COGNITIVE POETICS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MYSTICAL REALISM IN BRITISH AND UZBEK LITERATURE

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Abstract

This article examines psychological and mystical realism in British and Uzbek literature through the lens of cognitive literary studies. Moving beyond descriptive interpretations of interiority and spirituality, the study argues that both modes operate as structured simulations of consciousness. Drawing on cognitive narratology, Theory of Mind, and narrative simulation theory, the paper demonstrates how selected British and Uzbek prose texts construct inner speech, reconstructive memory, and moments of intensified perception. The analysis reveals that psychological and mystical realism share underlying cognitive mechanisms, while cultural traditions shape their ethical and symbolic configurations. The study contributes to comparative literary scholarship by introducing a cognitive framework to analyze cross-cultural representations of inner experience.

Keywords: cognitive narratology, psychological realism, mystical realism, Theory of Mind, comparative literature

Introduction

Psychological realism has traditionally been associated with the detailed portrayal of a character's inner life, while mystical realism is often interpreted as the representation of transcendental or spiritual experiences. However, recent developments in cognitive literary studies suggest that both modes may be understood as structured simulations of mental processes rather than merely thematic categories (Herman, 2013; Palmer, 2004). From this perspective, literary narratives model consciousness, memory, and perception in ways that

activate readers' cognitive capacities. British prose, particularly in the twentieth century, demonstrates a sustained preoccupation with interior consciousness, irony, and moral hesitation. Uzbek prose, shaped by its cultural and ethical frameworks, likewise foregrounds introspection, memory, and moments of intuitive insight. Despite these parallels, comparative scholarship rarely situates these traditions within a unified cognitive framework.

This article aims to investigate how psychological and mystical realism function as cognitive representations of inner experience in British and Uzbek prose. It addresses three questions:

1.   How do narratives construct simulations of consciousness?

2.   What cognitive mechanisms underlie mystical or intensified perception?

3.   How do cultural contexts influence these representations?

The central argument is that both psychological and mystical realism rely on similar cognitive structures, particularly Theory of Mind engagement and narrative simulation while differing in ethical orientation and symbolic articulation.

Literature Review

Cognitive literary studies have significantly reshaped approaches to narrative analysis. Zunshine (2006) argues that fiction capitalizes on readers' Theory of Mind abilities by presenting layered mental states that require inference and interpretation. Palmer (2004) similarly proposes that novels are structured around the representation of fictional minds, which readers actively construct through contextual cues. Herman (2013) further emphasizes that narratives function as "storyworlds" that model cognitive environments.

Psychological realism, historically associated with interior monologue and introspection, has been examined through psychoanalytic and narratological lenses. However, its cognitive dimension how narrative techniques simulate thought processes has gained attention only in recent decades. Narrative simulation theory suggests that readers

mentally rehearse experiences presented in fiction, thereby engaging in ethical and emotional modeling (Ryan, 2001).

Mystical realism, often conflated with supernaturalism, has also been reconsidered. Scholars argue that mystical experience in literature frequently represents heightened perception, symbolic recognition, or altered attention rather than literal transcendence (Taves, 2009). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrate that metaphor structures human cognition, suggesting that mystical moments may arise from intensified conceptual mapping rather than doctrinal belief.

In Uzbek literary criticism, psychological depth and spiritual reflection have been widely acknowledged. Yet systematic integration of cognitive theory into analyses of Uzbek prose remains limited. A comparative cognitive approach therefore addresses a significant methodological gap.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative comparative method grounded in cognitive narratology. It integrates close textual analysis with theoretical frameworks drawn from Theory of Mind, narrative simulation, and cognitive poetics.

The analytical focus centers on three mechanisms:

- Representation of inner speech and mental deliberation;
- Reconstructive memory and narrative temporality;
- Intensified perception and moments of mystical cognition.

Selected British and Uzbek prose texts were examined for narrative structures that foreground interior consciousness and transformative perception. The analysis does not treat mysticism as theological doctrine but as a cognitive phenomenon characterized by heightened awareness.

Results

In both traditions, inner speech functions as structured mental simulation. British prose frequently employs indirect discourse and irony to present fragmented consciousness. Such techniques require readers to infer coherence among competing mental states, thereby activating Theory of Mind processes (Zunshine, 2006). Uzbek prose

often situates inner speech within communal or ethical contexts. Characters reflect upon responsibility, memory, and moral duty. Although stylistically different, these narratives similarly prompt readers to reconstruct layered consciousness. In both cases, psychological realism emerges as a system of cues guiding mental modeling.

Memory in psychological realism is rarely presented as static recall. Instead, it appears as dynamic reconstruction shaping identity. Cognitive psychology emphasizes that memory is reconstructive rather than reproductive (Herman, 2013). Literary narratives mirror this process by depicting characters who reinterpret past events in light of present concerns. In British prose, memory frequently destabilizes narrative certainty, introducing ambiguity. Uzbek prose often frames memory as ethical continuity, linking past experience to communal values. Despite cultural differences, both traditions employ memory as cognitive restructuring of the self.

Moments of mystical realism are characterized by heightened perception, symbolic recognition, and temporal suspension. Rather than supernatural intervention, these episodes reflect intensified cognitive attention. Narrative pacing often slows, sensory detail increases, and metaphorical associations multiply. Cognitive linguistics explains such phenomena through conceptual metaphor and pattern recognition (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Characters perceive connections that transform ordinary experience into meaningful insight. In British prose, mystical perception may appear ironic or ambiguous. In Uzbek prose, it often aligns with moral clarity and communal resonance. In both cases, the underlying mechanism is cognitive intensification.

Discussion

The findings suggest that psychological and mystical realism share foundational cognitive structures. Both rely on the reader's capacity to attribute mental states, simulate alternative scenarios, and interpret symbolic cues. Psychological realism foregrounds reflective consciousness, while mystical realism amplifies perceptual and interpretive processes.

Cultural context shapes the ethical orientation of these simulations. British prose tends toward irony and epistemological uncertainty, whereas Uzbek prose emphasizes

moral coherence and collective responsibility. However, these differences operate within a shared cognitive architecture.

This comparative approach demonstrates that cognitive literary studies can bridge distinct literary traditions by focusing on universal mechanisms of mental representation.

Conclusion

Psychological and mystical realism in British and Uzbek prose can be reconceptualized as cognitive simulations of consciousness and perception. By applying cognitive narratology and Theory of Mind frameworks, this study reveals that both traditions construct structured models of inner experience. While cultural frameworks influence ethical and symbolic dimensions, the underlying mechanisms of mental modeling remain comparable.

The research contributes to expanding cognitive literary studies into comparative contexts and highlights the relevance of cognitive approaches for understanding cross-cultural representations of inner life. Future research may incorporate reader-response experiments or interdisciplinary dialogue with cognitive psychology to further substantiate these findings.

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