

RESISTANCE AND IDENTITY IN LANGSTON HUGHES'S PROSE: A COMPARATIVE INSIGHT WITH UZBEK JADID NARRATIVES

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Introduction:

The twentieth century witnessed the emergence of various resistance movements around the globe, each responding to unique forms of oppression—colonial, racial, political, and cultural. Among the most powerful tools used in these movements was literature, which served not only as a means of personal expression but also as a vehicle for social commentary, political mobilization, and cultural preservation. Langston Hughes, an iconic figure of the Harlem Renaissance, and the Uzbek Jadid writers such as Abdurauf Fitrat and Abdulhamid Cho'lpon, although from vastly different sociopolitical contexts, shared similar literary objectives: to resist systemic oppression and to forge a collective cultural identity through prose and poetry.

Langston Hughes's literary work is well-known for capturing the emotional depth, cultural richness, and struggles of African Americans in a segregated United States. Meanwhile, the Jadid movement in Central Asia used literature to awaken national consciousness under Tsarist and later Soviet domination. This paper aims to explore how Langston Hughes's prose articulates resistance and identity, and how his work resonates with that of Uzbek Jadid writers, forming a cross-cultural literary dialogue on resistance.

Methods:

This study adopts a **comparative literary analysis** approach, focusing on selected prose works by Langston Hughes—particularly his short stories in *The Ways of White Folks*—and Jadid writers such as Fitrat's *Munozara* and *Hind Sayohati*, and Cho'lpon's *Kecha va Kunduz*. These texts are examined for their literary devices, socio-political context, and ideological content.

The analysis involves:

- **Close reading** of key texts to identify themes related to identity, resistance, and social critique.
- **Historical contextualization**, including the impact of American segregation laws and Russian imperial/Soviet control over Turkestan.
- **Thematic comparison**, identifying convergences and divergences in the authors' literary strategies and objectives.

Both primary and secondary sources, including literary criticism, historical analysis, and scholarly articles, were consulted to support the analysis.

Results:

The comparative analysis reveals several significant **thematic and structural similarities** between Langston Hughes's and Jadid prose:

1. Theme of Cultural Resistance:

In Hughes's *The Blues I'm Playing*, the protagonist—a young Black pianist—resists the white patron's attempt to control her musical expression. This resistance to artistic colonization mirrors the Jadid writers' efforts to preserve indigenous culture in the face of Russification and Soviet ideological dominance. Fitrat's characters often question imposed educational and religious systems, seeking return to cultural authenticity.

2. Narratives of Identity Struggle:

Hughes's characters often face internal conflicts stemming from their social status, racial identity, and personal dignity. In *Passing*, he addresses the issue of racial passing, where a light-skinned Black man poses as white to escape discrimination, but at the cost of his true identity. Similarly, in *Kecha va Kunduz*, Cho'lpon presents a protagonist torn between traditional values and modern reforms, symbolizing the identity crisis under colonial rule.

3. Use of Irony and Satire:

Hughes often uses irony to expose the hypocrisy of white liberalism. For instance, in *Red-Headed Baby*, the racial tension is masked by seemingly mundane interactions, but the underlying message critiques systemic racism. Likewise, Fitrat's dialogues in *Munozara* critique conservative clerics through witty and ironic arguments, promoting progressive reform.

4. Voice of the Marginalized:

Both Hughes and the Jadid writers give voice to the voiceless. Hughes brings forward the perspective of the working-class African Americans, often ignored in mainstream literature. The Jadids, particularly Cho'lpon, focus on rural, uneducated Muslims, especially women, highlighting their struggles under both colonial rule and traditional patriarchy.

5. Educational and Political Empowerment:

The Jadid writers frequently emphasized education as a means to national revival. Fitrat's works include calls for curriculum reform and modern schooling. While Hughes does not

focus on formal education as explicitly, his emphasis on knowledge, self-worth, and cultural pride serve a similar emancipatory function.

Discussion:

The findings point to a remarkable **transcultural alignment** in the way Hughes and Jadid writers use prose to challenge power structures and reconstruct cultural identities. Both movements emerged in response to systemic exclusion—racial in Hughes’s case, colonial and ideological in the Jadids’ case. Despite different stylistic approaches—Hughes’s tone is often lyrical and emotionally nuanced, while Jadid prose leans toward polemical and reformist tones—they converge in their ultimate goal: liberation of the oppressed through intellectual awakening and narrative empowerment.

However, their differences are also notable. Hughes’s work is deeply embedded in the American experience of race and employs elements of jazz and blues, giving his prose a rhythmic and emotional resonance. The Jadid writers, in contrast, draw from Islamic reformist traditions, Central Asian folklore, and Ottoman-Turkish intellectual movements. Their prose is more didactic, often with a clear message for societal change.

Yet, both use the power of storytelling not just to entertain, but to **mobilize, reform, and resist**. This comparative perspective demonstrates that literature, across linguistic and cultural boundaries, can serve as a universal form of resistance.

Conclusion:

Langston Hughes and the Uzbek Jadid writers illustrate the power of literary expression in reclaiming identity and confronting oppression. Their works continue to resonate because they speak to the enduring human desire for dignity, justice, and cultural integrity. Though their contexts differed—one resisting racial inequality in 20th-century America, the other combating colonial and ideological domination in Central Asia—their objectives were aligned. Literature, in both cases, served as both mirror and weapon: reflecting social realities and challenging hegemonic narratives.

In a globalized world where cultural erasure and marginalization persist, studying such literary intersections is essential. It not only enriches our understanding of resistance literature but also affirms the shared human struggle for freedom and self-definition.

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