks and (presumably) let the Turkmen pass unnoticed and capture his family. When he spots the Turkmen hats, his imaginary courage is clearly ridiculed. The situation is serious: it is not supposed to cause the reader to laugh at Hasan. Even though it is clear that Hasan has failed his family and neighbours, he is not completely condemnable, as the narrator explains why Hasan acted in this way:

Many children, including Hasan, were brought up fearing Turkmens. When they were naughty or crying, their mothers would tell them: "Keep quiet! - There you go! A Turkman has come! If you don't keep quiet, I'll send you away with the Turkmen." Moreover, the attacks of Turkmens, which happened to his neighbours once or twice every year, only intesified that fear. The calamity of last year terrified Hasan particularly, because it happend directly to his family. That is why, he was undone, when he saw the 10-15 heads wearing black Turkmen hats without any forewarning. Now, he is no longer the head of his family, he has been captured, they will take him to Bukhara, Samarkand or another city and sell him; the women and children will be taken in every direction, scattered all over the world and sold into slavery...[113]

Owing to his upbringing, Hasan is 'doomed' to give up in this moment of truth. The fear of Turkmen enslaves his mind before he even spots the first of the hats. Interestingly, this is the second time Hasan is left completely disarmed, which serves to reiterate the point; Hasan 'mentally' capitulates when he first notices the black shadow while on the watch:

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[113] Ayni, Ƣ*ulomon*, pp. 35-36.

This situation made Hasan tremble; his heart pounded so fast and strong that he could hear his heartbeat; his whole face was covered with sweat.

- What a shame! - he said to himself - I'm lost and unable to do anything! If I alone am lost, damn it - let it be! But give me a moment to warn the children and let them escape...[114]

It could be argued that Ayni's proclivity for explaining the actions and mental states of his characters by reference to their personal histories is attributable not only to the realist posture of his writing, but also to the Stalinist values current at the time of writing. As Hoffmann reminds us, Stalinist worldview preferred "nurture" over "nature," and saw people's daily habits and modes of thinking not as inborn qualities but as products of acculturation.[115] This would help explain Ayni's portrayal of characters who grew in the circumstances of collectivisation as steel-willed and completely devoted to the kolkhoz in Part V. Nevertheless, Hasan is not a tragic hero: true, the world is evil and acting against him, but it is his easily inflating ego, stupidity, and inability to act according to the plan which ultimately compromises his chances of success.

Just as Hasan is not a positive hero, Qilic-Xalifa is not a completely condemnable one. We may dislike him for manipulating his wives and treating them as little more than cheap labour force. The narrator's sympathy is clearly on the side of the wives (note that even the least likeable of them, Qumrɪвɪвī, is depicted in a problematised manner, i.e. as a mother fearing for the lives of her children); however, unlike Hamdam and Qutвija (who could 'repent' and become devoted kolkhozniks), Xalifa has no real alternative; the historical circumastances of feudalism, his nomad lifestyle, the harsh conditions of the steppes, and the unusually long draught all force him, as it were, to send his plundering expeditions. As a result the dualistic value system that is such a prominent feature of Part V is absent from the Story of Qilic-Xalifa.

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[114] Ibid., pp. 31-32.

[115] Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, p. 45.

The Referential Illusion

The unquestionable staple of modern realism is what Roland Barthes called the "referential illusion." This basic device works on the inevitable presence in a narrative of objects "neither incongruous nor significant," elements which do not move the narrative forward, but which do not contradict the narrative flow in any way either. "Superfluous" in relation to structure, these elements (most often of descriptive nature) do not have any easily discernible symbolic meaning, do not create an "atmosphere," and do not serve the role that physical description had traditionally been assigned in Western tradition, i.e. that of expressing the 'beautiful.' In contrast to historiography where every fact is essentially relevant and noteworthy, in fiction such elements are "scandalous" because, by definition, their apparent signifieds do not 'really' exist:

[E]liminated from the realist speech-act as a signified of denotation, the "real" returns to it as a signified of connotation; for just when these details are reputed to *denote* the real directly, all that they do - without saying so - is to *signify* it; Flaubert's barometer, Michelet's little door finally say nothing but this: *we are the real*; it is the category of "the real" (and not its contingent contents) which is then signified; in other words, the very absence of the signified ... becomes the very signifier of realism: the *reality effect* is produced, the basis of that unavowed verisimilitude which forms the aesthetic of all the standard works of modernity.[116]

What Barthes does not spell out (and what is, however, inferable from his analysis) is that the "insignificant" elements of description are "directed to the mimetic imagination of the reader, to his memory-pictures of similar persons and similar milieux which he may have seen;"[117] it follows that, in order to be effective, the referential illusion needs a competent reader. Thus, for example, Flauber's *Madame Bovary* was written *primarily* for an audience which must have remembered the days of the July Monarchy, which is the reality represented in the novel; hence, most if not all of the intended readers must have been familiar with the tiny details comprising the referential illusion, and therefore competent to decode it.

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[116] Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 148.

[117] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p .471.

The situation is very different in novels which purport to represent realities that could not have been experienced by even the oldest of the intended readers. This is the case with Ayni's Oʻ*ulomon*, which, published in 1935, claims to represent the reality of more than one hundred years of Central Asian history. Incapable of verifying the accuracy of representation in the earliest chapters of the book, the intended reader (a contemporary of Ayni) was dependent on 'second-hand' knowledge acquired from sources other than the novel itself, or on the narrator's explanatory commentary. In the latter case, realist fiction manages to uphold its claim on the accuracy of its representation of the past by hiding "its nature as poetic discourse (where the only pertinent categories are those of the readable and the unreadable ...), so as to assimilate itself to discourses in which the relevant categories are those of the successful and the unsuccessful ..., the true and the false, the reproducible and the nonreproducible, the verifiable and the nonverifiable."[118] In other words, the narrator of a work of fiction adopts a voice that is more appropriate for a work of non-fiction: Such pseudo-analytical discourse allows the narrator to 'tame' the 'strangeness' of represented reality and so to leave the reader feel 'knowledgeable' about it rather than perplexed by it.[119]

It is another question why the 'non-fictionalising' voice should have such an effect on the reader in the first place. As de Bruijn reminds us, until the modern times, the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, the natural and the supernatural, in Persian lettres were porous.[120] However, following the Russian conquest of 1864, the historical consciousness informing the epistemology of Central Asian literatures began to change: The processes of modernisation, including secularisation and the scientification of knowledge, played themselves out in the new cultural institutions of the late imperial period - the *maktab-i uṣūl-i jadīd* and journalism.[121] Thus, for instance, historical articles (perforce, non-fiction pieces), were published regularly in the *Turkistan Wilayatining Gazeti* ("Turkestan

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[118] Robin, *Socialist Realism*, p. 248.

[119] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 209.

[120] *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, s.v. "FICTION, i: TRADITIONAL FORMS" by J.T.P de Bruijn, accessed on 30 July 2015, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/fiction-i-traditional.

[121] A very useful discussion of the processes of modernisation in the context of the emergence of realist prose writing in Central Asia can be found in Adeeb Khalid, "The Emergence of a Modern Central Asian Historical Consciousness," in *Historiography of Imperial Russia: The Profession and Writing of History in a Multinational State*, ed. Thomas Sanders (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999); and Jo-Ann Gross, "Historical Memory, Cultural Identity, and Change: Mirza ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Sami's Representation of the Russian Conquest of Bukhara," in *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples 1700-1917*, ed. Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

Gazette") while its long-standing editor Russian orientalist Nikolaj Ostroumov is, curiously, mentioned in Ayni's Ӯлulomon,[122] which suggests that Ayni was well-familiar with his writings. It is beyond any doubt that Ayni was a participant in this great change of consciouness and, through the many secular journals circulating in Central Asia at the time, familiarised with examples of Western, Ottoman, and Iranian realist prose.[123] Thus, it is no wonder that some of the features of realist writing elaborated above should have survived in Ayni's works even after the great Soviet project of socialist realist literature was launched in 1932.

Ayni makes frequent use of the referential illusion throughout the book, albeit his liking for this device diminishes in the post-October chapters, to the extent that in Part V it is virtually absent. The first paragraphs of Part I (just as the first paragraphs of Parts II and III[124]) show how skilfully Ayni operates this device, interweaving it with confident, yet unimposing voice of an expert:

A vast barren waste, a waterless desert. The only sources of water in this endless desert are deep wells dug every one or two parsangs apart. Native to this desert are travelling sand dunes and swaying desert plants - saltwort, camel-thorn, capers, *kavora*, and mugwort. Here and there, one can notice saxaul thickets, which bring to mind the sorry sight of burnt groves. Clay-brick domes and watchtowers, scattered every two to four parsangs apart, were the familiar picture of the Turkmen civilisation of the day.[125]

The present tense used in all but last sentence, reinforces the reality effect: Ayni virtually places the desert's expanse before the readers eyes, pointing out various features of the landscape. As far as the storyline is concerned, the list of desert plants is superfluous, as is the information about the intervals at which the watchtowers were built. What they really connote is the category of the real and, by the same token, the very expertise and trustworthiness of the narrator ('someone who knows such details must know the situation well'). The last sentence makes it clear that the story takes place in a past so distant that

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[122] *çапові Astromof* see Ayni, Ӯлulomon, p. 268.

[123] Naby, "Transitional Central Asian Literature," p. 230.

[124] Intererstingly, this tendency to open start each new Part of the novel with this device is limited to the pre-1917 Parts. I am not using the word "device" in the negative sense; Ayni's intention may well have been to tell, according to his best knowledge, what everyday life was like in the Turkmen steppes early nineteenth-century, rather than to 'fool' his readers.

[125] Ayni, Ӯлulomon, p. 9.

the narrator saw it fit to tell the reader that what he has recounted was precisely *the* way the Turkmen desert looked like back in the day. Finally, the comparison the narrator makes en passant between the saxaul thickets at hand and the burnt groves, introduces a poetic element to the otherwise dry and matter-of-fact description. The next paragraphs are, however, completely devoid of 'literariness;' instead, the narrator continues to recount 'superfluous' details, explaining their meaning in an informative, pseudo-analytical vein:

> Somewhere in this waste there was a large inn wrapped in seven walls made of wattle and daub. The inn must have been erected quite recently, as the blood of animals killed during construction was still visible. On the top of the inn's gate, skulls of a camel and a ram had been placed; in each of the two black jugs embellished with only perfunctory effort and placed next to the skulls a bunch of flowers had been placed. These objects were meant to protect the building against the evil eye: the building was clearly the finest erection of the desert ...
>
> In the centre of the inn, opposite the sheepfold, several black houses had been built one next to another. Outside the houses, small children were spinning combed camel hair into yarns with the aid of spindles. On one side of the houses, there were firepits with cauldrons. The cauldrons served as vitriol bath in which a middle-aged Turkmen woman was boiling the camel hair. Near the firepits there were several basins in which yellow, red, pink, violet, dark and light blue, green and black dyes had been prepared for dying camel hair which has been previously boiled in vitriol and dried.

The voice of an ethnographer reveals the significance the skulls, blood, and flowers, and casts some doubt on the reasonableness of the inhabitants' fears. In the other paragraph, the technical details of how camel hair used to be dyed and prepared for weaving only reinforce the impression of the narrator's expertise. Clearly, we are reading a serious text, devoid of fancy, perhaps even secular.

The Poetic Effect

As Robin has argued, a realist text has to maintain a volatile equilibrium between the referential illusion (esp. descriptions, scientific discourses), the thesis effect (the inscription of social discourse and the concomitant need on the reader's part to make moral judgements), and the "text effect," i.e. its poetic function ("literariness") in the Jakobsonian sense.[126] In other words, the aesthetic success of a realist work is compromised not only by the excess of 'raw,' matter-of-fact description and obvious ideological bias, but also by failing to employ specifically *literary* devices which would distinguish it from such utilitarian

[126] Robin, *Socialist Realism*, pp. 247-48.

‘genres’ as friendly chat, scientific treaty, or informative description of property. This literariness, according to Jacobson, is not a given constant, but depends on the cultural conditions in which the work of literature is created. Playing on the effect of defamiliarisation (*ostranenie*), a literary text renders the known in a new, unusual way, so as to perplex the reader, slow down understanding, open up new perspectives on the problem: in a word, to invite a more serious and critical examination of represented reality.[127]

This mixture of the three elements of realist writing is visible in a passage in which Ayni recounts the separation of families before they are dispatched to slave markets. Cruel though the actions of Turkmen appear, the narrator is initially unmoved, and explains their motives in an “objectively serious” voice of an expert:

It was necessary to divide [them] so that a wife does not fall into the hands of the same person as her husband, or any other relative. That is because slaves who are (emotionally) attached to anyone else than their master go for low prices, to the extend that the price of a woman who ends up in the same hands as her husband is as good as nothing. For making use of the feminine qualities of such woman is impossible ... .[128]

Listening to the cries and moans, the "victors" were laughing somewhat mockingly. Finally, it was time to put an end to this "spectacle." It was necessary to choke off the complaints and lamentations once and for all, for if a similar situation would happen at the market, the more tenderhearted would give up bidding for slaves, thus reducing the competition and making the prices plummet. Therefore they started cleaning up the "mourning assembly" by means of terror.[129]

The reader can now see the wider picture: the actions of the Turkmen are not cruel for the sake of cruelty; they are necessary if the slaves are to be sold at all. It is, therefore, not cruelty that motivates the Turkmen, but material gain. Nevertheless, in the next paragraphs, the narrator departs from his matter-of-fact tone:

Be it as it may, everything was executed according to the plan. The cries and moans of wives separated from their husbands, the crying of small children taken away from their parents,

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[127] Anna Burzyńska, and Paweł Markowski, *Teorie literatury XX wieku: Podręcznik* (Cracow: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 2006), p. 227.

[128] Ayni, Ƣ*ulomon*, p. 58.

[129] Ibid, p. 60.

the sighs of despair of parents who had lost their children; all that reached the skies and mixed with clouds. Eyes were flowing not tears, but blood; throats were breathing not sighs but fire.

This situation resembled the lambing time of karakul sheep, when lambs' heads were be pulled away from their mothers. The only difference here was that this calamity was happening not to dumb and unreasoning animals, which will forget it in an hour, which, today or tomorrow, will be killed anyway; this was happening to children of Adam, who were fully cognisant and aware, who had rendered considerable services cultivating the earth and bringing general comfort, who in their origin were no different to their oppressors.

Children got their ears twisted and cut; adults got their backs, thighs, and feet whipped. This violence dried the eyes and shut the throats. The slaves got it explained in a convincing manner that if they ever make a sound about it again, their tongues would be ripped out. Moreover, the slaves were individually reminded that, should they ever meet their relatives again, they must pretend to be strangers.[130]

In the first paragraph, Ayni uses classical cliches to describe the extremities of the emotional state of the slaves: Fire is traditionally associated with sighs of distress, while eyes are often said to pour blood rather than tears.[131] In the second paragraph, Ayni elaborates on the theme of distress and departs from the classical imagery; now, he shows it in a defamiliarised way, by comparing human suffering to that of animals. Thus, Ayni suggests that the slaves have lost their human dignity, which only compounds the emotive aspect of the passage. It is also here that Ayni marks clearly the literariness of his own text, only to return in the third paragraph, to his previous ‘sober’ and emotionally detached mode of narration.

[130] Ibid, p. 58.

[131] R. Zipoli, “Poetric Imagery,” in *General Introduction to Persian Literature*, ed. J.T.P. de Bruijn (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), p. 198.

CONCLUSION

If anything emerges from this study, it is that Ayni's Ƣ*ulomon* is more complex a narrative than the average Russian socialist realist novel, as analysed in the most recent Western scholarship. On the one hand, our analysis of Part V has shown that the travesties Ayni makes of the historical consciousness of the traditional epic, the classical Persian elaborations on theme of love, and the cliches associated with classical Persian ideals of feminine beauty, all sanction calling Ƣ*ulomon* a novel, at least as far as Bakhtin's definition of the genre is concerned. The specific content of these parodies has been shown to be motivated by the two major subtexts of Part V: the collectivisation of agriculture in Central Asia with its task of achieving autarky in cotton supplies, and the Soviet effort to liberate the Central Asian woman (the hujum). It is in this sense that Ayni managed to write a socialist novel, i.e. one praising the successes of the policies of the socialist state. Moreover, we have observed that Ayni's involvement in the institutions of Soviet literature, his frequent adulatory mention of Stalin, and the inscription of social discourse dictated by the Party in Pravda articles, all show Ayni as a party-minded literatus committed to representing socialism in literature. These socialist elements notwithstanding, Ƣ*ulomon* does not meet the definitions of socialist realism proposed by Clark and Robin. The realist inclination of the author manifested in the Story of Qilic-Xalifa, while not permitting us to label the whole work a 'realist novel,' shows that Ayni's writing escapes total 'schematisation.' This, in turn, makes us less ready to conflate socialist realism, or more generally Soviet literature of the 1930's, with the highly schematised Russian production novel, and invites a further study of socialist realism in the literatures of the Soviet minority nationalities.

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