

**COMPARATIVE LITERARY ANALYSIS OF SALOMAT VAFO'S "QAYTMAS YO'L"
AND MARGARET ATWOODS "HAPPY ENDINGS"**

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Abstract. This paper offers a study of Salomat Vafo's short story "Qaytmas yo'l" alongside Margaret Atwood's metafictional tale "Happy Endings." Despite originating from literary backgrounds—Uzbek and Canadian literature respectively—their works explore similar themes related to human autonomy the outcomes of decisions and the quest for individual identity amid social limitations. By analyzing narrative framework, character portrayal and theme progression this study emphasizes Vafo's use of realism and psychological insight contrasted with Atwood's reliance, on methods and narrative innovation. The comparison reveals that both writers challenge conventional understandings of destiny, responsibility, and freedom, though they do so through differing stylistic and cultural frameworks.

Keywords. Comparative literature, Gender roles, Narrative structure, Feminist literary analysis

Agency and choice

Intoduction

Salomat Vafo, a modern Uzbek author is recognized for her psychologically nuanced narratives that delve into ethical conflicts and the emotional intricacies of everyday experiences. Her tale "Qaytmas yo'l" (translated as "The Road of No Return") depicts a woman who confronts repercussions following a decision fueled by societal influence and individual despair.

Margaret Atwood, a presence in contemporary Canadian literature is well-known for her focus, on feminist themes, authority dynamics and metafictional storytelling techniques. Her short story "Endings" dismantles the traditional idea of plot by offering various potential lives and conclusions for the characters John and Mary—ultimately suggesting that endings remain constant whereas the process is what genuinely counts.

This article compares these two stories from different literary cultures to illuminate how both authors approach the themes of fate, choice, and the constraints placed on individuals—particularly women—within their societies.

Thematic Comparison

Agency and Personal Choice

In Vafo's "Qaytmas yo'l," the central character Dilrabo takes a step influenced by social norms and family duties. Her "path of no return" symbolizes the consequences of decisions taken amidst coercion. Vafo highlights the weight borne by women expected to conform to traditional roles.

Conversely Atwood's "Happy Endings" rejects the notion of free will. Through presenting variants" of the identical tale Atwood contends that personal decisions are frequently dominated by overarching frameworks dictated by society, genre and cultural norms. She reveals the constructed nature of storytelling implying that life seldom fits plotlines.

While Vafo focuses on the internal psychological struggle of a woman constrained by society, Atwood highlights the external structural forces shaping narrative and life.

Societal Expectations and Gender Roles

Vafo's narrative places gender roles within a communal framework. Dilrabo's choices are examined by relatives and society; her ethical value depends on approval. This illustrates the challenges encountered by Central Asian women who need to reconcile individual aspirations, with collective duties.

Atwood on the hand challenges gender norms using satire. In " Endings " Mary and John are portrayed as stereotypes: Mary as the selfless partner, John, as the emotionally distant male. Atwood reveals these tropes to highlight how Western cultural stories limit people to roles.

Both authors critique gender expectations, but Vafo does so through realistic emotional portrayal, while Atwood critiques through irony, meta-narrative, and parody.

Fate vs. Personal Responsibility

Vafo's main character experiences a sense of being ensnared by destiny. The narrative's emotional peak happens as Dilrabo comes to understand that trying to evade one problem merely pushes her into an one—highlighting the fatalistic themes typical of Uzbek literary heritage.

Atwood denies fatalism. Although she maintains that all conclusions are identical ("They die"—Atwood's recurring phrase) she highlights the possibilities within the middle of the narrative. Life is shaped by the decisions taken during the journey rather than, by the final outcome itself.

Thus, while Vafo depicts fate as a powerful, often unavoidable force, Atwood depicts fate as a narrative device that the writer—and by extension the individual—can manipulate or challenge.

While Salomat Vafo's "Qaytmas yo'l" and Margaret Atwood's "Happy Endings" vary greatly in style, format and cultural background each story investigates core issues regarding decisions, social pressures and the constraints placed on people—particularly women. Vafo's narrative reveals the toll of adhering to confining customs whereas Atwood dismantles Western storytelling conventions to highlight gender biases and the fabricated nature of "happy endings."

Together, the two stories reveal how diverse literary traditions can address universal themes, enriching the global understanding of the human experience.

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