HARMONY OF NATURE AND IMAGE: DESCRIPTIVENESS AND SYMBOLISM IN THE STORIES OF A. QAHHOR AND J. LONDON

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Abstract. This article examines the interaction of nature and character depiction in the novellas of Abdulla Qahhor and Jack London, two prominent representatives of Uzbek and American realism. The study emphasizes that natural settings are not merely background elements but an integral part of constructing the characters' inner world and social struggles. In Qahhor's works, nature often reflects the hardships of everyday life, signifying social inequality and the resilience of ordinary people under Soviet conditions. By contrast, in London vivid landscapes of the wilderness and frontier life are used to emphasize human endurance, survival instincts, and the tension between human beings and the environment. By comparing the symbolic and descriptive roles of nature in both traditions, the article reveals commonalities and differences shaped by cultural heritage and historical experience. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of realism's aesthetic strategy in Eastern and Western literatures.

Introduction. In literature, nature has always been more than a mere backdrop; it often functions as an aesthetic and symbolic force that shapes narrative meaning and deepens the reader's perception of characters. From ancient epics to modern prose, natural elements such as mountains, rivers, forests, and changing seasons are closely tied to human experience, reflecting emotions,

conflicts, and philosophical questions. The symbolic role of nature is especially significant in realist traditions, where the environment not only situates characters in a recognizable world but also unveils their inner states and social conditions. Thus, exploring the descriptive and symbolic dimensions of nature in literature opens a window onto how writers interpret the relationship between the individual and the surrounding world.

Abdulla Qahhor, a leading figure of Uzbek literature, skillfully uses nature to reflect the struggles and resilience of ordinary people in Soviet society. His short stories often present landscapes, climate, and seasons as mirrors of human destiny. For Qahhor, nature frequently signifies endurance, poverty, and the hardships of rural life, while at the same time underscoring moral strength and the quiet dignity of his characters. The depiction of nature in his works resonates with the broader aesthetics of Uzbek realism, in which environment is inseparable from the spiritual and cultural life of society. Jack London, one of America's most influential realists, similarly places nature at the center of his artistic vision. In his stories—especially those set during the Klondike Gold Rush—nature appears as an immense, unashamed, and often hostile force that tests human courage and survival. London's characters are frequently defined by their confrontations with snow, wilderness, and wild beasts, which serve as both literal and symbolic trials. His use of natural description emphasizes themes of struggle, endurance, and the fragile boundary between civilization and the wild.

A comparative study of Qahhor and London is timely, because it shows how two writers from distinct cultural and historical backgrounds approach nature as a decisive narrative instrument. By reading their works side by side, we can see how nature embodies social values, cultural specificity, and existential questions, while also serving as a bridge between the external world and human inner experience. The aim of this study is to analyze the descriptive and symbolic

functions of nature in Qahhor's and London's stories, highlighting commonalities and differences between Eastern and Western realist traditions.

In the works of both Jack London and Abdulla Qahhor, nature plays a decisive role not only in shaping the external environment but also the psychological and moral dimensions of their characters. Far from being a passive background, natural elements serve as trials, reflections, and even symbolic mirrors of human destiny. By observing how these two realist writers depict the interaction between persons and their surroundings, we can better grasp how literature conveys the tension between human resilience and vulnerability. In London's celebrated story "To Build a Fire," nature functions as an unforgiving force that determines the hero's fate. The frozen Yukon wilderness—through extreme cold and merciless indifference—becomes a court of life or death. The hero's struggle to survive by building a fire is more than a physical battle; it reflects human arrogance in underestimating the power of nature. London uses snow, ice, and biting wind not only to create atmosphere but to shape the central character; his downfall is sealed by his failure to respect natural laws. Likewise, in "The Call of the Wild," nature transforms a domesticated dog into a primordial and powerful being. The harsh conditions of the Klondike strip away layers of civilization and compel Buck to rediscover his instincts and claim leadership in the wild. Here, nature is not only a test of endurance but a means of forming a new identity based on instinct and strength.

Qahhor approaches nature differently, binding it to the psychological depth and social milieu of his characters. In "Anor" (*Pomegranate*), natural imagery emphasizes themes of poverty and sacrifice. The fruit itself—with its vivid color and life-giving quality—signifies both scarcity and the hope of joy, reflecting the struggle of ordinary people to maintain dignity amid hardship. In "O'g'ri" (*The Thief*), night and darkness play symbolic roles, shaping an atmosphere of fear and

hopelessness surrounding the protagonist. Here, natural elements become part of the character's inner world, mirroring moral conflict and the social injustice of Soviet society. Another example appears in "Sinchalak," where Qahhor uses rural landscapes and seasonal images to depict the simplicity and steadiness of peasant life. Nature's cycles are closely bound to the rhythm of human existence, creating not only a material backdrop but a foundation for understanding the resilience of ordinary people. In both writers' works, the bond between character and nature serves an important artistic purpose. For London, nature is a relentless, almost Darwinian force that demands adaptation or brings ruin. For Qahhor, it is a subtle yet powerful mirror of the human spirit and social conditions. Together they reveal how nature shapes identity, uncovering universal struggles of survival, morality, and dignity across cultures.

Although realism is often associated with faithful, detailed depictions of everyday life, both Western and Eastern realist traditions frequently use symbolism as a potent artistic device. Realism does not exclude symbols; rather, it grounds them in lived experience and culturally shared meanings. For Jack London, writing in early-twentieth-century America, symbols are drawn primarily from nature and resonate with a "Darwinian philosophy" of survival of the fittest. For Abdulla Qahhor, working in mid-twentieth-century Soviet Uzbekistan, nature-rooted symbols are tightly linked to social issues, national identity, and the collective memory of his people. By analyzing the symbolic elements in their works, we uncover not only artistic strategies but also the cultural foundations that shape the meaning of nature in literature.

Jack London's fiction is inseparable from his symbolic use of nature. The natural environment is more than a backdrop; it embodies struggle, fate, and the philosophical essence of life. Having lived through California's Gold Rush culture

and spent time in the Yukon, London viewed nature as the ultimate testing ground of the human spirit.

1. Nature as a symbol of struggle and survival. In "To Build a Fire," the frozen wilderness signifies the universe's indifference to human existence. The cold is not merely a physical state—it is a metaphor for nature's power and the futility of human arrogance. The hero's failure to survive conveys a broader truth: humanity is insignificant before natural law. Here London fuses Darwinian thought with artistic narrative: survival belongs not to the proud but to the adaptable.

In "The Call of the Wild," nature turns the domestic dog Buck into a symbol of primal instinct and leadership. The wild does not merely shape him; it reveals the original essence buried beneath layers of human civilization. Buck's journey is both literal and symbolic—a rediscovery of instinctive strength and the triumph of natural law over artificial order. This reflects Western fascination with individualism and the search for authenticity in a rapidly industrializing society.

London's symbols are not only literary but ideological. His stories often reflect Darwinian principles: the strong survive, the weak perish. This worldview symbolically mirrors early-twentieth-century capitalist America, where competition, industrial progress, and expansionism defined social life. Thus his symbolic use of nature encapsulates both the beauty and cruelty of modern existence.

Unlike London's universal, Darwinian symbolism, Abdulla Qahhor uses natural elements as culturally rooted symbols. His works often reflect the hardships of ordinary Uzbeks under Soviet rule, where literature was expected to fulfill a "social order." Despite censorship, Qahhor infused his stories with symbols of deep social and national significance.

Nature as a symbol of national values. In “Anor,” the fruit is more than food—it signifies sacrifice, dignity, and the resilience of poor families. Its vivid color expresses both vitality and deprivation, embodying the paradox of beauty in hardship. For Uzbek readers the pomegranate also carries cultural associations of fertility, abundance, and family honor, linking personal struggles to collective cultural memory.

In “O‘g‘ri,” Qahhor uses night, darkness, and weather not merely to set a scene but to mirror the hero’s moral conflict. Nature reflects social injustice, where poverty drives people to desperate acts. Unlike London’s nature, which tests survival in a biological sense, Qahhor’s symbolic nature emphasizes the social struggle of ordinary people under a rigid system.

In “Sinchalak,” rural landscapes and seasonal cycles signify the steadiness and simplicity of village life. Nature becomes a reminder of national identity, cultural tradition, and communal resilience against social inequality and political control. For Qahhor, natural symbols function as cultural memory—signs of continuity amid rapid social change.

Comparative symbolism. Placing London and Qahhor side by side, we see that both use natural symbols, but their cultural roots differ.

Symbolic focus: Universal vs. social.

London: nature signifies universal laws of struggle, survival, and instinct. The focus falls on the individual confronting the cosmos.

Qahhor: nature signifies social problems, moral struggles, and national identity. The focus falls on the individual within a society shaped by collective values and historical memory.

2. Philosophical foundations

London is influenced by Darwinism, social Darwinism, and American individualism. His symbols reflect the inevitability of natural law and the difficulty of survival in a capitalist society.

Qahhor writes under Soviet censorship and within Uzbek cultural heritage. Even when hidden beneath realism, his symbols carry layers of social critique and reflect moral concern for justice, equality, and dignity.

3. The function of symbolism

In **London,** symbolism emphasizes the **existential confrontation** between human beings and nature.

In **Qahhor,** symbolism reveals **social contradictions** in everyday life and the durability of cultural values.

London's symbolic use of nature is rooted in American cultural and historical contexts:

– Gold Rush culture, with its focus on risk, adventure, and the frontier;

– Industrial capitalism, where competition mirrored the natural "struggle for life";

– Darwinian science, which shaped intellectual thought on progress and survival;

– Romanticism and naturalism, literary movements that viewed nature as both beautiful and destructive.

Qahhor's symbolic system arises from Uzbek cultural and historical conditions:

– Rural traditions in which natural cycles ordered daily life and carried symbolic meanings (e.g., pomegranate = abundance, spring = renewal);

– Soviet censorship, which forced writers to encode critique through indirect signs;

– Islamic and Eastern symbolism, where fruits, gardens, and seasons often bear moral and spiritual significance;

– Uzbek literary heritage (from Navoi to Qodiriy), emphasizing relations among person, society, and moral responsibility.

Artistic impact of symbolism

Symbolic use of nature enriches both writers' works in several ways:

1. **Deepening characterization**—nature is not passive; it helps shape or reflect the protagonists' inner life.
2. **Creating cultural resonance**—symbols draw meaning from shared cultural memory, bringing stories closer to their intended audiences.
3. **Enriching realism**—though realism depicts life truthfully, symbolism adds interpretive layers that broaden meaning.
4. **Cross-cultural universality**—despite differences, both writers show how nature can symbolize universal struggles—survival, dignity, or justice.

Symbolism in the works of Jack London and Abdulla Qahhor reveals nature's powerful role in shaping individual characters and broader cultural meanings. For London, nature signifies universal laws of struggle and survival, deeply connected with Darwinian thought and American individualism. For Qahhor, nature signifies social struggle, cultural memory, and national values within Soviet society. Though they arise from distinct traditions, both writers demonstrate that realism is not confined to surface detail; it also relies on symbols that link personal experience to universal and cultural truths. Through this comparative analysis, we see that when used symbolically, nature becomes a bridge between literature and life—embracing not only the external world but also humanity's deepest aspirations, fears, and values across East and West.

The role of nature in literary realism differs markedly between Eastern and Western traditions, reflecting not only stylistic preferences but also cultural and philosophical perspectives on the relation between humanity and the world. Although Abdulla Qahhor and Jack London are divided by geography and

ideology, they exemplify these tendencies by using nature as both symbolic and structural elements in storytelling. In Eastern realism—particularly Uzbek literature—nature often serves as a mirror of the inner world and social milieu. Qahhor's stories show that natural imagery does not merely reflect environment; it unveils the moral and emotional struggles of characters. For example, in "Anor," the pomegranate is both a material object and a symbol of dignity, sacrifice, and family patience, reflecting the wider community's resilience in difficult circumstances. Similarly, the rural landscapes in "Sinchalak" embody communal memory and cultural rootedness. Here nature is not an external force threatening survival but a canvas upon which social and psychological realities are projected. In this sense, Eastern realism considers nature intimately bound to human feelings, cultural traditions, and social values.

Conversely, in Western realism, particularly London's works, nature often appears as an external, vast force that individuals must struggle against. In "To Build a Fire," the frozen wilderness becomes a test of human survival, signifying the hard indifference of the universe. In "The Call of the Wild," the wilderness transforms the protagonist into his primordial self, emphasizing Darwinian notions of adaptation and instinct. Thus Western realism positions nature as an autonomous entity—greater than human society—against which individuals measure their strength, endurance, and capacity to survive.

Conclusion. This is a proving ground, a reminder of human frailty, and a metaphor for life's existential struggle. Despite these differences, there are important similarities as well. Both traditions use nature not merely descriptively but symbolically. Both recognize that human experience cannot be fully understood without reference to the natural environment. However, while Eastern writers like Qahhor use nature to emphasize social relations and inner life, Western writers like London use it to stress individual struggle and the universal

laws of existence. In sum, a comparative analysis of Eastern and Western traditions shows that nature is a shared artistic device but is shaped by cultural worldviews: the East sees it as a mirror of society and self, while the West sees it as a stage for human trial and survival.

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