PSYCHOLOGICAL AND STYLISTIC FUNCTIONS OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT DEPICTION IN EDGAR ALLAN POE AND NAZAR ESHONQUL: A COMPARATIVE NARRATOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract. *This study examines how direct and indirect modes of depiction construct psychological experience in short fiction by Edgar Allan Poe and Nazar Eshonqul. It treats explicit statement, confessional speech, action, sensory imagery, symbolic setting, and silence as interacting narrative resources rather than reducing them to a simple telling-versus-showing opposition. The corpus comprises Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Black Cat," and "The Pit and the Pendulum," together with Eshonqul's "Maymun yetaklagan odam" ("The Man Led by a Monkey") and "Shamolni tutib bo'lmaydi" ("The Wind Cannot Be Caught"). Through comparative close reading, 40 psychologically salient passages were classified as predominantly direct, indirect, or mixed. In the coded sample, Poe foregrounds self-report and argumentative confession but destabilizes them through rhythm, auditory imagery, contradiction, and unreliable narration. Eshonqul relies more heavily on environmental projection, material objects, bodily detail, communal silence, and historically charged symbolism; direct speech appears selectively at moments of moral rupture. Both writers produce psychological depth by moving between explicit disclosure and inferential reconstruction. Their differences are better explained by genre, historical memory, ethical orientation, and narrative voice than by claims about fixed national psychologies. The analysis offers a transparent framework for cross-cultural study of represented minds in literary narrative analysis.*

Keywords*: direct depiction, indirect depiction, psychological narrative, Edgar Allan Poe, Nazar Eshonqul, mind style, comparative narratology.*

Introduction

Psychological fiction does more than name emotions; it shapes the conditions under which readers recognize, question, and evaluate a represented mind. A narrator may explicitly declare fear, guilt, hatred, or sanity, yet the force of that declaration depends on the surrounding syntax, action, sensory detail, focalization, and symbolic environment. A text may also avoid naming an emotion while making it legible through a trembling hand, a decaying house, an obsessive sound, or a refusal to speak. Direct and indirect depiction are therefore complementary modes within a broader system of characterization and consciousness representation rather than mutually exclusive techniques.

Narratology provides a useful basis for distinguishing these modes. Direct depiction explicitly attributes a psychological quality or state through narration, self-report, or dialogue; indirect depiction requires readers to infer mentality from behavior, perception, setting, objects, temporal structure, and figurative patterning. Rimmon-Kenan (2002) treats characterization as a cumulative process in which traits may be stated or inferred, whereas Keen (2015) emphasizes that

fictional minds are constructed through several representational channels rather than isolated descriptions. Work on narrative form and mentality likewise argues that consciousness emerges through interactions among voice, perspective, discourse form, and contextual knowledge (Maziarczyk & Teske, 2026). The distinction remains analytically useful when treated as a continuum that also accommodates mixed passages in which explicit and inferential cues operate together.

Poe's tales suit this framework because their narrators often insist on the accuracy of their perceptions while their verbal performance exposes instability. In "The Tell-Tale Heart," claims of sanity coexist with compulsive repetition, temporal dilation, and impossible hearing. Shen's (2013) reader-oriented account of unreliability helps explain this discrepancy: readers assess narration against textual, generic, ethical, and experiential frames. Toikkanen (2017) further shows that the tale's auditory images are not neutral descriptions; sound becomes an imaginative event that reorganizes the relationship among narrator, victim, and reader. Poe's explicit psychological vocabulary is therefore inseparable from the indirect evidence supplied by style.

Nazar Eshonqul's prose offers a productive cross-cultural comparison. His fiction repeatedly represents damaged subjectivity through ruined spaces, bodily deterioration, paintings, garments, silence, and memories embedded in the material world. Recent scholarship places Eshonqul within post-Soviet Central Asian prose and emphasizes moral uncertainty, historical trauma, symbolic density, and the intersection of realism with fantastic and modernist strategies (Ochilov, 2026a, 2026b). In "Maymun yetaklagan odam," an old painter's ideological disillusionment appears in his speech and in the decaying house, deteriorating body, and changing relationship between the human figure and the monkey in his paintings. In "Shamolni tutib bo'lmaydi," Bayna momo's grief and anger are distributed across the old house, the unworn garments of her dead husband and son, the village's black-curtained windows, and her restrained speech (Eshonqul, 2013a, 2013b).

This comparison does not reduce the writers' work to fixed Western and Eastern psychologies. Such an approach would mistake literary convention for cultural essence. Instead, the analysis asks how writers from different historical and linguistic traditions combine explicit and inferential resources to represent psychological crisis. It also considers how genre and historical memory shape the ethical effects of those resources. Poe's Gothic confessions usually concentrate attention on an individual consciousness under pressure, whereas Eshonqul's narratives often connect private suffering with collective history, social complicity, and the residue of ideological violence.

The analysis addresses three research questions: (1) How are direct, indirect, and mixed modes distributed across a purposive sample of psychologically salient passages? (2) Which stylistic devices most consistently carry psychological meaning in each author's selected texts? (3) How do the writers differ in the ethical and cultural functions assigned to confession, silence, sensory imagery, and symbolic setting? These questions support a theoretically grounded and transparent comparative framework while preserving the interpretive sensitivity required by literary texts.

Materials and Methods

Research Design and Corpus

This study used a qualitative comparative design that combined narratological close reading with descriptive passage coding. Coding was not intended to convert literary interpretation into objective measurement or to support statistical generalization across either author's complete

oeuvre. Instead, it created an explicit record of the textual evidence underlying the comparison and reduced reliance on impressionistic claims that one writer is simply more "direct" or "symbolic" than the other.

The corpus comprised three tales by Poe—"The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Black Cat," and "The Pit and the Pendulum"—and two stories by Eshonqul—"Maymun yetaklagan odam" and "Shamolni tutib bo'lmaydi" (Eshonqul, 2013a, 2013b; Poe, 1842, 1843a, 1843b). The Poe texts represent different configurations of obsession, guilt, bodily fear, and first-person narration. The Eshonqul texts foreground ideological collapse, historical grievance, loneliness, and the symbolic afterlife of violence. Psychological experience is central to all five texts, although they differ in narrative voice, historical setting, and degree of explicit introspection.

The analysis used 40 purposively selected passages: 20 from Poe and 20 from Eshonqul. A passage was included when it performed a clear psychological function through at least one of the following features: explicit emotion or self-assessment, interior reflection, consequential dialogue or silence, bodily action, sensory patterning, symbolic objects, spatial projection, temporal distortion, or contradiction between statement and performance. The selection covered the beginning, middle, and ending of each work and included both climactic and quieter moments. Uzbek passages were interpreted in the original language; brief English renderings are the researcher's translations.

Coding Framework and Analytical Procedure

Each passage was assigned one primary code. Direct depiction was used when the narrator or a character explicitly named a mental state, motive, judgment, or identity. Indirect depiction was used when psychology was inferred mainly from action, bodily detail, setting, sound, objects, images, or silence. Mixed depiction was used when explicit statement and inferential evidence were equally necessary to the passage's effect. Table 1 summarizes the categories and indicators. The researcher then conducted a second interpretive pass, checking each code against its surrounding scene. Borderline passages were retained as mixed rather than forced into a binary category.

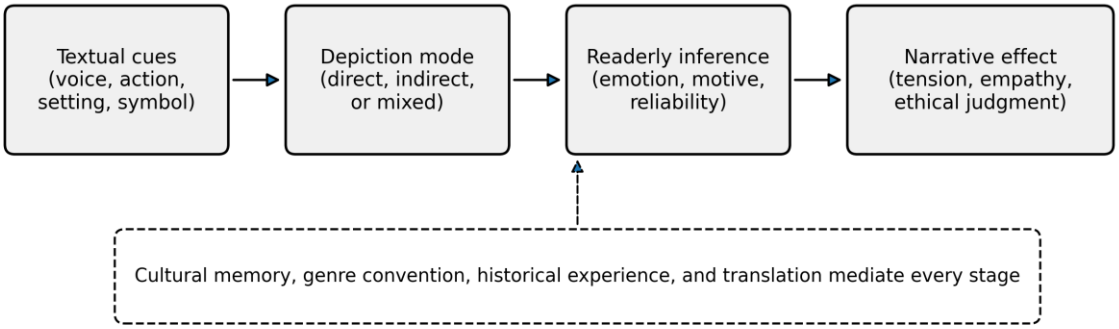
Table 1. Operational Framework for Coding Psychological Depiction

Code	Operational definition	Typical textual indicators	Primary interpretive function
Direct	A mental state, motive, judgment, or identity is named explicitly.	Self-report, narrator statement, confession, or evaluative dialogue.	Rapid disclosure, argument, and moral or emotional framing.
Indirect	Psychology is inferred mainly from nonexplicit evidence.	Action, gesture, bodily detail, sound, setting, objects, images, or silence.	Readerly reconstruction, ambiguity, and symbolic or sensory immersion.
Mixed	Explicit and inferential cues are equally necessary to the passage's effect.	A statement is contradicted or amplified by style, event, setting, or behavior.	Dynamic tension between what is stated and what the text makes perceptible.

The analysis proceeded at two levels. First, descriptive counts and percentages were calculated for the 40 coded passages. Because the sample was small and purposive, these percentages serve only to organize the comparison; they are not estimates of either author's complete stylistic practice. Second, the passages were examined for interactions among narrative

voice, mind style, sensory imagery, symbolic setting, and ethical positioning. Pillière's (2013) account of mind style supports attention to recurring linguistic patterns that shape a reader's model of consciousness. Keen's (2006) theory of narrative empathy informs the distinction between access to a character's emotions and ethical approval of that character. Figure 1 presents the conceptual sequence used in the analysis.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model for Analyzing Direct and Indirect Psychological Depiction



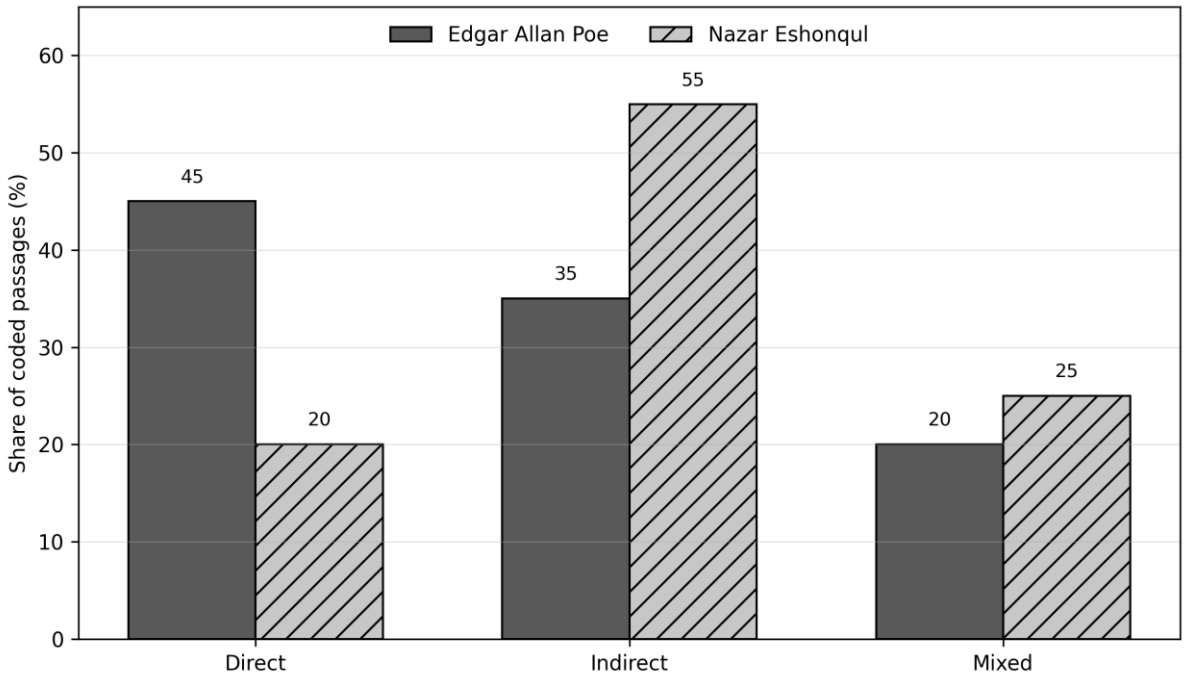
Note. The model treats depiction mode as one stage in a contextual process rather than as an isolated binary feature.

Results

Distribution of Depiction Modes

The coding revealed a clear but nonabsolute contrast. Among Poe's 20 passages, 9 (45%) were predominantly direct, 7 (35%) indirect, and 4 (20%) mixed. Among Eshonqul's 20 passages, 4 (20%) were direct, 11 (55%) indirect, and 5 (25%) mixed. Figure 2 presents this distribution. Within the selected sample, Poe foregrounds explicit psychological speech more often, whereas Eshonqul more often externalizes mentality through setting, objects, bodily signs, and communal behavior. The mixed category remains important because both writers create especially complex effects when explicit statements are confirmed, complicated, or contradicted by indirect cues.

Figure 2. Distribution of Direct, Indirect, and Mixed Depiction in the Coded Passage Sample



Note. Percentages describe a purposive sample of 20 passages per author and are not corpus-wide estimates.

Poe: Confessional Directness and Sensory Destabilization

Poe's direct mode is most visible in confessional openings and argumentative self-description. "The Tell-Tale Heart" opens with the narrator insisting that he is nervous but sane (Poe, 1843b). This is direct psychological naming, yet the punctuation, repetition, and defensive address immediately weaken its credibility. The statement does not settle the narrator's condition; it creates a problem of interpretation. Shen's (2013) model of unreliability explains why the passage functions as mixed depiction at the level of reader response even though its surface form is direct. Readers weigh the narrator's claim against his irrational motive, exaggerated sensory capacity, and urgent effort to persuade an imagined listener.

The same pattern structures "The Black Cat." The narrator attributes his transformation to alcohol and an innate impulse toward perversity, thereby supplying readers with a vocabulary for his deterioration (Poe, 1843a). Yet his moral language repeatedly functions as evasion. Cruel actions, changes in tone, and the displacement of responsibility onto alcohol, fate, and the animal indirectly reveal a consciousness unwilling to accept agency. Direct confession is therefore not equivalent to reliable self-knowledge. Poe turns self-report into dramatic evidence: what the narrator says about himself matters, but how and when he says it matters more.

Poe's indirect depiction relies especially on sound, rhythm, and bodily sensation. In "The Tell-Tale Heart," the heartbeat is more than an object within the story world. Its increasing intensity converts guilt or panic into an auditory structure experienced by both narrator and reader. Toikkanen (2017) argues that such auditory imagery produces a paradoxical visualization of sound; readers do not simply hear about the heartbeat but imaginatively experience its pressure. Short clauses, repeated temporal markers, and accelerating exclamations produce a mind style organized by hyperattention. The psychological state is enacted before it is interpreted.

"The Pit and the Pendulum" shifts the emphasis from guilt to survival. The narrator repeatedly reports uncertainty about space, duration, and bodily position (Poe, 1842). Direct statements of terror occur, but the dominant psychological effect emerges indirectly through

darkness, measured movement, tactile exploration, the descending blade, and the narrowing walls. The external machinery becomes a model of consciousness under coercion. The prison is not merely symbolic; it structures perception by restricting what can be known at each moment. Poe's psychological method thus ranges from confessional overstatement to sensory restriction, but both forms depend on careful management of readerly inference.

Eshonqul: Material Memory, Silence, and Ethical Compression

Eshonqul's direct passages are less frequent and strategically concentrated. In "Maymun yetaklagan odam," the old painter's reflections on faith explicitly articulate ideological disillusionment: values he once revered as good have become indistinguishable from evil (Eshonqul, 2013a). This is a direct moral and psychological diagnosis, but its force depends on indirect preparation through the neglected house, decaying smells, trembling hands, hostile gaze, and paintings that reverse the relationship between the man and the monkey. The dialogue names the collapse only after the environment has embodied it. Direct speech functions as a late interpretive key rather than the primary carrier of consciousness.

The painter's changing artworks are the story's central indirect device. They materialize a historical and ethical trajectory that the character cannot fully explain. The narrator interprets them gradually, revising his initial impressions as he learns about the old man's past. This delayed understanding makes psychology relational: the old man's mind is not transparently available, and the younger narrator's interpretive limitations become part of the story. Ochilov (2026a) likewise emphasizes moral ambiguity in Eshonqul's treatment of ideological inheritance. The old man is at once a victim, participant, witness, and judge of a historical order. His bitterness cannot be reduced to private pathology because it remains inseparable from compromised collective memory.

In "Shamolni tutib bo'lmaydi," indirect depiction is still more prominent. Bayna momo's grief is represented through the old house, the pillar she embraces, garments displayed in public, dust-filled rooms, and repeated acts of solitary labor (Eshonqul, 2013b). The house ages with her and becomes an external archive of bereavement. This correspondence between material space and emotion is integral to the narrative rather than decorative. The house stores history, while the village's modernization threatens to erase that history through demolition. Psychological depiction thus becomes inseparable from the politics of memory.

Silence has an equally complex function. Bayna momo's refusal to speak does not indicate emotional emptiness; it operates as controlled resistance and ethical condemnation. When she eventually tells the villagers to mourn their own dead, the statement is brief because decades of indirect evidence have accumulated behind it. Her later dismissal of the village as a place without men similarly converts private loss into a judgment on communal cowardice (Eshonqul, 2013b). Unlike Poe's narrators, who often speak compulsively to establish mastery over their stories, Bayna momo restricts speech and thereby denies the community access to her inner world.

Comparative Synthesis

Table 2 synthesizes the comparative results. Poe's dominant sequence is confession followed by destabilization: a narrator directly names a condition or motive, after which style and event expose the limits of that account. Eshonqul's dominant sequence is accumulation followed by compression: objects, spaces, gestures, and historical details create an inferential field, after which a brief statement crystallizes its ethical meaning. Mixed passages are therefore not an intermediate or weaker category; they are points at which psychological representation becomes narratively dynamic.

Table 2. Comparative Psychological and Stylistic Patterns

Analytical dimension	Edgar Allan Poe	Nazar Eshonqul
Typical narrative sequence	An explicit claim or confession followed by contradiction, escalation, or sensory destabilization.	An accumulation of environmental and historical cues followed by brief ethical or emotional articulation.
Dominant carriers of mind	First-person voice, punctuation, repetition, sound, bodily sensation, and obsessive objects.	Houses, landscapes, paintings, garments, bodily deterioration, communal silence, and remembered violence.
Function of direct speech	Self-defense, confession, rationalization, or an attempt to control interpretation.	Selective moral crystallization, refusal, or judgment after prolonged reticence.
Readerly position	Intimate access combined with distrust and readerly unease.	Reconstructive distance combined with historical and ethical empathy.
Primary ethical horizon	Individual guilt, perversity, fear, and unstable agency.	Collective complicity, ideological disillusionment, memory, endurance, and erasure.

Discussion

The findings complicate the pedagogical tendency to equate direct depiction with simple telling and indirect depiction with aesthetically superior showing. In psychologically complex fiction, directness may itself be deceptive, theatrical, or ethically unstable. Poe's narrators reveal much about their states of mind, yet their verbal excess creates distance as well as intimacy. Eshonqul's characters disclose less, but the surrounding world becomes saturated with their histories. The central question is therefore not which mode is better, but what interpretive work each performs within a particular narrative system.

The first theoretical implication concerns unreliability. Direct psychological language is often treated as privileged access to consciousness, but Poe shows that self-report may be the least stable form of evidence. The narrators of "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat" can describe emotion without exercising adequate moral judgment. Their accounts are rich in sensation and explanation but poor in trustworthy evaluation. Shen (2013) argues that readers identify unreliability by comparing narrative statements with broader textual and contextual frames. The present analysis supports that account and further indicates that rhythm, contradiction, sensory impossibility, and action provide the indirect evidence that makes such comparison possible.

Narrative empathy provides a second implication. First-person access does not automatically produce sympathy, and indirect distance does not prevent emotional engagement. Keen (2006) cautions against assuming a stable causal relationship between a narrative technique and an empathetic response. Poe's intense interiority may generate fascination, fear, or unease rather than ethical identification. Eshonqul's reticent narration may foster empathy through objects and spaces that allow readers to reconstruct suffering without receiving a complete verbal

confession. In “Shamolni tutib bo‘lmaydi,” readers encounter Bayna momo’s anger through duration and repetition; its effect depends on historical imagination as much as emotional proximity.

The findings also support accounts of represented minds as culturally and socially embedded. Eshonqul’s psychological worlds are not sealed interiors; they are distributed across villages, houses, paintings, clothing, memories, and the conduct of witnesses. This pattern accords with narratological arguments that fictional mentality extends beyond private introspection (Keen, 2015; Maziarczyk & Teske, 2026). Poe also externalizes mind through environments, but his Gothic spaces more often intensify a singular consciousness: the chamber, cellar, dungeon, eye, cat, and heartbeat become extensions or antagonists of a narrator’s obsession. Eshonqul’s objects more directly connect individual suffering to collective responsibility and historical erasure.

These differences are better explained through genre and history than through a rigid contrast between American individualism and Uzbek collectivism. Poe writes within Gothic and Romantic traditions that cultivate enclosed spaces, extreme perception, and self-dramatizing narrators. Eshonqul writes after the rupture of Soviet ideology and frequently turns private damage into an inquiry into compromised memory and moral survival. Ochilov’s (2026b) account of Eshonqul’s transcultural magical realism identifies formal hybridity rather than cultural isolation: Eshonqul draws on local history and symbolic traditions while participating in international modernist, existential, and fantastic modes.

Mind style provides another useful point of comparison. Pillière (2013) argues that the concept should not be restricted to obviously deviant or pathological language. In the selected corpus, Poe’s narrators display marked mind styles through repetition, syntactic acceleration, sensory absolutism, and argumentative address. Eshonqul’s characters are often represented through a more dispersed mind style in which the narrator’s figurative language, recurring materials, and historical analogies shape the reader’s model of consciousness. The concept can therefore describe both overtly disturbed first-person narration and socially mediated third-person or observer narration.

The coded sample constrains interpretation without treating counts as substitutes for close reading. The descriptive percentages make the contrast visible, but the categories remain dependent on function and context: the same device may be direct in one scene and indirect in another. Dialogue may name an emotion explicitly or reveal it through evasion. A symbol may imply guilt indirectly, or a narrator may explain its meaning directly. Future research could expand the corpus, involve multiple coders, compare published translations, or apply corpus-stylistic tools to repetition, sensory vocabulary, and speech distribution. Such work would be particularly useful for Eshonqul because the present analysis could draw on only a small body of recent English-language scholarship.

The study has several limitations. The selective corpus does not represent the full generic range of either author. The passage counts refer to psychologically salient units rather than equal-length segments and should not be interpreted as corpus frequencies. The coding was conducted by one researcher, so no interrater reliability estimate is available. The Eshonqul analysis is based on Uzbek originals and researcher-produced English renderings; published translations may produce different stylistic effects. Finally, the study examines textual strategies rather than actual reader responses. Claims about tension, empathy, and ethical judgment are theoretically informed interpretations, not experimentally measured outcomes.

Conclusion

Direct and indirect depiction function in Poe and Eshonqul as interdependent strategies for constructing psychological depth. Poe often begins with explicit self-report, confession, or sensory assertion and then undermines or intensifies it through contradiction, rhythm, sound, action, and unreliable narration. Eshonqul more often allows material environments, bodies, paintings, garments, ruins, silence, and historical memory to carry psychological meaning before direct speech condenses that meaning into moral judgment. The distinction is therefore not between a direct writer and an indirect writer, but between different narrative sequences and distributions of interpretive labor.

The comparative model developed here places textual cues, depiction mode, readerly inference, and narrative effect within cultural and generic contexts. It avoids treating literary psychology as a transparent report of inner states or as evidence of fixed national character. Psychological representation instead emerges from relationships among voice, form, history, and readerly reconstruction. Poe's confessional narrators and Eshonqul's historically burdened silences converge in one respect: both require readers to look beyond what is openly stated. Their fiction shows how representations of mind gain complexity when direct disclosure and indirect evidence remain in tension.

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