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Genre Characteristics Of The European Novella And Their Reflection In Uzbek Literature (The Influence Of Boccaccio, Kafka, Thomas Mann, Hemingway, And Other Writers)

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ABSTRACT

The novella, positioned between the short story and the novel, has served as one of European literature's most resilient and adaptable forms. This article identifies core genre characteristics of the European novella—event-centered plotting, temporal and spatial compression, symbolic density, and a decisive, often crisis-like turning point—and examines their reflection in Uzbek prose traditions, particularly in the qissa and hikoya. Drawing on emblematic texts by Giovanni Boccaccio, Franz Kafka, Thomas Mann, and Ernest Hemingway, the study outlines a comparative narratological frame showing how the novella's compact architectonics migrated across languages and cultural systems through translation, literary education, and shared modernist poetics. The analysis demonstrates that Uzbek writers adapted the novella's concentration on a singular, "unheard-of" event, its limited chronotope, and its preference for implication over exposition, while inflecting these features with indigenous narrative habits, ethical didacticism, and parable-like tonality. The results illuminate how European models catalyzed a minimalist turn in Uzbek prose style, encouraged psychological interiority, and offered a flexible vehicle for thematizing social transformation, moral choice, and urbanization in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The article contributes to ongoing debates about transnational genre travel by foregrounding how a portable form like the novella preserves its structural identity while accommodating local aesthetics.

Keywords: European novella; qissa; hikoya; Boccaccio; Kafka; Thomas Mann; Hemingway; narratology; Uzbek literature; chronotope.

Introduction

Among the modern literary genres, the novella has retained a paradoxical status: defined by its brevity yet capacious in meaning, outwardly simple in design yet structurally exacting in its demands. European practice from Boccaccio onward has emphasized an action that is both sharply bounded and ethically significant, a temporal span that rarely exceeds the diegetic space of a few days or even hours, and a narrative economy that turns description into index and symbol. Goethe's oft-cited conceptualization of the novella as the narration of an "unheard-of event" captures one facet of this logic, but the form's historical

persistence depends equally on what scholars have described as its vector of inevitability: the careful orchestration of causality toward a decisive reversal or recognition. When the novella migrated across languages and literary schools—Romantic, Realist, Naturalist, and Modernist—it preserved a recognizable grammar of concentration while taking on the tonal shades of each epoch.

In the Uzbek literary sphere, the encounter with the novella was mediated by multiple channels, including Russian and European translations, literary education curricula, and the

syncretic elasticity of native prose categories such as qissa (commonly rendered as “novella” or “short novel”) and hikoya (short story). The qissa’s historical lineage, which includes didactic, anecdotal, and parable-like strands, endowed Uzbek writers with a preexisting cultural affinity for compact narrative. As a result, the formal migration of the European novella did not unfold as a simple importation but as a productive dialogue in which a universal genre matrix was refracted through national aesthetics. The interaction is especially visible in the twentieth century, when Uzbek prose engaged intensively with modernist minimalism, psychological interiority, and the ethics of everyday life, responding to social transitions while experimenting with compressed structures.

This article sets out to describe and compare core features of the European novella and to demonstrate their reflection and adaptation in Uzbek literature. By analyzing canonical works—Boccaccio’s frame-mediated tale, Kafka’s metamorphic crisis text, Mann’s symbolic psychological narrative, and Hemingway’s spare, exemplary novella—the study traces a pathway of techniques that Uzbek writers absorbed and re-accented within their own thematic concerns and stylistic traditions.

The aim of this study is to articulate a concise poetics of the European novella and to examine how its characteristic features have been appropriated, transformed, and localized in Uzbek literature. The specific objectives are to clarify the novella’s structural markers, explore representative European texts as paradigms, and map points of convergence with qissa and hikoya practices in Uzbek prose across the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

The research employs a comparative-typological method grounded in narratology. Primary materials include emblematic novellas by Boccaccio, Kafka, Mann, and Hemingway, alongside representative Uzbek qissa and hikoya texts that display analogous structural traits. While the European corpus provides clear genre templates—event centrism, limited chronotope, symbolic economy, and the decisive moment—the Uzbek examples are considered in terms of their adaptation of these traits to local poetics, moral discourse, and social thematics. The analysis draws conceptually on Bakhtin’s chronotope for spatial-temporal modeling, Genette’s categories for focalization and narrative voice, and critical accounts of modernist minimalism, especially those touching on Hemingway’s “iceberg principle.” The method is

qualitative, using close reading of narrative structure, motif networks, and rhetorical compression to identify homologous features rather than seeking statistical generalization.

A first distinguishing trait of the European novella is its reliance on an organizing event whose novelty or ethical charge dislodges the protagonist from habitual life and precipitates a rapid reconfiguration of self and situation. Boccaccio’s Decameron supplies archetypal instances, subordinating description to the mechanics of a clever action, a ruse, or a test that culminates in recognition or reversal. The frame narrative’s alternation of tales over ten days reinforces concentration by delimiting time and social space, yet the tales themselves preserve autonomy through their tight causal arcs. This construction establishes a template in which the novella’s brevity is not a constraint but a catalytic condition; the single episode must bear the weight of transformation.

Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* radicalizes the “unheard-of event,” beginning in medias res with an impossible yet unshakably literal change that governs plot, space, and perception. The apartment becomes a suffocating chronotope that enforces inwardness, and the narrative’s calm, bureaucratic surface transposes allegory into everyday tone. What connects Kafka to Boccaccio is not subject matter but procedure. The event is introduced without preparatory delay, and the narrative refuses to diffuse its energy into subplots or expansive description, instead allowing symbolic radiations to accumulate around compressed motifs: the door, the violin, the apple, the manager’s voice. The lesson for the novella tradition lies in how the exceptional event reorganizes the entire semantic field, giving the short form philosophical amplitude without forfeiting structural rigor.

Mann’s *Death in Venice* illustrates a second axis: psychological intensification and symbolic patterning under conditions of temporal and spatial constraint. Venice is not merely setting but a semantic operator that condenses aesthetic desire, decay, and self-stylization. The novella privileges interior discourse, allusion, and motif recurrence over external multiplicity, yet its progression remains teleological, carried by the decisive recognition of a limit that aesthetic will cannot overstep. Mann shows how the novella can function as a chamber for ethical and metaphysical audition, where a single line of action acquires iconographic resonance through leitmotifs rather than through the multiplicity of events typical of the novel.

Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* models the poetics of minimalism, refining the novella into exemplary parable without explicit allegorical marking. The action is singular and linear; the sea and skiff delimit the chronotope; the prose reduces description to the essentials of movement, sensation, and endurance. Meaning arises not through discursive commentary but through omission, restraint, and the rhythmic return of images. This procedure codifies a technique that would travel widely: symbolic density underwritten by narrative scarcity, or the pressure of the unsaid.

These European templates correspond strikingly to developments in Uzbek prose, where the *qissa* and *hikoya* have long functioned as preferred vehicles for thematizing moral testing, social transition, and interior conflict. In many Uzbek narratives, the decisive episode is not an extravagant "unheard-of" miracle but a morally charged choice—a revelation of character under pressure, the outcome of which redefines kinship obligations, communal reputation, or professional honor. The chronotopes are tightly circumscribed: a courtyard, a rural worksite, a city apartment, a government office, a hospital ward. Within these bounded arenas, writers stage a crisis whose reach exceeds its immediate circumstances, relying on concentrated motifs and the suggestive power of omission rather than on authorial explanation. The adoption of this compact architectonics owes much to the availability of European novellas in translation and to the general modernist drive toward condensation, but it also harmonizes with native parable traditions where ethical meaning is carried by the precision of an episode rather than by encyclopedic narration.

One recurrent sign of the novella's influence in Uzbek literature is the primacy of the single plot vector. Linear progression with minimal digressions produces a reading experience in which each paragraph advances consequence. The small number of characters is not a mere effect of brevity; it is a technique for isolating relational dynamics and intensifying thematic polarization. This isolation, in turn, promotes psychological focalization, allowing writers to render interior speech and micro-gesture with a clarity that would dissipate in a broader canvas. The result is a style in which spare description carries a disproportionate cognitive load. A teacup placed too quietly on a table, a delayed glance at a family photograph, an unspoken word at a hospital bedside—such charged details perform the work that expository paragraphs might perform in a novel, echoing the symbolic

compression cultivated by Mann and the rhetoric of omission systematized by Hemingway.

Another sign is the novella's intimate calibration of time. European theorists have noted the form's predilection for the "short present," and Uzbek *qissas* frequently adopt an analogous scheme: hours rather than years, a handful of days at most, punctuated by one decision that cannot be evaded. The restricted temporal window strengthens causality by reducing noise; it also foregrounds embodied experience, including the rhythms of labor, meal times, and ritual observances, which become indices of ethical texture. By tethering moral choice to daily temporalities, Uzbek writers anchor the novella's abstract architecture in cultural concreteness.

The influence of Kafka manifests less in overt absurdism than in tonal management and the domestication of the strange. Bureaucratic spaces—offices, queues, inspections—acquire a faintly surreal charge without abandoning realist surface. The pressure of an official form, a signature, or a closed door can function as an event of metamorphic significance, altering self-perception and social visibility. In such stories, the novella's compactness serves a critical function, revealing how institutional rationality compresses human possibility. The transformation is not zoological but ethical, and yet the narrative procedures mirror Kafka's: rapid onset of crisis, claustrophobic setting, and sober diction that lets symbolism hatch from the everyday.

From Boccaccio, Uzbek prose inherits less the erotic intrigue or comic ruse than the logic of framing and the didactic horizon. Collections organized around a loose thematic arc, narrator figures who gently introduce or comment, and a final, often understated turn toward moral inference recall the *Decameron's* balance of entertainment and ethical testing. However, the frame in Uzbek practice tends to cede to the autonomy of individual pieces, which are more solemn in tone and less carnivalesque, closer to modernist inwardness than to Renaissance sociability.

Hemingway's impact is audible in stylistic economies that prefer verb over adjective, gesture over explanation, and dialogue whose gaps are as eloquent as its utterances. The sea becomes steppe, canal, orchard, or factory, but the structural principle remains: an elemental encounter staged without rhetorical excess. Where European modernism sometimes reads as aestheticism, Uzbek minimalism often registers as ethical modesty, a choice to let action speak.

The iceberg principle adapts readily to this horizon, allowing writers to leave communal codes implicit while trusting readers to reconstruct the submerged nine-tenths.

It is important to stress that these convergences do not flatten difference. Uzbek prose retains a notable parabolic affinity, in which the end aligns with an ethical clarification subtly cued from the beginning, and an attention to the social surround—kin networks, neighborhood norms, work collectives—that modulates the aura of solitude radiating from many European novellas. The “unheard-of event” maintains its force not as an ontological rupture but as a concentrated test of character against a communal standard. This recalibration helps explain the novella’s popularity in contexts of rapid social change. When economic and cultural forms shift quickly, the compact narrative that concentrates experience into a decisive hour offers a precise instrument for modeling moral choice without the longueurs of the novel.

Translation and editorial practice played an enabling role. Boccaccio, Kafka, Mann, and Hemingway entered the reading lives of Uzbek authors through Russian and Uzbek translations, school anthologies, and writers’ unions’ seminars. The novella’s portability made it an ideal candidate for classroom discussion and for periodical publication. Its craft disciplines—beginning near the brink of crisis, limiting scenes, pruning description, concealing thematic claims—became part of a shared professional vocabulary. In this sense, the novella acted as both aesthetic influence and pedagogical tool, teaching how to distribute meaning across a slim textual surface.

Finally, the modern Uzbek qissa has also looped back into broader conversations about the novella’s global poetics. Works that stage ethical confrontation in compressed rural or urban settings, that allow motif networks—water, dust, stone, tea, dusk—to bind scenes, and that heighten interior speech at the moment of choice contribute to a comparative archive in which the novella’s grammar is recognizable yet locally inflected. By joining European structural inheritance to indigenous rhetorical tact, these texts demonstrate how a form can travel without surrendering to imitation. The novella’s identity lies not in the replication of European plots but in the disciplined equilibrium of brevity, event, and implication, an equilibrium that Uzbek literature has made distinctly its own.

The European novella’s enduring profile emerges from four interlocking commitments: a single decisive event,

tight temporal and spatial bounds, symbolic concentration, and a teleology of recognition or reversal. In Boccaccio the form coheres around wit and ethical testing within a framed conviviality; in Kafka it compresses metaphysical anxiety into a literal fact that reorganizes everyday life; in Mann it refines psychological and aesthetic conflict into a symbolic itinerary; and in Hemingway it pares narrative to an exemplary action whose resonance exceeds its words. Uzbek prose has appropriated this grammar with notable sensitivity, particularly in the qissa and hikoya, where writers have transformed the “unheard-of event” into a locally meaningful crisis of duty, conscience, or solidarity. The chronotope narrows to courtyards, offices, wards, and fields; stylistic restraint lets gesture carry ethical weight; and endings clarify without moralizing. Rather than imitation, the relationship is one of calibrated adoption, in which the novella’s compact architectonics meet indigenous parable traditions and communal ethics. The result is a body of work that belongs to the global history of the novella while preserving the textures of Uzbek life and language. As literary systems continue to intersect through translation and digital circulation, the novella’s portability will likely sustain its role as a preferred medium for modeling moral and psychological threshold moments, ensuring that its European lineage remains audible even as its accents multiply.

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