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Appraisal and Semiotics of Motherhood: A Comparative Study of English and Uzbek Literary Discourse

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the evaluative-expressive features of communicative signs in two short stories from distinct linguistic and cultural backgrounds: *Chevara* (Great-grandchild) by Said Ahmad (Uzbek) and *I Stand Here Ironing* by Tillie Olsen (American). Grounded in Appraisal Theory, the study classifies and interprets evaluative and affective expressions in maternal discourse. Lexical analysis highlights emotionally charged vocabulary, while semiotic analysis decodes symbolic signs within the narratives. These approaches enable a multi-layered understanding of how motherhood is communicated in the two cultures. Although the texts were written in different sociopolitical contexts, the Uzbek Soviet era and the American postwar period, both focus on female caregivers reflecting on their children's upbringing under difficult circumstances. Moving beyond traditional grammatical or syntactic emphasis, this study reveals the affective, social, and cultural functions of language through expressive verbal and nonverbal signs in key episodes. The analysis demonstrates culture-specific emotional and interactional styles and contributes to cross-cultural understanding with practical applications in translation, diplomacy, and language education. The study introduces an integrated evaluative model that triangulates appraisal, lexical, and semiotic resources, extending Appraisal Theory to encompass semiotic materiality. Semiotic materiality denotes the

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evaluative force of objects, spaces, and embodied actions as signs, while the model specifies how these signs interact with lexical indices and appraisal resources to yield culturally anchored evaluations (see Section 4). This model offers tools for translators, diplomats, and educators and broadens our understanding of how emotion and morality are encoded across literary traditions, opening avenues for further cross-cultural research.

Highlights

- The paper examines evaluative-expressive features of communicative signs in two culturally distinct short stories: *Chevara* by Said Ahmad (Uzbek) and *I Stand Here Ironing* by Tillie Olsen (American).
- It integrates Appraisal Theory, lexical analysis, and semiotic analysis to investigate how maternal discourse conveys emotion, morality, and social values.
- The analysis reveals culture-specific emotional and interactional styles, showing how motherhood is expressed differently in the Uzbek Soviet and American postwar contexts.
- The study proposes an integrated evaluative model that extends Appraisal Theory to semiotic materiality, with practical applications in translation (preserving appraisal lexis), diplomacy (register templates), and language education (appraisal-aware tasks), ultimately enhancing cross-cultural understanding.

Keywords: Appraisal Theory; Communicative Signs; Maternal Discourse; Cross-Cultural Analysis; Lexical and Semiotic Analysis; Tillie Olsen; Said Ahmad; Evaluative-Expressive Language

1. Introduction

The processes of communication and mutual understanding are predicated on a complex system of signs that facilitates the conveyance of both factual information and subjective attitudes. In linguistics, particularly semiotics and discourse analysis, signs are of fundamental importance. The specific term “communicative signs” does not have a singular originator; rather, it has evolved through the contributions of various linguists and semioticians. Ferdinand de Saussure made significant strides in the study of linguistic signs with his seminal work, *Course in General Linguistics*, wherein he introduced the dyadic sign model, categorizing signs into the signifier and the signified^[1]. Despite the substantial impact of his work on the understanding of sign function, Saussure’s focus was limited to verbal linguistic signs and the structural aspects of language, neglecting the contextual and pragmatic dimensions of communicative exchanges, including speaker-listener interactions. In contrast, Charles Sanders Peirce broadened the scope by developing the triadic model, identifying signs as representamen, object, and interpretant^[2]. The strength of Peirce’s work lies in its comprehensive semiotic typology and its emphasis on interpretation and the logic of meaning within a multimodal framework. However, his work also lacks a complete model of the real-world commu-

nication. The concept of communicative signs is also evident in Charles Morris’s work. In his paper *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*, presented at the International Conference of Unified Sciences, Morris posited that the use of signs can be termed semiosis, with semiotics being the study of these signs^[3]. In this work, he delineates the three frameworks of signs: syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, while asserting that the concept of a sign should not be confined to linguistic or conventional signs alone. Recent scholarship has further emphasized how literary studies must integrate national and global theoretical frameworks to better capture identity and cultural values. For instance, modern Kazakh literary criticism demonstrates how structuralism, postmodernism, and hermeneutics enrich the analysis of texts while preserving national identity, showing the necessity of blending global methodologies with local traditions^[4].

In recent years, the study of communicative signs has been pivotal for numerous scholars, contributing to an enhanced understanding of the function of communicative signs in relation to their meaning and evaluative and expressive aspects. Notable contributions have been made by Xu et al. (2022), who explore the role of verbal and visual representations in the perception of the English language^[5]. The strengths of their study lie in its multimodal approach, in-

tegrating both visual and verbal data, thereby addressing the limitations of relying solely on linguistic data. The research is grounded in established theories, including the perspectives of Oxford et al. on education and Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory, providing a solid foundation for the interpretation of the findings. However, the small sample size of 11 learners from a single institution may limit the generalizability of the results. Another significant contribution is the work of Bogdana Paskaleva (2024), whose study, "Re-structuralist Semiology: Materiality of Language in Ferdinand de Saussure," investigates the rarely explored manuscripts of Saussure, particularly "On the Dual Essence of Language." Paskaleva offers fresh insights into Saussure's semiological views, challenging his work by introducing a post-structuralist perspective^[6]. She suggests that Saussure's early ideas focused more on the dynamic nature of language rather than fixed systems, reframing his early semiological view. The emphasis on the materiality of signs renders this work relevant to communication studies, particularly in multimodal and embodied sign systems. Additionally, this article examines the "final quaternion" model, which transcends the traditional concepts of signifier/signified, aiming to uncover a multidimensional model of signification. While the signifier/signified model divides meaning between a linguistic form (the signifier) and the concept it represents (the signified), the final quaternion incorporates not only the signifier and signified but also the materiality (physical or sensory aspect) of the sign and the temporal or historical dimension of how signs evolve and shift in context. However, the abstract nature of this paper may limit comprehension for readers unfamiliar with Saussure's theory. Similarly, research on American newspaper discourse conceptualizes parenthood through metaphorical clusters, such as "parent is duties, parent is difficulties, owner, and burden"^[7]. These findings reveal how metaphors not only shape public perception of parental roles but also expose cultural nuances in communicative practices. Another paper that attempts to analyze different schools of thought and models used in the study of semiotics is authored by Batu (2012)^[8]. In his paper "An Overview of the Field of Semiotics," he argues that despite the availability of various models, the foundational principles and objectives remain consistent. While this paper discusses theoretical frameworks, it lacks concrete case studies or detailed examples. Additionally, some semiotic terminology

is presented without sufficient explanation, which may pose challenges for novice readers. The authors align their study with semiotic theories, emphasizing the critical role of language and its symbols. The communicative functions of signs have been extensively discussed, including a notable contribution by researchers Evelina Fedorenko, Steven T. Piantadosi, and Edward A. F. Gibson (2024)^[9]. In their paper titled "Language is primarily a tool for communication rather than thought," the authors draw evidence from neuroscience, cognitive science, and linguistics to present several key findings. Their central thesis posits that language co-evolved with human cognition, primarily serving to facilitate social communication and interaction, rather than merely expressing thought. This process aids cultural transmission, allowing the passage of knowledge, norms, and practices through communication. However, this study predominantly focused on the universal aspects of language, with limited exploration of how communicative signs vary across cultural contexts. A significant related study on four types of expressive speech acts (greetings, apologies, thanks, and wishes) during the Covid-19 pandemic was conducted by Ogiermann and Bella^[10]. In their work, "On the dual role of expressive speech acts: Relational work on signs announcing closures during the Covid-19 pandemic" (2021), they analyze signs to highlight the adaptability of language in maintaining social bonds and relationships during unprecedented times. They emphasize emotional expression and convey empathy, solidarity, or regret during periods of limited physical interaction. This comparative study is instrumental in understanding how different cultures balance emotional expression and politeness in public contexts.

Suren Zolyan's chapter, "On Pragma-Semantics of Expressive: Between Words and Actions," offers an analysis of Bühler's representational theory alongside Austin and Searle's performative theory, facilitating an understanding of expressives as both descriptive and performative elements^[11]. The author connects expressive to behavioral patterns and real-life situational contexts, highlighting their expressive features of communicative signs. Despite its robust theoretical framework, this study appears to lack empirical data that could demonstrate the practical application of the proposed pragma-semantics concepts. Another noteworthy contribution is the work of Yin Kayo, Regier Terry, and Klein Dan, which explores American Sign Language

(ASL) and its communicative efficiency^[12]. They developed innovative methods to measure the perceptual effort required to identify handshapes and the articulatory effort needed to produce them. Subsequently, they investigated the relationship between communicative effort and usage data in English and ASL. Their findings indicate that frequent ASL handshapes are easier to produce and that ASL usage, rather than English lexical borrowing, serves as the primary communication source. Additionally, Gesine Lenore Schiewer, Jacek Szczepaniak, Janusz Pociask, Jarosław Bogacki, and Sławomir Kowalewski, in their paper “Discourse Linguistics and Emotions in Media,” discuss three prominent research traditions: emotion-oriented textology, emotion semantics, and emotion semiotics^[13]. This study also examines the emotionalization of discursive events, considering the roles of the media and actors in the formation and evolution of discourses. In this context, the study of emotions in media discourse is supported by a discourse-linguistic multilevel approach. Examples are provided to illustrate how the coding, manifestation, and creation of emotions can be examined.

This study examines the similarities and differences in the evaluative-expressive features of communicative signs in English and Uzbek. It is essential to acknowledge the previous comparative studies conducted by Uzbek scholars. Notably, Otajonova’s work, “Communicative Features of Signs: Translation in Literary Works,” focuses on the communicative features of sign usage in literary translation, specifically in English, Uzbek, and Russian literature^[14]. This study explores the semiotic and pragmatic aspects of language, highlighting the significance of both verbal and nonverbal elements in intercultural communication. Comparative studies provide valuable insights into how cultural values, communicative styles, and evaluative meanings are embedded in different linguistic traditions. Numerous scholars have contributed to this field by investigating the expression of emotions and various concepts across cultures. A prominent study by Makhmudov et al. (2025) analyzes gothic lexemes to understand how fear, anxiety, and stress influence language^[15]. The findings enhance pedagogical applications in linguocultural literacy, promote gender studies and facilitate cross-cultural communication. Another significant contribution to cultural analysis is the work of Raimovna et al., which underscores the cultural and national characteristics of qualitative lexemes in Turkish and Uzbek^[16]. The research

materials from this study can be used to develop explanatory dictionaries and improve textbooks and manuals on Uzbek and Turkish grammar.

The works of Tillie Olsen and Said Ahmad have been extensively studied by scholars, albeit predominantly in isolation rather than in a comparative context. An illustrative example is the study by Nurhayati (2018), which employs the transitivity system, a core lexico-grammatical component of Systemic Functional Grammar, to analyze characterization^[17]. While the narrative has frequently been examined using traditional literary methodologies, this study offers a novel perspective by exploring how linguistic choices shape character development. The analysis utilizes the field scenario and transitivity system to elucidate the employment of processes, particularly relational, mental, and material, within the story. This linguistic representation ultimately reflects and critiques the patriarchal constraints that women in mid-20th century American society. By examining these patterns, this study elucidates how language functions as a vehicle for social commentary. Another pertinent work related to Tillie Olsen is the study by Shah M. et al. (2020), entitled “Stereotyping of Gender Roles and Norms by Society: A Feminist Analysis of *I Stand Here Ironing*.”^[18] This study investigates how societal institutions perpetuate traditional parenting notions while critiquing the social stereotyping of gender roles from a social construction feminist perspective. The protagonist’s sense of guilt in Tillie Olsen’s *I Stand Here Ironing* reflects societal norms that define and regulate perceptions of “good” mothering. By scrutinizing these constructed norms, this study examines how gendered beliefs and inadequate social support systems compel women to assume unequal roles. Although *Chevara* has not been thoroughly analyzed, numerous studies have been devoted to Said Ahmad and his other published works. His works are deeply rooted in the historical and cultural realities of Uzbekistan, often portraying the struggles of ordinary people against the backdrop of war, poverty, and moral dilemmas. Alongside short stories like *Chevara*, his monumental *Ufq* (Horizon) trilogy is widely recognized as a milestone in Uzbek prose, offering an epic portrayal of collective resilience during the construction of the Great Fergana Canal, the hardships of the Second World War, and the aftermath of those turbulent years^[19].

The role of evaluative-expressive resources in literary

texts, particularly in typologically and culturally diverse languages, has been insufficiently explored despite growing interest in communicative signs and their contribution to meaning production. While extensive research has been conducted on syntactic and grammatical universals, expressive features such as emotions, values, and attitudes remain underexplored, especially in the context of cross-cultural literary discourse. This gap is particularly evident in Uzbek literature, owing to the limited application of linguistic theories such as semiotic analysis and appraisal theory. Although comparative studies in this domain are scarce, literary works such as Tillie Olsen's *I Stand Here Ironing* and Said Ahmad's *Chevara* offer a rich context for examining how social positioning and emotions are linguistically and culturally conveyed.

Current studies on evaluative meaning creation predominantly focus on English and other commonly studied Western languages, often neglecting non-Western literary traditions such as Chinese. Research examining the creation of expressive meaning across languages and cultures rarely integrates lexical analysis, semantic-semiotics, and appraisal theory into a cohesive framework. Specifically, the interpersonal metafunction of language, which pertains to how speakers and writers engage with readers and express sentiments, has not been adequately investigated in Uzbek literary discourse. Furthermore, there is a paucity of cross-cultural research on the impact of narrative voice and expressive language on gender, guilt, and parenting concepts. Against this background, the present study asks how *Chevara* and *I Stand Here Ironing* utilize the fundamental elements of Appraisal Theory (attitude, engagement, and graduation resources) to construct evaluative meaning, and what linguistic and semiotic techniques are employed to position characters in relation to guilt, gender roles, and motherhood within an emotional and ideological framework. It further considers how lexical choices, metaphorical expressions, and narrative voices in the two texts encode interpersonal and cultural meanings differently, and what similarities and differences between the expressive communicative signs in the two works reveal about the sociocultural contexts in which they were composed. In addressing these questions, the study seeks to analyze the mechanisms by which graduation, engagement, and attitude systems in the selected texts convey evaluative-expressive meanings, while also ex-

ploring the construction of emotional posture and societal critique, particularly concerning motherhood, through narrative voice, character interaction, and stylistic expression. Additionally, it examines the differences between English and Uzbek texts in lexical and semiotic choices that affect interpersonal meaning, ultimately contributing to the development of an interdisciplinary framework for cross-cultural literary studies that integrates semiotic-linguistic analysis and appraisal theory. This study theoretically advances an integrated evaluative model by synthesizing Appraisal Theory with lexical and semiotic analysis. By examining appraisal resources such as attitude, engagement, and graduation, alongside culture-specific lexical indices and material/semiotic signs, the model elucidates how evaluation is articulated not only through lexis and grammar but also through objects, spaces, and culturally significant terms. This integration expands Appraisal Theory's interpersonal focus by incorporating semiotic materiality and lexical-cultural indexing, thereby offering a reusable framework for cross-linguistic literary analysis that more effectively captures multimodal and culturally-bound evaluative meaning.

The findings of this study hold significant practical implications for the fields of diplomacy, education, and translation. In diplomatic contexts, the contrast between Uzbek and American maternal discourse underscores the necessity of tailoring intercultural communication: Uzbek audiences may be more receptive to expressions emphasizing communal solidarity and endurance *sabr* (patience), forbearance, whereas U.S. audiences often anticipate a focus on individual emotion and practical assistance. Consequently, training modules for diplomatic personnel could incorporate paired condolence templates and role-playing exercises to illustrate when to emphasize collective resilience versus personal disclosure. In the realm of language education, the application of Appraisal Theory in classroom settings can enhance intercultural literacy by integrating lexical analysis, translation practice, and semiotic reflection. For instance, students can identify appraisal markers in a text, propose both literal and culturally sensitive translations of culturally significant terms such as *sabr* (patience), and experiment with modifying intensifiers to observe changes in interpersonal meaning. These exercises not only cultivate an awareness of evaluative language but also promote sensitivity to cultural nuances. Translation practice itself benefits from these insights, as evaluative

lexis like *sabr* (patience) or *taqdir* (fate) resists straightforward equivalence. Translators are encouraged to employ hybrid strategies, such as combining literal translations with paratextual glossing and to maintain appraisal intensity by preserving evaluative modifiers and metaphors rather than neutralizing them. Collectively, these applications demonstrate that the study's integrated methodology not only advances theoretical understanding but also provides practical tools for intercultural communication, pedagogy, and translation. For clarity, Section 4 details the integrated evaluative model and defines semiotic materiality, outlining the coding rules that link appraisal resources to lexical-cultural indices and material signs.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employs a multi-layered qualitative framework to investigate the expressive-evaluative dimensions of motherhood-related communicative signs in Tillie Olsen's *I Stand Here Ironing* and Said Ahmad's *Chevara*. This research is structured through three complementary lenses: semiotic analysis, lexical analysis, and appraisal theory. Each lens offers a distinct yet interconnected perspective on the expression and evaluation of maternal identity within the two cultural traditions. In cross-cultural literary research, this integrated methodology enhances interpretative depth by adhering to Denzin's (1978) concept of methodological triangulation, utilizing multiple methods to examine a single phenomenon, thereby augmenting the validity and richness of research findings^[20]. Expanding on this view, Flick (2004) posits that triangulation in qualitative research is not merely about cross-checking data; it is crucial for developing an interpretatively nuanced model for understanding the profound meaning within language^[21]. He supports the notion that no single method can fully interpret how communicative signs function across cultures and languages. Appraisal Theory, developed by Martin and White (2005) within the tradition of Systemic Functional Linguistics, serves as the primary analytical tool for evaluative language in this study^[22]. This framework provides a methodology for analyzing how speakers and writers convey affect (feeling), judgment (morality), and appreciation (visual or cultural value) in their language. Furthermore, it examines how authors position themselves with respect to opposing views (engagement) and how eval-

uation is intensified (graduation). Appraisal theory is commonly employed in literary, journalistic, and pedagogical discourse analyses to assess interpersonal meaning^[23–26]. In this study, five emotionally intense passages were selected from each text using qualitative, theory-led criteria aligned with Appraisal Theory and semiotic salience. Specifically, we purposively sampled passages that (a) foreground affect, judgment, or appreciation through explicit or implied appraisal resources; (b) exhibit semiotically rich cues (objects, spaces, embodied actions) that index cultural meanings; and (c) bear narrative significance for the construction of motherhood. Selection proceeded iteratively: candidate segments were first flagged during close reading for evaluative density and semiotic prominence; they were then retained when multiple appraisal categories co-occurred or when a semiotic cue (e.g., domestic artifact, ritual gesture) functioned as an evaluative sign in context. This qualitative rationale avoids crude lexical frequency claims and instead grounds inclusion in interpretive relevance and theoretical fit, which is appropriate for the study's design. As sampling and coding procedure, candidate passages were independently flagged during an initial analytic pass and then discussed until interpretive consensus was reached. For each retained passage, sentences were coded to Affect, Judgment, or Appreciation using Martin and White (2005), with disagreements resolved by reference to the framework's definitions and to local context. To make coder decisions auditable, we recorded a brief memo per passage explaining why the semiotic cue(s) functioned evaluatively (e.g., ironing board as routine-sacrifice sign; photograph as lineage-continuity sign).

The focus of lexical analysis is on culturally distinctive lexemes, repetitions, intensifiers, and word selections that convey emotional and evaluative meanings. This approach integrates concepts from discourse linguistics and literary stylistics, drawing particularly on the works of Short (1996)^[27] and Simpson (2004)^[28]. These scholars have illustrated how character psychology and literary tone are shaped by lexical fields and by collocational patterns. This method identifies significant terms such as *sabr* (patience) or *taqdir* (fate) in Ahmad's work, which reflect culturally constrained norms of maternal endurance, and terms like *worry*, *sick*, and *hard* in Olsen's work, which underscore emotional burden. Lexical analysis demonstrates how language encodes moral and emotional positions. To enhance methodological rigor,

the selected passages were categorized in accordance with Martin and White's (2005) framework^[22]. Sentences were systematically assigned to affect, judgment, or appreciation based on explicit evaluative vocabulary, grammatical framing, and contextual cues. In instances of ambiguity, coding decisions were resolved by revisiting the theoretical definitions within the appraisal framework, thereby ensuring consistency and reliability in the analysis. Furthermore, although the selection of emotionally charged excerpts and the categorization of appraisal types were guided by explicit and reproducible criteria, these processes remain interpretive and theoretically grounded. This suggests that another researcher, employing the same framework, might still arrive at slightly different coding decisions. Such reflexivity underscores the qualitative nature of the study while highlighting its reliance on established theoretical models to ensure rigor and transparency. Beyond spoken words, maternal identity is constructed through nonverbal cues, symbols, artifacts, and cultural themes, which are examined using semiotic analysis. This method is grounded in semiotic framework, which posits that culture is a semiotic system wherein interrelated signs generate meaning^[29,30]. Chandler (2017) provides a comprehensive overview of literary and cultural semiotics for contemporary discourse^[31]. Domestic environments, such as the kitchen, and monotonous housework serve as symbols of gendered labor and emotional exhaustion in Olsen's art. Along with verbal cues, these tangible and visual indicators communicate identity formation, cultural pressure, and maternal devotion. These three frameworks were integrated in this study to offer a methodologically robust approach that encompasses the cultural, symbolic, affective, and evaluative dimensions of motherhood in literature. By combining Appraisal Theory with lexical and semiotic analysis, it is possible to achieve a nuanced and comparative understanding of the representation of mothers in the Uzbek and English literary traditions.

3. Results

Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the expression of attitudes, emotions, and values in language^[22]. This theory comprises three primary subsystems: affect, judgment, and appreciation. This analysis focuses on the affect subsystem,

which examines how emotions are expressed, implied, or suppressed in discourse. Two literary works serve as the basis for this comparative study. Both narratives feature mothers recounting traumatic experiences shaped by loss, hardship, and resilience. These stories convey a range of emotional states, including grief, remorse, joy, and powerlessness, through various linguistic devices such as metaphors, repetition, and physical imagery. In all examples, the original sentences from *I Stand Here Ironing* are presented first, followed by the original sentences from *Chevara*, with English translations provided for the Uzbek texts to ensure clarity and comparability.

To conduct a thorough analysis, the Affect system of Appraisal Theory was applied to five distinct and emotionally charged passages from each story. This approach allows for a systematic examination of the affective patterns present in both narratives, highlighting similarities and differences in emotional expression across cultures. The analysis reveals how the authors employ language to evoke and communicate complex emotional experiences. For instance, metaphors may be used to convey the weight of maternal guilt, while repetition might emphasize the persistence of certain emotions. Physical imagery often serves to make abstract emotional states more tangible and relatable to the reader. By examining these texts through the lens of Appraisal Theory's Affect system, this analysis aims to shed light on the universal and culture-specific aspects of emotional expression in literature. It also demonstrates the utility of this theoretical framework in uncovering the subtle ways in which authors convey complex emotional experiences through their writing.

The judgment subsystem of appraisal theory assesses an individual's moral worth, behavior, and character through both explicit and implicit language. This evaluation may encompass social sanction, such as truthfulness or propriety, or social esteem, such as normalcy, ability, or perseverance. In the narratives *I Stand Here Ironing* and *Chevara*, both narrators engage in self-assessment and the evaluation of others, revealing moral fortitude, self-doubt, and culturally influenced notions of sacrifice, resilience, and motherhood. Five examples from these texts are examined and analyzed according to the Judgment subsystem.

Appraisal theory conceptualizes appreciation as the evaluation of behaviors, events, and artifacts based on their aesthetic value, emotional impact, and cultural significance.

In contrast to *I Stand Here Ironing*, which offers a serene, introspective reflection on time and memory, *Chevara* employs vivid imagery and personal experience to elicit profound symbolic meaning and emotional depth. Both narrators skillfully depict aspects of life, not only for aesthetic purposes but also to convey the significance of love, loss, and survival. Similar to the other two subsystems, five examples are provided in the text.

3.1. Affect

3.1.1. Sorrow and Guilt

Olsen's narrator reflects: "*And when is there time to remember, to sift, to weigh, to estimate, to total? ... I will become engulfed with all I did or did not do.*" This quotation exemplifies the narrator's internalized grief and guilt, which manifests as profound emotional self-reproach. Her emotions, marked by pervasive unhappiness and insecurity, are intense and introspectively repetitive. In addition to its personal nature, this grief is rooted in the cultural paradoxes of post-war America, where women were simultaneously lauded for their selfless caregiving and encouraged to pursue contemporary ideals of autonomy and self-actualization. Consequently, the narrator's shame exposes the unattainable expectations imposed on women and the psychological burden of failing to reconcile societal obligations with personal aspirations, thereby reflecting the historical dynamics of American gender ideology.

Ahmad's narrator laments: "*Shuncha bola tug'ib, qum qisimlagandek quruq qo'l bilan qolaverdim.*" [I gave birth to so many children, yet was left empty-handed, like grasping at sand.] The Uzbek grandmother employs metaphors to express her profound desperation. The tactile imagery of "grabbing sand" effectively evokes feelings of anguish and powerlessness, aligning with the negative satisfaction/dissatisfaction dimension of affect. Nevertheless, her expressions of distress are unintelligible outside the context of the Soviet-era Uzbek socio-political framework, wherein a woman's worth was intrinsically linked to her reproductive capabilities, her role in sustaining familial continuity, and her contributions to the collective. Consequently, her inability to save her children manifests as a culturally intensified guilt alongside personal grief, illustrating how Soviet material and ideological conditions constrained women's emotional autonomy

and construed loss as both a societal failure and an individual affliction. In comparison, one mother experiences the loss of an emotional bond, while the other endures the loss of her children. Both mothers derive their sense of worth from what they were unable to retain in their pregnancies. Emotional intensity stems from mothers' inability to provide protection and the profound existential sadness they experience. The cultural and historical contexts impart distinct forms to their grief: Said Ahmad's narrator articulates the collective sorrow of Uzbek women, whose maternal identities were shaped by survival and ideological conformity, whereas Olsen's narrator embodies the personal, introspective guilt shaped by post-war American gender contradictions. In both instances, emotional expression is intricately connected to the sociopolitical systems that influenced, constrained, and intensified parental mourning.

3.1.2. Nostalgic Pain and Joy

"*She was a beautiful baby... She blew shining bubbles of sound. She loved motion, loved light, loved color and music and textures.*" The passage reflects a positive affect, characterized by contentment and a sense of safety. In memory, the rhythm of the word "loved" signifies maternal joy; however, the context and use of past tense language obscure an underlying sense of loss. This temporal distance not only signifies personal grief but also exemplifies a broader cultural pattern within Western literary tradition, wherein maternal memory is frequently depicted through the lenses of nostalgia and irrevocable loss.

Chevarasining suratiga qarab goh xo'rsinadi, goh iljayadi. Suratni ko'zlariga surtadi." [She looks at a photo of her great-grandchild, sometimes sighing, sometimes smiling. She presses it to her eyes.] While the act of sighing suggests melancholic nostalgia, bringing the photograph to her eyes signifies profound tenderness. The narrator's conflicted recollection is mirrored in her affect, which oscillates between happiness and sadness. This embodied gesture exemplifies an Uzbek cultural-historical pattern wherein memory is associated with tangible symbols of kinship, and where sorrow and affection are expressed through physical proximity rather than abstract recollection.

In comparison, both mothers exhibit complex emotional longings, expressing anguish over loss or distance and joy in reminiscence. Sensory descriptions enhance emotional resonance. Their expressions are shaped by distinct cultural

contexts: the English text underscores the inevitability of temporal separation, whereas the Uzbek text emphasizes continuity through tactile interaction with memory objects. This contrast illustrates how cultural-historical frameworks influence not only the emotions expressed but also the modes through which maternal love is remembered and communicated.

3.1.3. Powerlessness

“Even if I came, what good would it do? ... You think because I am her mother I have a key?” The mother expresses doubt regarding her ability to support or emotionally engage with her child, a rhetorical strategy that reveals her vulnerability and isolation. This sentiment is imbued with emotionally charged negative unease. This skepticism reflects a broader cultural discourse prevalent in American contexts, where individual responsibility and self-sufficiency are emphasized. Consequently, the mother’s inability to “unlock” her child’s emotions signifies a profound disruption in the anticipated role of autonomous maternal authority.

“Telbaman, telbaman, bolalarim.” [I’m mad, I’m mad, my children.] The repeated use of the term *telbaman* signifies an emotional breakdown, representing a profound form of negative affect in which loneliness and grief lead to the disintegration of identity and reason. This examination is contextualized within the Uzbek cultural-historical milieu, where public displays of madness and despair are often recognized as culturally approved channels for articulating profound suffering, thus merging the boundaries between genuine emotional expression and performative lamentation.

When comparing the Uzbek grandmother to the American mother, the latter exhibits emotional extremism, whereas the former demonstrates peaceful resignation. Both figures convey a sense of helplessness; however, the expression of this helplessness differs culturally, with one being quiet and the other being ferocious. The extremism exhibited by the American mother reflects a cultural tradition that emphasizes individual struggle and psychological fragmentation. In contrast, the resigned grief of the Uzbek grandmother aligns with a cultural ethos that prioritizes endurance, collective memory, and emotional restraint. These differences illustrate how cultural-historical frameworks not only shape the emotional repertoires of the mothers but also influence the symbolic meanings their expressions hold within their respective societies.

3.1.4. Emotional Suppression and Regret

“There were years when she did not want me to touch her. She kept too much in herself, her life was such she had to keep too much in herself.” This moment is characterized by intense emotions of suppressed closeness. The repetition conveys a sense of regret and emotional detachment as the narrator mourns the lack of both emotional and physical intimacy. This pattern exemplifies a cultural inclination within American discourse to internalize emotional pain and to regard emotional restraint as an indicator of strength, despite the fact that such silence concurrently engenders a sense of irreparable distance.

“Uyqusiz bu kechada uning ko‘nglidan ne gaplar o‘tdi ekan?” [What thoughts passed through her heart on this sleepless night, who knows?] While this rhetorical question may seem contemplative, it actually reveals a subtle yet powerful emotional undercurrent of mental distress and insomnia stemming from overwhelming past trauma. The employment of rhetorical questioning is deeply embedded in Uzbek literary tradition, wherein unspoken suffering is articulated indirectly. This approach facilitates the collective sharing of grief and anxiety without necessitating direct confrontation.

Both narrators depict the absence of emotional and physical scars. The predominant emotional landscape is characterized by regret, reflection, and subdued emotional tension. The emotional expressions of individuals are distinctly influenced by their cultural-historical contexts. The American mother’s restrained intimacy is indicative of an individualistic paradigm, where silence is emblematic of isolation. In contrast, the Uzbek grandmother’s indirect expression is consistent with a communal ethos, wherein endurance and the subtle articulation of pain serve to uphold dignity. Collectively, these narratives illustrate how regret and suppressed intimacy manifest in culturally specific forms, transforming personal suffering into reflections of broader societal values.

3.1.5. Hope and Love

“Shoogily... invented by her to say: comfort.” Although fabricated, the term *shoogily*, serves as a subtle symbol of affect. It conjures a sense of warmth and intimacy that persists even in the absence of children. This creative endeavor exemplifies a broader American cultural-historical trend of linguistic innovation, wherein novel terms serve as

conduits for emotional intimacy. This demonstrates how maternal affection is preserved through imaginative language, even in the absence of physical proximity.

“Ular qachonlardir boshqa odam bo‘lib, qayta bosh ko‘tarsalar ajab emas!” [Perhaps they will rise again one day as different people!] Following a profound loss, this sentence conveys a sense of hope and even suggests spiritual renewal. It represents a moment of positive transformation, marking the transition from grief to resilience and faith. This imagery aligns with Uzbek cultural-historical traditions, which are deeply rooted in collective endurance and spiritual renewal. It articulates the concept of hope following adversity through the expression of moral fortitude and the rejuvenation of the self within the community.

Similarly, through a word, dream, or faith, both passages suggest a glimmer of hope. Here, the emotion is restrained yet powerful, characterized by resilience rather than triumph. The affect system reveals a complex emotional portrayal of parenting under stress in both short stories. Nevertheless, cultural contexts significantly influence the conceptualization of resilience: in the American narrative, hope is articulated through intimate linguistic innovation that mitigates personal grief, whereas in the Uzbek narrative, it is conveyed through communal metaphors of rebirth, linking suffering to continuity and endurance. Despite significant cultural and historical differences, both women articulate maternal suffering, perseverance, and remorse in private yet socially constrained manners. Through the use of metaphor and memory, appraisal theory allows us to trace not only what is expressed but also how emotion permeates, erupts, or softens. Ultimately, these distinctions underscore the manner in which cultural-historical frameworks not only shape the expression of maternal hope and love but also convert private grief into socially significant narratives of resilience.

3.2. Judgment

3.2.1. Self-Judgment as Inadequate Mother

“She was a child of her age, of depression, of war, of fear... My wisdom came too late.” This assessment reflects a negative evaluation of both the appropriateness and capability. The mother expresses significant regret and moral self-reproach regarding her emotional and practical unavailability. She perceives that her daughter was more profoundly

affected by neglect than by nurturing influence. This type of introspection is consistent with American cultural-historical traditions of psychological self-examination, where maternal shortcomings are frequently viewed as an internal moral failing influenced by larger societal issues like war and economic depression.

“Shuncha bola tug‘ib, qum qisimlagandek quruq qo‘l bilan qolaverdim.” [I gave birth to so many children, yet was left empty-handed, like grasping at sand.] The Uzbek narrator also articulates a negative self-perception, characterizing it as a sense of helplessness and an inability to protect rather than as incompetence. This depiction conveys a melancholic sense of futility, indicating the mother’s perceived failure to fulfill her parental responsibilities despite her earnest efforts. The metaphor of *“qum qisimlagandek quruq qo‘l bilan,”* rooted in Uzbek cultural-historical traditions, evokes themes of motherhood, fertility, continuity, and material endurance. This imagery underscores a sense of emptiness that resonates not only as a personal failure but also as a disruption of collective expectations.

In comparison, both women employ culturally distinct metaphors to render severe self-assessments in their poetry. The Uzbek narrator utilizes earthy and fatalistic imagery, whereas the American mother engages in psychological reflection. Both narratives express the mothers’ experiences of grief and guilt. However, the contrast reveals more than just a stylistic difference; it illustrates how cultural-historical contexts influence maternal self-assessment. In the United States, guilt is seen as an individual and psychological issue, whereas in Uzbekistan, failure is evaluated based on communal standards of fertility, protection, and heritage. This distinction underscores how the narrative of maternal inadequacy turns personal feelings into culturally significant meanings.

3.2.2. Judgment of Society’s Influence

“Why do I put that first? I do not even know if it matters, or if it explains anything.” The narrator exhibits a conflicted judgment by simultaneously questioning and subtly critiquing societal determinism. By highlighting the tension between social consciousness and personal accountability, she interrogates the legitimacy of attributing blame to external circumstances. This ambivalence highlights an American cultural and historical backdrop where individuals are expected to take responsibility for their own situations, even

while acknowledging the structural limitations caused by war, poverty, or gender-based expectations. The reluctance illustrates how guilt transforms societal shortcomings into personal burdens.

“Ellikboshi o‘zining o‘g‘li o‘rniga mening erimni jo‘natgan ekan noinsof.” [The headman sent my husband in place of his own son — heartless scoundrel.] This passage presents a clear and critical evaluation of propriety. The Uzbek narrator condemns the unethical exploitation of power by a local leader. The term *noinsof* (heartless) is employed to express moral indignation and establish the speaker’s moral justification. This type of condemnation is indicative of an Uzbek cultural and historical narrative where injustice is expressed through straightforward moral judgments, intertwining individual suffering with a broader societal critique of hierarchy, corruption, and communal shame.

In comparison, both narrators hold others accountable, albeit in different manners: one adopts a subtle approach, while the other is more direct. The American narrator’s perspective is internal, hesitant, and influenced by guilt, whereas the Uzbek narrator’s stance is moral and public. This comparison highlights the influence of cultural frameworks on the limits of judgment: in the American narrative, responsibility is moderated by psychological self-doubt, whereas in the Uzbek narrative, blame is directed outward and moral indignation is justified by communal values. Consequently, maternal voices not only convey personal grievances but also embody culturally specific methods of moral assessment, transforming individual suffering into a critique that is socially understood.

3.2.3. Judgment of Gender Roles and Strength

“I was a young mother. I was a distracted mother.” She judges herself according to societal expectations of emotional expressiveness and maternal care. “Distracted” highlights internalized gender norms by suggesting a shortcoming in meeting these conventional standards. This self-assessment is rooted in an American cultural and historical backdrop where the role of motherhood is evaluated against ideals of emotional attentiveness, influenced by mid-20th-century narratives that linked maternal dedication to moral value. The mother’s self-criticism as being “distracted” highlights the impact of these societal expectations, which turn personal challenges into perceived moral shortcomings.

“Xotin boshim bilan Poytuq istansasida hammollik qil-

ganman. Odam o‘ldirganman.” [As a woman, I did porter’s work at the Poytuq station. I even killed a man.] Despite challenging gender taboos, this nuanced commentary offers a positive evaluation of tenacity and capabilities. The tone reflects a resilient pride in her ability to endure and thrive, rather than a sense of shame. Her statements defy gender stereotypes. Drawing from Uzbek cultural and historical traditions, this open defiance highlights how women’s survival in harsh conditions, such as famine, poverty, or war, is seen not as a disgrace but as a testament to their moral strength. By referencing actions that challenge traditional female roles, the narrator reinterprets womanhood through resilience, hard work, and even aggression, turning marginalization into a form of empowerment.

In comparison, gendered ideals are employed to assess both narrators. The American mother assumes responsibility, while the Uzbek narrator, by questioning social roles, reclaims judgment as a symbol of survival. Collectively, these instances illustrate the influence of cultural-historical contexts on maternal identity: in the American narrative, gender roles restrict the mother to internalized self-criticism, whereas in the Uzbek narrative, they offer a platform for redefining feminine strength through resilience and proactive behavior. These varied forms of judgment underscore how maternal voices not only mirror but also challenge societal norms, transforming personal experiences into cultural critiques of gender expectations.

3.2.4. Judgment of Emotional Collapse and Resilience

“And when is there time to remember... I will become engulfed with all I did or did not do.” The narrator interprets this emotional breakdown as a moral deficiency. She views her experiences of grief and introspection as self-indulgent and debilitating rather than therapeutic. Her introspection highlights a uniquely American challenge with self-examination, where remembering often shifts into self-blame. In this scenario, emotional breakdowns are evaluated against the standards of efficiency and progress, turning vulnerability into what is seen as a moral shortcoming.

“Telbaman, telbaman, bolalarim.” [I’m mad, I’m mad, my children.] The repetition serves as both a plea for acceptance and a form of self-assessment. She acknowledges her emotional breakdown and legitimizes it by equating profound sadness with insanity. Madness thus becomes a hu-

manized yet socially condemned response. In Uzbek culture, however, such expressions are linked to traditions of public lamentation, where calling oneself “mad” serves to dramatize grief while maintaining dignity through performance. The distinction between madness and mourning is intentionally obscured, transforming personal anguish into a socially meaningful expression of loss.

In comparison, both narrators experience emotional collapse; however, the American narrator perceives reflection as a potential sign of weakness, whereas the Uzbek narrator’s candid repetition suggests that suffering is unjustly condemned. Consequently, judgment reflects both societal norms and individual self-perception. The comparison highlights two different cultural perspectives: the American mother views failure as a personal moral failing, whereas the Uzbek grandmother sees it as a collective sorrow. In both scenarios, resilience is characterized not by the absence of hardship but by the way cultural customs influence its expression and moral understanding.

3.2.5. The Judgment of Motherhood Through Legacy

“She is a child of her age, nothing else perhaps to offer her.” The concept of motherhood as a failed transmission represents a subtly negative evaluation of perceived inadequacies. The narrator suggests that she merely departed from the societal upheaval without leaving a lasting legacy. The feeling of loss is anchored in a contemporary Western perspective that frequently associates a mother’s worth with her social impact and personal accomplishments. Within this framework, the failure to leave behind a “legacy” is perceived as an individual shortcoming, mirroring wider concerns about advancement, self-fulfillment, and the influence on future generations.

Shu murg‘ak bola — uning ham o‘g‘li, ham nevarasi, ham chevarasi.” [This little child — is both her son, her grandchild, and her great-grandchild.] The concepts of moral worth and emotional restoration are positively evaluated in this context. The grandmother’s identity as a mother is reaffirmed through love and memories, offering her a sense of purpose and validation despite experiencing significant loss. The Uzbek storyteller taps into cultural customs that associate motherhood with the continuity of generations. Instead of being evaluated based on personal accomplishments, a mother’s value is honored through the enduring strength of

the family, where each child represents a living link to the past. This shared perspective turns sorrow into heritage, connecting survival with resilience.

In contrast to the American narrator, who perceives motherhood as a squandered potential, the Uzbek narrator regards it as a manifestation of cyclical resilience. Both perspectives highlight the moral implications of the maternal experience: one narrative emphasizes the restoration of worth, whereas the other critiques perceived failure. The contrast highlights how cultural contexts influence maternal perceptions: the American viewpoint emphasizes a linear, future-focused notion of legacy linked to personal achievement, whereas the Uzbek perspective reflects a cyclical and relational view, where legacy is found in the ongoing connections of family and memory.

3.3. Appreciation

3.3.1. Physical Tenderness as Sacred Memory

“She was a beautiful baby... She loved motion, loved light, loved color and music and textures.” The mother demonstrates an artistic appreciation for life through her poetic catalog of sensory experiences. Vibrant, joyful, and spiritually rich, the repeated use of “loved” celebrates the child’s soul through emotive imagery. This poetic style captures a uniquely American cultural setting that celebrates individuality and energy. By turning sensory richness into an art form, the narrator portrays memory not just as recalling the past but as a way of artistically preserving it, where beauty acts as a shield against sorrow.

Chevarasining suratiga qarab goh xo‘rsinadi, goh iljayadi. Suratni ko‘zlariga surtadi.” [She looks at her great-grandchild’s photo, sometimes sighing and sometimes smiling. She presses it to her eyes.] This moment elevates a mundane object to a symbol of desire and affection. The grandmother’s actions imbue the image with a spiritual dimension. Her gesture, which transforms memory into a vivid presence, reflects a profound emotional appreciation. In this context, the gesture of pressing the photograph against her eyes taps into the deeply ingrained Uzbek customs of sacred touch, where physical items serve as conduits for blessings (*baraka*) and continuity. Thus, memory is conveyed not through artistic storytelling but through a ritual that combines love with spirituality.

In comparison, both storytellers aestheticize love over time using emotional and sensory language. In the case of the Uzbek grandmother, presence is evoked from the absence, whereas in the American mother, recalled liveliness is captured. The cultural difference is evident in the ways of expression: American dialogue portrays memory as an artistic recollection of life, whereas Uzbek dialogue manifests memory through sacred touch and embodied rituals. This difference highlights how varying cultural-historical perspectives transform maternal tenderness into either an aesthetic or spiritual heritage.

3.3.2. The Value of Continuity

"She has much of me in her, and probably little enough of me at that." The narrator demonstrates ambivalence by questioning the value of her heritage while simultaneously deriving satisfaction from perceived similarities. However, this admiration is tainted by a sense of guilt. Despite her skepticism regarding the significance of her influence, she acknowledges its impact. This ambivalence mirrors a contemporary, individual-focused cultural framework where inheritance is perceived less as a sacred obligation and more as a psychological negotiation of identity. The American mother's discomfort stems from broader cultural concerns about autonomy, self-definition, and the uncertain transmission of values across generations influenced by social upheavals like war and depression.

"Xuddi o'zi, Kenjaginamning o'zi. Birtuki o'zgamas..." [Exactly him, just like my dearest little child. Not a single thread is different.] This line encapsulates a sense of awe and sacredness. Through visual continuity, the grandmother undergoes a process of rebirth rather than merely perceiving the similarities. The terminology employed suggests religious awareness of lineage, as well as spiritual and emotional inheritance. In this context, the Uzbek storyteller taps into longstanding cultural customs that view continuity not as a cause for skepticism but as a confirmation of fate and divine order. The focus on similarity reflects a perspective where family heritage is seen as continuous and spiritually endorsed, ensuring that identity is maintained beyond the vulnerability of individual existence.

In comparison, both narrators evaluate the intergenerational continuity. The American narrator experiences ambivalence and confusion, whereas the Uzbek narrator finds emotional solace. This comparison underscores two sepa-

rate cultural-historical frameworks: in the American context, continuity prompts reflections on personal legacy within a society that values individuality, whereas in the Uzbek context, continuity represents collective endurance and sacred renewal within a lineage-focused perspective.

3.3.3. Appreciating Emotional Rituals

"There is still enough left to live. It is still there in the tones of her voice..." In this context, the voice functions as a conduit for preserving emotional stability. The mother is drawn to subtle, aesthetically pleasing nuances, not events, but traces and tones. This reflects a refined and understated appreciation of what endures. The focus on tonal nuances highlights a distinctly modern, Western fascination with aesthetics as a realm of emotional resilience. Within the context of American cultural history, prioritizing "tones" over dramatic actions reflects a broader tradition of personal emotional strength, influenced by individualism and the psychological impact of war and societal transformations.

Choydan bir ho'pladi. Stakandagi choyning chayqalishiga ma'yus tikilib hikoyasini boshladi. [She sipped the tea and gazed sadly at the way it rippled in the glass, before beginning her story.] In this tranquil depiction, tea serves as a conduit for contemplation and represents an aesthetic ritual. Its importance is not inherent in the tea itself but rather in its role as a moment for emotional preparedness. The internal conflict is mirrored in ripples. In the context of Uzbek culture and history, drinking tea is far from a simple act; it is a profound social and spiritual tradition that signifies respect, contemplation, and connection. The grandmother's action elevates a common beverage to a meaningful ritual, placing personal sorrow within the shared practices of hospitality, patience, and quiet resilience.

Both narratives underscore the importance of aesthetic rituals, such as tea, speech, and gestures, as repositories of meaning and memory. One narrative is poetically introspective, whereas the other is anchored in cultural traditions. They collectively demonstrate how culturally distinct practices, Western aesthetic minimalism and Uzbek ritual symbolism, serve as stabilizing forces that uphold dignity and continuity in the face of maternal loss.

3.3.4. Aestheticize Resilience

"She would defend herself against attack... with a fierce protective dignity." The narrator expresses admira-

tion for her daughter's emotional resilience. The term *fierce protective dignity* encapsulates a nuanced and optimistic perspective on psychological endurance, embodying an aesthetic of resilience in the face of adversity. In the American context, this sense of dignity is both individual and historical, influenced by a cultural story that values stoicism, independence, and psychological endurance in the aftermath of war, economic downturns, and social turmoil. By describing resilience as "aesthetic," the narrator engages in a Western tradition of elevating hardship through metaphorical enhancement rather than through collective rituals.

"Xotin kishi bo 'la turib, azbaroyi tirikchilik ekan, konibodomlik zo'r polvon bilan kurash tushganman..." [Though I was a woman, out of sheer necessity I wrestled with a mighty champion from Konibodom.] The absence of dramatization in the delivery of this remarkable confession elevates her actions to a testament of resilience and strength. The significance lies in survival as a form of strength, rather than a moral judgment. In the context of Uzbek culture and history, resilience is seen as a practical and socially embedded concept. Engaging in activities like wrestling a man, which defy traditional gender roles, is portrayed not as an extraordinary feat but as a necessary aspect of survival in a patriarchal society characterized by poverty, communal challenges, and physical toughness. The lack of dramatization highlights a cultural perspective where resilience is assessed through practical survival rather than introspective psychological analysis.

In comparison, both women perceive resistance as a form of beauty, with one emphasizing emotional defense and the other emphasizing physical resilience. This perspective encompasses moral, social, and artistic appreciation of the work. In summary, the comparison highlights two distinct cultural approaches to survival: the American mother views resilience as a form of psychological nobility, while the Uzbek grandmother sees it as practical pragmatism. Despite their differences, both perspectives demonstrate how women can reinterpret suffering not as a sign of weakness but as a culturally recognized form of strength.

3.3.5. Nature and Silence in Form of Emotional Landscapes

"I stand here ironing... what you asked me moves tormented back and forth with the iron." In this context, ironing serves as a metaphor for mourning and memory. Through

repetition, care, and existential significance, mundane tasks acquire importance, embodying poetic and commonplace elements. Within the American cultural and historical framework, the conversion of household chores into metaphors mirrors a literary trend from the mid-20th century. During this period, women reinterpreted domestic life as both a burden and a realm for subtle self-expression. Ironing, traditionally seen as a routine female task, is re-envisioned as an existential activity, illustrating how personal acts of endurance became symbolic channels for repressed emotions in a society influenced by postwar gender norms.

"Poezd derazadan lip-lip o'tayotgan bog'larga, cho'llarga ma'yus boqadi. Ko'zlaridan shashqator yosh oqadi." [She gazes out at the flashing orchards and deserts. Tears stream from her eyes.] The natural environment serves as a canvas for mourning. Emotional tranquility stands in stark contrast to apparent swiftness. As external movement mirrors internal turmoil, the appreciation of the landscape becomes symbolic, merging emotion and natural beauty. In the context of Uzbek culture and history, nature often serves as a shared emotional backdrop. The grandmother's view of orchards and deserts embodies not just her personal sorrow but also the agrarian and nomadic traditions where land, memory, and destiny are intertwined. Her tears are integrated with the environment, indicating a culturally ingrained perspective where mourning is echoed through natural cycles and landscapes, rather than being confined to individual psychological experiences.

Both narrators articulate their internal emotions through external spaces or activities, with appreciation emerging through symbolic actions, in the workplace or the landscape. This analysis shows that the American narrator turns everyday household tasks into a symbol of internal conflict, while the Uzbek narrator uses the natural world as a reflection of communal resilience. In both narratives, silence, whether found in monotonous chores or thoughtful observation, evolves into a culturally influenced emotional expression that converts personal sorrow into a collective understanding.

3.4. A Comparative Lexical Analysis of Maternal Discourse in Two Cultural Contexts

A linguistic examination of the two stories reveals a shared emphasis on themes of motherhood, adversity, and

social identity through the use of recurring words closely associated with women's real-life experiences. In *I Stand Here Ironing*, terms and expressions such as *mother*, *daughter*, *baby*, *she seldom smiled*, *I loved her*, and *a child of anxious love* construct a portrayal of caregiving intertwined with regret and concern. The vocabulary of *work*, *depression*, *poverty*, *war*, and *running* outlines a narrative of systemic challenges and female perseverance. In *Chevara*, words such as *kampir* [old woman], *qizim* [my daughter], *chevara* [great-grandchild], *yetti bola tuqqanman* [I had seven children], and *yuzidan cho 'pillatib o 'paverdi* [kept kissing him all over the face with smacking sounds] similarly anchor the narrative in maternal identity, while *hammollik* [porter's work], *urush* [war], *qamoq* [prison], *hech kimdan sado chiqmasdi* [no sound came from anyone meaning no one to help], and *tuproqqa bergan olti bolasi* [her six children who had passed away] emphasize the harshness of personal and his-

torical trauma. Emotional language is present in both texts, with examples such as "my heart in darkness," "fear," "I cried," "I could not sleep" in Said Ahmad, and "worry," "guilt," "fear" in Tillie Olsen. Violence and loss are depicted in *Chevara* through "killed a man," "knife to the throat," "house burned," and in Olsen through "war," "fear," and "sharing want." Despite these challenges, hope and resilience are lexically expressed through "she will find her way," "there is still enough left to live by," and "survived, thank God, he was reborn" in *Chevara*. Social values and roles are evident in both texts, with Olsen using "caretaker," "mother," "neighbors," and "school," while Ahmad employs "mother," "chairman," "husband," and "the elders." This consistent lexical pattern highlights how both authors craft a linguistically rich portrayal of women's endurance, suffering, and quest for dignity amid oppressive circumstances (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Comparison of Emotional Lexemes.

Category	Example Lexemes (Tillie Olsen)	Example Lexemes (Said Ahmad)	Notes
Motherhood & Care	mother, baby, nurse, feed, hold, daughter, love, protect	kampir [old woman], qizim [my daughter], chevara [great-grandchild], bolam [my child], o'g'lim [my son], bag'riga [to her bosom], duo [prayer]	Both texts examine the mother-child relationship, employing lexical elements that convey themes of nurturing and loss.
Hardship & Struggle	work, hunger, struggle, war, poor, cry, iron, worry, fear	qiynchilik [hardship], o'lim [death], jang [battle], yetim [orphan], yig'lash [crying], urush [war], qamoq [prison], hammollik [porter's work]	Both narratives depict women's resilience in adverse conditions.
Emotions & Attitudes	regret, hope, despair, guilt, sorrow, happiness, sadness, shame	ma'yus [melancholy], umid [hope], baxt [happiness], qo'rquv [fear], sabr [patience], alam [pain], yetimlik [orphanhood], dard [sorrow]	Appraisal categories: expressing.
Resilience & Survival	endure, survive, manage, help, try, live	chidash [endurance], sabr [patience], yashash [to live], ko'nikish [adaptation], shukur [gratitude], bardosh [fortitude]	Both underscore women's resilience.
Social Roles & Norms	mother, caretaker, housewife, woman, daughter, neighbor	kampir [old woman], ona [mother], ayol [woman], rais [chairman/head], boshliq [leader], qiz [daughter], kuyov [son-in-law]	Illustrates the cultural expectations placed on women, their responsibilities, and the societal assessments they encounter.
Violence & Trauma	fight, hit, beat, fear, scream, war, leave, break	o'ldirish [to kill], kurash [wrestling], urush [war], qon [blood], o'lim [death], qochish [escape], yiqilish [falling]	Manifested in Ahmad's experiences of war and oppression, as well as in Olsen's trauma from the Depression era
Hope & Future	dream, hope, laugh, perform, gift, chance, believe	orzu [dream], kelajak [future], yashash [to live], chevara [great-grandchild], umid [hope], mehribonlik [kindness], duo [prayer]	Language of possibility despite hardship

3.5. A Semiotic Analysis of the Two Works

The semiotic analysis of Tillie Olsen's *I Stand Here Ironing* offers a profound exploration of maternal identity and societal expectations through the lens of everyday ob-

jects and domestic routines. The narrative's central symbol, the ironing board, serves as a multifaceted metaphor for the mother's role and her experiences.

The ironing board represents more than just a household item; it embodies the repetitive and often thankless nature

of domestic labor traditionally assigned to women. As the mother stands at the ironing board, she engages in a physical act that parallels her emotional and mental efforts to “smooth out” the complexities of her daughter’s life. This continuous process of shaping and refining mirrors the ongoing challenges of motherhood, where the desire for perfection often clashes with the realities of limited resources and societal constraints.

The child’s worn-out clothing becomes a poignant symbol of both material poverty and the passage of time. These garments, repeatedly washed and ironed, reflect the mother’s persistent efforts to maintain dignity and care for her child despite the financial hardships. The act of mending and maintaining these clothes symbolizes the mother’s attempt to repair and nurture her relationship with her daughter, which has been strained by circumstances beyond their control.

The household environment itself becomes a semiotic landscape, with each object and space laden with meanings. The cramped living quarters, absence of luxuries, and omnipresence of domestic tools all contribute to a sense of confinement and limitation. This setting reinforces societal expectations placed on mothers, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, to sacrifice their personal aspirations for their children.

The repetitive nature of household chores, exemplified by the constant need for ironing, washing, and cleaning, serves as a powerful symbol of the cyclical and often overwhelming nature of maternal duty. This repetition not only structures the mother’s daily life but also represents the societal expectation of unwavering maternal dedication and selflessness.

These interconnected symbols collectively construct a complex portrait of maternal identities. They illustrate how motherhood is not just a biological role but a socially constructed identity shaped by cultural norms, economic realities and gendered expectations. The mother’s internal struggle, as she reflects on her past choices and their impact on her daughter, is externalized through her interaction with these domestic objects and spaces.

Moreover, the narrative’s semiotic elements highlight the moral dimensions associated with motherhood. The patience required for repetitive tasks, the responsibility inherent in maintaining a household, and the perseverance demonstrated in the face of hardship all contribute to a culturally

idealized notion of the “good mother.” However, this idealization is presented with a critical eye, as the narrative reveals the emotional toll and personal sacrifices demanded by such expectations.

In conclusion, the semiotic analysis of *I Stand Here Ironing* reveals how everyday objects and routines can have profound cultural and personal significance. Through the symbolism of the ironing board, worn clothing, and the domestic environment, Olsen’s narrative provides a nuanced exploration of maternal identity, societal expectations, and the complex interplay between personal experience and cultural norms. This analysis not only deepens our understanding of the text but also invites reflection on broader societal constructs surrounding motherhood and gender roles.

In contrast, the semiotic analysis of *Chevara* reveals a rich tapestry of symbols and cultural artifacts that construct maternal identity through nonverbal communication. The narrative employs various semiotic elements to bridge generational gaps and cultural distances, emphasizing the enduring nature of familial bonds and maternal devotion. The grandmother’s journey, initiated by receiving her grandson’s photograph, serves as a powerful semiotic device. This journey becomes a metaphorical bridge between the past and present, symbolizing the continuity of family ties across time and space. The photograph itself acts as a catalyst, a visual signifier that sparks a chain of emotional and physical responses, embodying the power of visual representation in maintaining familial connections. Throughout the narrative, everyday objects are imbued with profound symbolic significance. Photographs, scarves, and shared meals transcend their mundane functions to become powerful symbols of love, continuity, and resistance to loss. These objects serve as tangible links to cultural heritage and family history, acting as semiotic anchors in a world of change and alienation. The grandmother’s repeated references to the destroyed and rebuilt home create a powerful visual and material language of endurance. This recurring motif symbolizes resilience in the face of adversity, reflecting the broader cultural narratives of survival and reconstruction. The home, in its destruction and rebirth, becomes a metaphor for the family’s ability to withstand challenges and to maintain their identity and values. The train journey introduces a dynamic element to the semiotic landscape. The train itself becomes a symbol of transition and connection, physically and metaphorically

transporting the grandmother between different worlds - the past and present, the familiar and the unknown. This journey underscores the themes of maternal sacrifice and determination, as the grandmother undertakes this voyage out of love and duty. Intimate details, such as tears mingling with tea, create sensory symbolism that conveys deep emotional resonance. This image blends the bitterness of separation with the warmth of familial love, encapsulating the complex emotions associated with long-distance family relationships. Similarly, ancestral blessings invoke a spiritual dimension that connects the present generation to a long lineage of maternal care and wisdom. The concept of *sabr* (patience) emerges as a central theme, embodied in the grandmother's actions and attitudes. This cultural value is a semiotic marker of maternal identity, representing the enduring nature of a mother's love and her capacity for selfless waiting and hoping. The grandmother's patient journey and her unwavering

focus on reuniting with her grandson exemplify this cultural ideal. Viewed through Yuri Lotman's perspective of culture as a dynamic semiotic system^[13], *Chevara* illustrates how familial and cultural identities are sustained through a complex interplay of signs and symbols. The narrative demonstrates how individual actions and objects gain meaning within a broader cultural context, contributing to the maintenance and evolution of a collective identity. In conclusion, the semiotic analysis of *Chevara* reveals a nuanced portrayal of maternal identity constructed through a rich array of non-verbal symbols and cultural artifacts. The narrative weaves together personal, familial, and cultural elements to create a compelling representation of maternal love and duty that transcends geographical and generational boundaries of the Uzbek. This analysis highlights the power of semiotics in conveying complex cultural narratives and emotional truths through ordinary objects and actions (see **Tables 2–4**).

Table 2. Semiotic Analysis of *I Stand Here Ironing*.

Semiotic Element	Sign/Artifact	Function/Meaning
Domestic Space	Ironing board, kitchen	Symbolizes repetitive, gendered maternal labor and constrained identity
Material Artifacts	Daughter's clothes, toys	Represent the burden of caregiving, reminders of poverty and sacrifice
Emotional Atmosphere	Silence, sighs, interruptions	Nonverbal markers of stress, regret, and maternal guilt
Repetitive Actions	Ironing, preparing food	Reinforce themes of routine self-sacrifice and gender expectations
Cultural Themes	Maternal responsibility	Reflects cultural codes of patience, duty, and moral perseverance

Table 3. Semiotic Analysis of *Chevara*.

Semiotic Element	Sign/Artifact	Function/Meaning
Domestic Space	Rural home, station, train	Signifies migration, dislocation, resilience, and maternal rootedness
Material Artifacts	Grandson's photograph, scarf	Connects personal memory, ancestral hope, and generational survival
Emotional Atmosphere	Tears, sighs, silent endurance	Nonverbal markers of loss, sorrow, but also deep inner strength
Repetitive Actions	Traveling, blessing the child	Encodes the grandmother's unwavering sense of care and transmission of values
Cultural Themes	Patience	Expresses cultural ideals of maternal devotion, faith, and spiritual hope

Table 4. Full Comparative Table of Both Short Stories.

Dimension	<i>I Stand Here Ironing</i>	<i>Chevara</i>	Shared/Cultural Insight
Narrative Style	Reflective, self-critical, emotionally restrained	Vivid storytelling, morally declarative	Narrative style shapes how maternal pain and survival are framed
Affect	Guilt, regret, fragile hope, expressed through metaphors and rhetorical doubt	Grief, resignation, spiritual resilience, expressed through embodied metaphors and repetition	Universal maternal affective burden, culturally inflected through language and symbol
Judgment	Self-blame, cautious social critique	Self-defence, strong condemnation of social injustice	Different cultural codes shape moral evaluation of motherhood
Appreciation	Beauty in small rituals (ironing, memories, sensory experiences)	Beauty in heritage symbols (tea, family photo, blessings)	Aesthetic meaning of everyday acts as a coping mechanism
Semiotic Symbols	Ironing board, child's clothing, routine chores	Grandson's photograph, scarf, ancestral prayers	Domestic and material artifacts transmit cultural codes of gendered labour, patience, and moral continuity
Cultural Meaning	Emphasis on psychological, individual struggle	Emphasis on collective endurance, moral survival	Both reveal how cultural ideology shapes maternal identity under conditions of adversity and change

Taken together, the semiotic readings of *I Stand Here Ironing* and *Chevara* demonstrate how maternal identity is articulated through symbolic objects, domestic spaces, and cultural practices. While Tillie Olsen encodes maternal struggle in the repetitive acts of ironing, worn clothing, and silence, Said Ahmad embeds endurance and patience in photographs, train journeys, and blessings. Each text relies on semiotic markers that transform ordinary objects into carriers of cultural and emotional meaning, situating motherhood at the intersection of private experience and collective tradition. This section shows that, although the symbolic repertoires differ, both narratives mobilize everyday artifacts to communicate maternal resilience, responsibility, and devotion within their respective cultural frameworks.

4. The Integrated Evaluative Model: Definitions, Architecture, and Operation

4.1. Purpose

The integrated evaluative model formalizes how appraisal resources (Affect, Judgment, Appreciation) interact with lexical indices and semiotic materiality to produce culturally situated evaluation in literary discourse.

4.2. Key Definitions

Semiotic materiality refers to the object- and space-bound carriers of meaning (e.g., ironing board, clothing, photograph, train compartment, tea glass). In this study, a material element counts as evaluative when, in context, it positions characters or stances (e.g., as dutiful, resigned, resilient) or grades intensity (e.g., repetition, ritual handling) even without explicit evaluative lexis.

Lexical indices are culture-bearing words or collocations whose meanings are conventionalized within a speech community (e.g., *sabr*, *taqdir* in Uzbek; “fierce protective dignity” in Olsen) and that index value orientations (endurance, fate, self-defense).

Appraisal resources follow Martin and White (2005): Affect (feelings), Judgment (ethics/capacity/propriety), Appreciation (valuation of things/processes).

4.3. Architectural Layers

- (1) Textual layer (Appraisal): mark clauses for Affect/Judgment/Appreciation, engagement, and graduation.
- (2) Lexical-cultural layer: identify culture-specific terms and collocations that index values or moral stances.
- (3) Material-semiotic layer: identify objects/spaces/gestures that act as evaluative signs in context.
- (4) Integration layer: link (1)–(3) via co-instantiation (e.g., an Affect resource co-occurs with a ritual gesture) or substitution (a material sign stands in for an explicit evaluation).

4.4. Operating principles

- (1) Co-instantiation rule: If an appraisal clause occurs adjacent to a material sign or ritual act, treat them as a single composite evaluation unless contradicted by context.
- (2) Substitution rule: When explicit appraisal is absent but a material sign predictably cues stance (e.g., pressing a photograph to one’s eyes), code an implicit evaluation (e.g., tenderness, continuity) and mark it as semiotic-driven.
- (3) Graduation via materiality: Repetition, ritualization, or tactile intensity grades evaluation (e.g., repeated ironing ↔ routinized sacrifice; repeated “*telbaman*” ↔ intensified despair).
- (4) Cultural anchoring: Interpret material signs through documented cultural practices (e.g., tea as reflective social ritual; domestic tools as gendered labor symbols).

4.5. Minimal Coding Schema (Extract)

To ensure the transparency and replicability of the analytical procedure, the **Table 5** presents a minimal coding schema that was applied during the close reading and interpretive analysis of the selected passages. It outlines the unit of analysis, the corresponding code family, representative example cues, and the evaluative functions derived from the Appraisal Theory framework and the proposed integrated evaluative model. This schema served as a practical reference during the annotation of both verbal and semiotic expressions in the narratives.

Table 5. Minimal Coding Schema for Appraisal, Lexical, and Semiotic Analysis.

Unit	Code Family	Example Cue	How it Evaluates
Clause	Affect	“She seldom smiled”	Negative affect (unhappiness)
Clause	Judgment	“My wisdom came too late”	Negative capacity/propriety (self-assessment)
Material sign	Semiotic materiality	Ironing board	Routine self-sacrifice; constrained role
Gesture	Semiotic materiality	Pressing photo to eyes	Tenderness; lineage continuity
Lexical index	Lexical-cultural	sabr ‘patience’	Endurance; communal resilience

4.6. Contribution

The model extends Appraisal Theory by systematizing how objects, spaces, and gestures function as evaluative resources, making semiotic materiality first-class evidence rather than background illustration.

5. Discussion

In the narratives examined from Sections 3.1.1 to 3.3.5, the discourse of mothers and grandmothers reveals a complex interplay between personal emotions and cultural-historical influences. Both the American mother and the Uzbek grandmother articulate grief, resilience, and love through evaluative-expressive communicative signs, yet the encoding of these emotions reflects their distinct socio-political and cultural contexts. In the American narrative, the maternal voice is characterized by ambivalence, guilt, and an aestheticization of absence. Emotional breakdown is perceived as a weakness or moral failing, evident in the narrator’s discomfort with grief and introspection. Legacy is framed as inadequacy, with motherhood depicted as a “failed transmission” rather than a source of continuity. Even moments of resilience, such as “fierce protective dignity,” are viewed through a lens of psychological defense rather than embodied survival. Domestic rituals, ironing, the tones of a voice, remembered sensory impressions, are elevated as aesthetic markers of inner turmoil. These expressive signs illustrate how post-war American culture, with its tensions between traditional domestic roles and emerging individualism, shaped maternal identity as a site of ambivalence, fragility, and nostalgia. Conversely, the Uzbek grandmother’s discourse situates emotion within continuity, ritual, and embodied practices. Emotional collapse is not internalized as weakness but humanized through repetition and legitimized as a social reality. Motherhood is positively evaluated through cyclical resilience, with kinship ties providing restoration and moral worth. Everyday gestures, pressing a photograph to the eyes,

sipping tea before narrating, gazing at landscapes through tears, become ritualized acts that transform memory into presence. Resilience is celebrated through understated strength, as in wrestling “a mighty champion,” where survival itself is the measure of dignity. These communicative signs reflect the cultural-historical conditions of Soviet-era Uzbekistan, where communal resilience, lineage, and embodied continuity were central values in the face of loss and upheaval. Together, the comparison highlights that maternal discourse cannot be reduced to linguistic description alone but must be situated in cultural memory and historical context. The American mother’s evaluative-expressive signs emphasize psychological introspection, ambivalence, and the aesthetics of loss, whereas the Uzbek grandmother’s signs underscore continuity, resilience, and the ritualization of memory. This contrast demonstrates that communicative signs function as more than expressive tools: they serve as semiotic carriers of collective history, transmitting emotional legacies shaped by post-war American individualism and Soviet-era Uzbek collectivism. These findings affirm the study’s central argument that evaluative-expressive communicative signs not only reveal individual affect but also encode broader socio-cultural worldviews, making them essential to understanding how emotion and identity are represented in literature across cultures.

6. Conclusions

The comparative examination of Tillie Olsen’s *I Stand Here Ironing* and Said Ahmad’s *Chevara* reveals that maternal discourse serves as a significant locus where culture, language, and emotion converge to create a complex portrayal of motherhood. The study employs Appraisal Theory in conjunction with lexical and semiotic analysis to elucidate the distinct expressions of grief, guilt, resilience, and optimism in American and Uzbek cultures, while simultaneously expressing universal maternal feelings. Olsen’s narrator re-

flects an internal conflict influenced by personal guilt and psychological weight, while Ahmad's grandmother articulates with ethical clarity, cultural forbearance, and communal strength. These findings affirm that maternal identity is both a personal expression and a cultural construct influenced by historical contexts, societal expectations, and language resources. Common items like an ironing board, a portrait, or a cup of tea serve as cultural symbols that encapsulate moral beliefs, survival tactics, and emotional realities. The study thereby enhances the field of cross-cultural literary analysis by demonstrating that the language of motherhood, despite being articulated through diverse metaphors and symbols, possesses universal significance. Simultaneously, it emphasizes the significance of maintaining cultural specificity in translation, education, and interpretation. Nonetheless, given that the analysis is confined to two literary works, the conclusions should be interpreted with caution: they elucidate the representation of American and Uzbek motherhood in the narratives of Olsen and Ahmad, rather than asserting definitive claims about either culture in its entirety. This limitation underscores the necessity for future research to expand the corpus in order to capture a more comprehensive cultural perspective. Overall, the perspectives of mothers in these two works underscore that literature reflects human suffering and exemplifies resilience, connecting various faiths via common emotional and ethical experiences.

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Conceptualization, F.K. and K.M.; methodology, D.O. and G.M.; formal analysis, F.D. and N.B.; investigation, M.K. and R.U.; resources, S.-F.A.; data curation, Z.S.; writing—original draft preparation, F.K. and K.M.; writing—review and editing, all authors; visualization, D.O.; supervision, K.M.; project administration, F.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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