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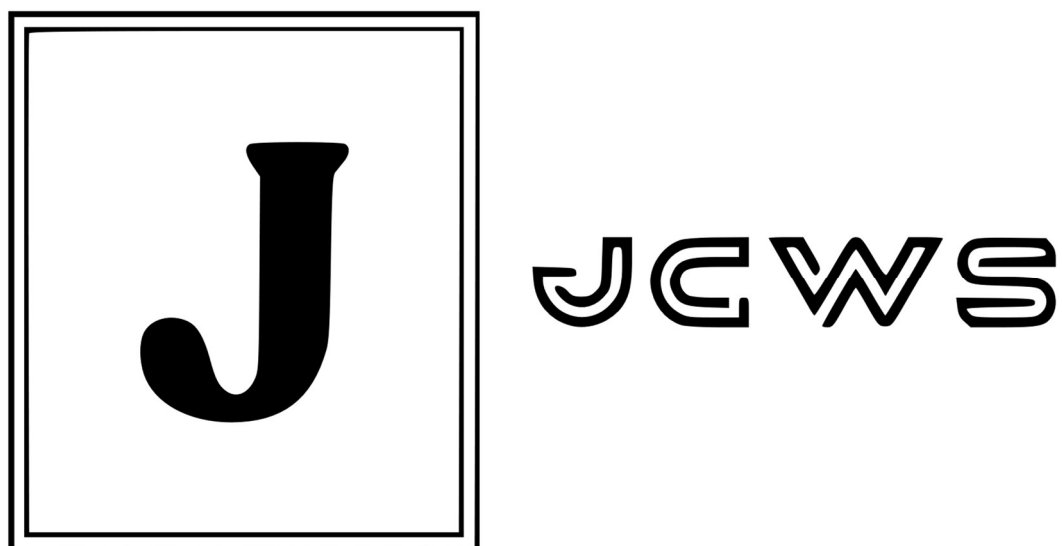
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METHODOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHICAL WORLDVIEW IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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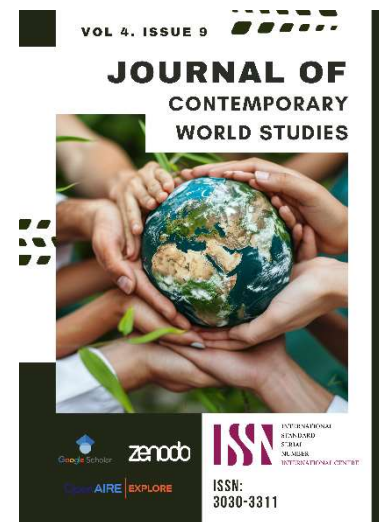
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ANNOTATION:

This article presents a comparative analysis of methodology and philosophical worldview as foundational elements in English and Uzbek literary traditions. Drawing on hermeneutic, structuralist, and postcolonial theoretical frameworks, the study examines how distinct epistemological orientations—rooted in Enlightenment rationalism on the one hand and Sufi-Islamic philosophical traditions on the other—have shaped narrative form, aesthetic purpose, and ethical discourse in both literary canons. Through close textual analysis of representative works from each tradition, this research identifies both convergences and divergences in the philosophical underpinnings that guide literary composition and interpretation. The findings suggest that while both traditions employ literature as a vehicle for existential inquiry and social critique, they differ substantially in their conceptions of subjectivity, cosmological order, and the relationship between language and truth. This study contributes to the growing field of comparative world literature by providing a rigorous methodological framework for cross-cultural literary analysis.

KEYWORDS:

comparative literature, English literature, Uzbek literature, philosophical worldview, literary methodology, Sufism, hermeneutics, postcolonialism.



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INTRODUCTION

Literature does not exist in a philosophical vacuum. Every literary tradition is undergirded by a set of epistemological assumptions, ontological commitments, and methodological orientations that shape how writers conceive of reality, narrate human experience, and position the text in relation to truth. The comparative study of literary traditions thus necessarily involves an engagement with the philosophical worldviews that animate them. English and Uzbek literatures, though separated by geography, language, and cultural genealogy, represent two remarkably rich traditions whose philosophical foundations invite rigorous scholarly comparison.

English literature, stretching from the Anglo-Saxon period through the Renaissance, Romanticism, Modernism, and into contemporary postmodern expression, has been shaped by a succession of philosophical movements including Neoplatonism, Empiricism, Kantian idealism, and Darwinian naturalism (Abrams, 1953; Eagleton, 1996). Uzbek literature, rooted in the ancient civilizations of Central Asia and flourishing through Persian-Turkic classical forms before emerging as a distinct national literary tradition in the modern period, has been profoundly shaped by Sufi metaphysics, Islamic theology, and more recently, Soviet-era materialist aesthetics and post-independence national identity discourse (Allworth, 1990; Dadajonov, 2010).

Despite the growing importance of world literature as an academic discipline, systematic comparative studies between English and Uzbek literary traditions remain scarce. Most existing scholarship either treats Uzbek literature in isolation or subsumes it under broader Central Asian or Turkic studies frameworks without adequate engagement with comparative

methodology. This article seeks to address this gap by offering a methodologically rigorous comparative analysis that foregrounds the philosophical dimensions of both traditions.

Research Objectives: This study aims to: (1) identify and analyze the dominant philosophical worldviews embedded in canonical English and Uzbek literary works; (2) examine how these worldviews shape narrative structure, characterization, and thematic content; (3) compare the methodological approaches employed by literary critics in both traditions; and (4) propose an integrative comparative framework applicable to cross-cultural literary analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The philosophical underpinnings of English literature have been extensively theorized. According to Wellek and Warren (1949), literary criticism in the Anglo-American tradition has historically oscillated between formalist concerns with textual structure and historicist attention to the social determinants of literary meaning. The Romantic period, in particular, witnessed a philosophical turn toward subjectivism and the centrality of individual consciousness, informed by the Kantian critique of pure reason and its implications for aesthetic judgment (Hartman, 1964).

Modernist literature in England—exemplified by the works of Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, and James Joyce—drew heavily on Bergson's philosophy of duration, Freudian psychoanalysis, and phenomenological investigations of consciousness (Levenson, 1984). The postmodern turn subsequently destabilized the metaphysical certainties that had grounded both Enlightenment and Romantic literary projects, embracing fragmentation, intertextuality, and the undecidability of meaning as its defining

philosophical commitments (Lyotard, 1984; Waugh, 1992).

The philosophical worldview embedded in Uzbek literature is inseparable from the broader intellectual heritage of Central Asia. The region produced some of the medieval Islamic world's most influential philosopher-scientists, including al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and al-Biruni, whose synthesis of Aristotelian logic with Islamic theology created a distinctive epistemological tradition (Gutas, 1998). This tradition deeply influenced the literary aesthetic of the classical Uzbek-Persian period, particularly through the works of Alisher Navoi (1441–1501), whose five-poem *Khamasa* represents a summit of Sufi philosophical poetry in the Chagatai Turkic language (Subtelny, 1994).

Sufi metaphysics, with its doctrine of the unity of being (*wahdat al-wujud*) and its mystical epistemology privileging direct experiential knowledge (*kashf*) over discursive reason, constitutes perhaps the single most important philosophical current in classical Uzbek literature (Schimmel, 1975). The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the emergence of the Jadidist reform movement, which sought to reconcile Islamic philosophical heritage with Enlightenment rationalism and secular progressivism, producing a literature characterized by social criticism and educational advocacy (Khalid, 1998).

Comparative literature as a discipline has developed several methodological frameworks applicable to cross-cultural analysis. Damrosch's (2003) concept of world literature as text that gains in translation provides a useful starting point, while Moretti's (2000) distant reading approach and Spivak's (2003) ethical model of planetary reading offer complementary perspectives. However, as Prendergast (2004) cautions, comparative frameworks developed primarily in Western academic

contexts risk reproducing Eurocentric hierarchies when applied to non-Western literary traditions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The primary corpus for this study comprises twelve literary works selected from each tradition, spanning multiple historical periods and genres. From the English tradition, the corpus includes works by Geoffrey Chaucer, John Milton, William Blake, Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, and contemporary authors including Kazuo Ishiguro. From the Uzbek tradition, the corpus includes the classical works of Alisher Navoi and Mashrab, the Jadidist prose of Abdulla Qodiriy, the Soviet-era poetry of Hamid Olimjon, and contemporary works by Erkin Vohidov and O'tkir Hoshimov. The selection criteria prioritized canonical status, availability of reliable critical editions, and representativeness of the philosophical currents under examination.

This study employs a tripartite methodological framework integrating hermeneutical analysis, structural-semantic analysis, and philosophical contextual analysis. Hermeneutical analysis, drawing on Gadamer's (1960/2004) philosophical hermeneutics, enables attention to the horizon of understanding within which texts are produced and interpreted. Structural-semantic analysis, informed by Greimas's (1966) actantial model, facilitates systematic comparison of narrative structures across linguistically and culturally disparate texts. Philosophical contextual analysis situates individual texts within their broader intellectual traditions, drawing on primary philosophical sources and secondary scholarship.

Textual data was collected through close reading of primary sources supplemented by systematic review of secondary scholarly literature in English, Russian, and Uzbek. For Uzbek-language

primary sources, both original texts and scholarly English-language translations were consulted to minimize interpretive distortion. Thematic coding was applied to identify recurring philosophical motifs, with particular attention to representations of (1) the nature of reality and being; (2) the relationship between the individual and the cosmos; (3) epistemological positions regarding the sources of knowledge; and (4) ethical frameworks governing human conduct. Inter-rater reliability for thematic coding was established through consultation with two specialist scholars in each respective literary tradition.

RESULTS

1. Ontological Orientations: Immanence versus Transcendence

Analysis of the primary corpus reveals a fundamental divergence in ontological orientation between the two traditions. English literary texts, particularly from the Enlightenment through the Modernist period, tend to locate the ground of reality in the material world of historical experience, privileging what may be termed an immanent ontology in which meaning is constructed within, rather than derived from beyond, the human lifeworld. This orientation is consistent with the trajectory of Western philosophy from Locke's empiricism through Darwin's evolutionary naturalism to Freud's psychoanalytic materialism.

In contrast, classical Uzbek literary texts consistently manifest a transcendentalist ontology grounded in the Sufi doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*. In Navoi's *Hayrat ul-Abror* (Amazement of the Righteous), for instance, the material world is characterized as a veil (*hijab*) concealing rather than constituting reality, which is ultimately identified with divine being. This ontological position generates a distinctive narrative teleology in which character development is measured not by

psychological complexity or social achievement but by degrees of proximity to mystical union with the divine.

2. Epistemological Positions and Literary Form

The divergent epistemological positions of the two traditions have direct formal consequences. English literary forms, particularly the novel, have historically privileged empirical verisimilitude, psychological realism, and discursive rationality as markers of literary value. The realist novel, from Fielding through Dickens to Eliot, constructs its authority through detailed observation of social life and plausible causation of events—an epistemological stance consistent with the empiricist tradition in British philosophy.

Uzbek classical literature, by contrast, privileges the epistemological authority of mystical experience, expressed through the allegorical and symbolic resources of the *masnavi* (narrative poem) and *ghazal* (lyric poem) forms. The deliberate obscurity of Sufi poetic symbolism is not a failure of communication but an epistemological strategy: it encodes knowledge that cannot be conveyed through discursive language but must be experientially apprehended. This distinction has significant implications for comparative methodology, as criteria of evaluation developed within one epistemological tradition cannot be unreflectively applied to the other.

3. Ethical Frameworks and Social Vision

Both traditions employ literature as a vehicle for ethical reflection and social vision, but the philosophical frameworks within which ethical questions are posed differ significantly. English literature from the eighteenth century onward has been heavily influenced by utilitarian and Kantian ethical frameworks, foregrounding

questions of individual rights, social contract, and the ethics of sympathy and recognition. The Victorian novel, in particular, constitutes a major site of ethical deliberation regarding class, gender, empire, and moral character (Nunokawa, 1994).

Uzbek literary ethics, particularly in the classical period, are grounded in Islamic virtue ethics as elaborated through Sufi spiritual psychology, with its detailed typology of spiritual stations (*maqamat*) and states (*ahwal*). The ethical ideal is not the autonomous rational agent of Kantian morality but the purified heart capable of receiving divine light. In the modern period, however, particularly in Jadidist and Soviet-era Uzbek literature, this framework was substantially modified by engagement with social Darwinism, socialist realism, and national liberation ideologies, producing a more this-worldly ethical orientation focused on collective progress and national identity.

4. Convergences: Universal Themes and Shared Concerns

Despite these structural differences, the comparative analysis also reveals significant convergences. Both traditions deploy literature as a medium for exploring the tension between individual desire and social constraint, the problem of moral corruption in positions of power, and the redemptive possibilities of love and aesthetic experience. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Navoi's *Farhad* share a common concern with the disorienting encounter between idealized values and the corrupt realities of political life, though the philosophical frameworks within which this encounter is articulated differ profoundly.

Furthermore, both traditions evidence a persistent metafictional awareness—a reflexive attention to the constructedness of literary form and the limitations of language as a vehicle for

truth. The postmodern English novel and the classical Uzbek *masnavi* arrive at this awareness through different philosophical routes (Derridean deconstruction versus Sufi apophatic theology), but the destination exhibits notable similarities: a profound skepticism about the capacity of language to capture reality combined with a continued faith in the ethical and spiritual value of the literary enterprise.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study have several significant implications for comparative literary methodology and for our understanding of the philosophical dimensions of both traditions. Most fundamentally, they demonstrate the inadequacy of applying a single philosophical framework—whether derived from Western analytical philosophy, Continental theory, or Islamic intellectual tradition—as the universal standard for cross-cultural literary evaluation.

The tendency of Western comparative literature scholarship to treat English and European literatures as the normative center and to evaluate non-Western literary traditions by their degree of approximation to Western aesthetic and philosophical standards constitutes what Spivak (2003) terms 'sanctioned ignorance'—a systematic inattention to the epistemological resources of non-Western traditions. The philosophical sophistication of the Sufi metaphysical tradition, far from being a pre-rational precursor to modern literary consciousness, represents an alternative and in many respects more radical interrogation of the grounds of knowledge and the nature of being.

At the same time, the findings caution against the opposite tendency—a cultural relativism that refuses comparison altogether in the name of respecting difference. The convergences identified in this study—in the ethical uses of narrative,

the reflexive treatment of literary form, and the sustained engagement with questions of love, mortality, and political corruption—suggest that meaningful cross-cultural dialogue is possible and productive, provided that it proceeds from a position of genuine methodological reciprocity rather than hierarchical evaluation.

The methodological framework proposed in this study—integrating hermeneutical, structural-semantic, and philosophical contextual analysis—offers a potential model for such reciprocal comparison. By attending simultaneously to the formal structures of texts, their philosophical contexts, and the horizons of understanding that scholars bring to interpretation, this framework aims to hold together the universalizing aspirations of comparative literary study with the particularizing demands of contextual sensitivity.

Several limitations of the present study should be acknowledged. First, the corpus, though carefully selected, cannot claim comprehensive coverage of either tradition; significant authors and works remain unexamined. Second, the analysis relies on existing English translations of Uzbek texts for comparative purposes, introducing potential distortions that future scholarship should address through more systematic attention to the challenges of literary translation across radically different philosophical idioms. Third, the focus on canonical texts risks reproducing the hierarchical valuations embedded in existing critical traditions; future research should attend more systematically to vernacular, oral, and marginalized literary forms in both traditions.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that English and Uzbek literary traditions embody substantially different philosophical worldviews that shape their

narrative forms, epistemological commitments, and ethical visions in systematic ways. The immanent ontology, empiricist epistemology, and rights-based ethical discourse characteristic of mainstream English literary tradition stand in significant contrast to the transcendentalist ontology, mystical epistemology, and virtue-based ethical framework of the classical Uzbek literary tradition. These differences are not merely incidental features but fundamental philosophical orientations that require methodologically sophisticated frameworks to analyze comparatively.

At the same time, the study has identified meaningful convergences in the two traditions' shared concerns with the ethical dimensions of literary experience, the reflexive interrogation of literary form, and the sustained engagement with universal existential questions. These convergences suggest that cross-cultural comparative literary analysis is not only possible but intellectually essential for developing a genuinely world-literary understanding of humanity's diverse but interconnected aesthetic traditions.

Future research should extend this comparative framework to other literary traditions of Central Asia, expand the corpus to include oral and popular literary forms, and develop more rigorous methods for analyzing the effects of translation on philosophical content. Collaborative scholarship involving specialists in both traditions, working with genuine methodological reciprocity, offers the most promising path toward a comparative world literature that honors both the particularity and the universality of human literary expression.

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