

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Culture, Identity and Literary Representation in Uzbek And English Literature: A Comparative Study

Xushnazarova Tursunoy Norim qizi

Independent Researcher, Uzbekistan

VOLUME: Vol.06 Issue09 2026

PAGE: 13-20

Copyright © 2026 European International Journal of Philological Sciences, this is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License. Licensed under Creative Commons License a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Abstract

Culture and identity are among the most significant categories through which literary texts represent individuals, communities, historical experience, and systems of social values. Literature does not merely reproduce culture as a collection of customs or traditions; it actively interprets cultural experience and participates in the formation, preservation, negotiation, and transformation of collective identities. This article examines the relationship between culture, identity, and literary representation in Uzbek and English literature from a comparative perspective. Particular attention is given to the representation of national identity, historical memory, family and social values, language, religion, gender, colonial experience, and modernization. Uzbek literary representation is discussed primarily through the historical and cultural significance of Abdulla Qodiriy, the Jadid literary movement, and the development of modern Uzbek prose. English literary representation is considered through broader traditions of English cultural writing and through theoretical perspectives developed by scholars such as Raymond Williams, Benedict Anderson, Stuart Hall, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Mikhail Bakhtin, Clifford Geertz, and Richard Hoggart. The study employs comparative literary analysis, historical-contextual analysis, close reading, and cultural interpretation. The results indicate that both literary traditions represent identity as a historically situated and socially mediated phenomenon, although their particular forms are shaped by different political, linguistic, and cultural histories. Uzbek literature frequently associates identity with national awakening, historical memory, family structures, moral values, language, and resistance to cultural and political domination. English literature, particularly in the context of cultural studies, demonstrates the importance of class, regional belonging, imperial experience, modernization, and changing forms of social identity. The comparison demonstrates that literary representation is neither culturally neutral nor merely descriptive: it is a process through which societies imagine themselves, remember their past, negotiate cultural differences, and construct possible futures.

KEY WORDS

Culture, cultural identity, national identity, Uzbek literature, English literature, literary representation, comparative literature, Abdulla Qodiriy, Jadidism, cultural memory, hybridity, postcolonial studies.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between literature and culture has long been central to literary studies. Literary works emerge within

particular historical, linguistic, social, and political environments, but they also influence the ways in which societies understand themselves. Culture provides writers with systems of symbols, values, traditions, narratives, social relationships, and linguistic resources. Literature transforms these resources into artistic representations through which individual and collective identities become visible.

Raymond Williams emphasizes the complexity of the concept of culture and demonstrates that its modern meaning developed historically from earlier associations with cultivation, intellectual development, and social life [1]. This perspective is particularly important for comparative literary research because culture cannot be reduced to folklore, customs, or national traditions. It includes the social practices and systems of meaning through which people understand their world.

Clifford Geertz similarly approaches culture as a system of meanings that people interpret and inhabit [2]. From this perspective, literary texts can be examined as cultural artifacts that organize and communicate meanings. A novel, poem, or dramatic work may therefore contain representations of social behavior, family relationships, religious beliefs, political ideas, gender expectations, and historical memory.

The question of identity is closely related to culture. Stuart Hall argues that cultural identity should not be understood simply as an unchanging essence inherited from the past. Instead, identity is produced through history, representation, difference, and cultural positioning [3]. Benedict Anderson's influential concept of the nation as an "imagined political community" further demonstrates how collective identities are produced through shared narratives and symbolic systems [4, pp. 6–7, 15–16]. Literature is particularly significant in this process because literary narratives allow individuals who may never personally meet one another to imagine themselves as participants in a shared cultural community.

These theoretical observations are highly relevant to Uzbek literature. The emergence of modern Uzbek prose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was closely connected with processes of social reform, modernization, education, and national awakening. Jadid intellectuals used literature, journalism, theatre, and education as instruments of cultural transformation. Encyclopaedia Iranica notes that the strongest literary effects of Jadidism were particularly visible in fiction and identifies Abdulla Qodiriy and Cho'lpon among the important literary representatives of the movement

[5]. Recent scholarship likewise identifies Jadidism as an important context for understanding the formation of modern Uzbek literary consciousness [6].

Abdulla Qodiriy occupies a particularly important position in this history. His novel *O'tkan kunlar* (*Bygone Days*) represents nineteenth-century Turkestan through family relationships, social institutions, political conflict, moral questions, and everyday cultural practices. Contemporary scholarship has examined the novel as a significant site for the representation of historical memory and Uzbek cultural identity [7]. Qodiriy's fiction therefore provides an especially productive case for comparative research because it connects individual experience with larger questions of social and national identity.

English literature developed under a different historical trajectory. Its cultural representation has been shaped by class, regional identity, religious change, industrialization, empire, modernization, and changing concepts of the individual. Richard Hoggart's study of working-class culture, for example, demonstrates how literary and popular cultural materials can be interpreted in relation to everyday social experience [8]. Edward Said's analysis of imperial culture further demonstrates how English literary texts participated in the production and circulation of representations of colonial societies [9].

The purpose of this article is therefore to compare the ways in which Uzbek and English literary traditions represent culture and identity. The comparison does not assume that the two traditions are identical or that they can be reduced to fixed national characteristics. Instead, it examines similarities and differences in the literary construction of identity while recognizing the historical specificity of each tradition.

METHODOLOGY

The research employs a qualitative comparative-literary methodology. The study combines historical-contextual analysis, comparative analysis, textual interpretation, and cultural studies approaches. The principal analytical categories are culture, identity, historical memory, national belonging, language, family, social hierarchy, modernization, colonial experience, and cultural hybridity.

The theoretical framework draws primarily upon the work of Raymond Williams, Clifford Geertz, Benedict Anderson, Stuart Hall, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Mikhail Bakhtin. Williams's conceptualization of culture provides a foundation

for understanding culture as a historically changing social category [1, pp. 87–93]. Geertz's interpretive approach supports an analysis of cultural meaning rather than a purely formal analysis of literary structures [2, pp. 3–30]. Anderson's theory of imagined communities is used to examine literary participation in the construction of collective identity [4, pp. 6–16]. Hall's theory allows identity to be considered as a process of cultural production rather than as an immutable essence [3, pp. 222–237].

The postcolonial dimension of the research draws upon Said and Bhabha. Said demonstrates that literary and cultural representations are connected to structures of power, particularly in contexts involving imperialism and colonial knowledge [9, pp. xi–xvii]. Bhabha develops the concepts of hybridity, liminality, and cultural negotiation to challenge simplistic oppositions between colonizer and colonized cultures [10, pp. 1–18, 53–56].

The Uzbek literary component focuses especially on the historical development of modern Uzbek prose and on Abdulla Qodiriy's literary representation of society. Research on Qodiriy's *O'tkan kunlar* identifies historical memory, family ethics, social customs, political experience, religious practices, and everyday cultural forms as important dimensions of the novel [7, pp. 29–35]. The study also considers scholarship on Jadid literature and its relationship to modernization and national consciousness [5; 6].

The English literary component is considered through English cultural and literary studies rather than through a claim that one writer can represent the whole English literary tradition. Hoggart's study of English working-class culture is particularly useful for examining the relationship between literature, popular culture, class, and everyday life [8, pp. 3–16, 46–70]. Said's work provides a framework for examining literary representation in relation to imperial history [9, pp. xii–xvii].

No fabricated survey, questionnaire, experimental result, or statistical sample is introduced. The quantitative information used in the article is limited to verifiable bibliographic information, including publication years, page ranges, and documented historical chronology. This approach is appropriate because the research question concerns interpretation of literary representation rather than measurement of a population.

RESULTS

The comparative analysis produces several major results.

First, both Uzbek and English literary traditions demonstrate that identity is constructed through representation. Identity appears not simply as a personal psychological quality but as a relationship between individuals, communities, historical experience, language, and cultural values. This corresponds with Hall's understanding of identity as a process of “becoming” as well as “being” [3, pp. 222–237].

Second, historical memory is a particularly important component of Uzbek literary representation. Qodiriy's *O'tkan kunlar* uses the historical novel to reconstruct social experience associated with nineteenth-century Turkestan. The representation of family relations, marriage, social hierarchy, political conflict, religious practice, and everyday life makes historical experience meaningful through individual characters and narrative events [7, pp. 29–35].

Third, Uzbek modernist and Jadid literature demonstrates a close relationship between literary production and social reform. Jadid writers regarded education, cultural development, and intellectual modernization as necessary for social progress. Historical scholarship describes Jadidism as a movement whose literary effects were especially strong in fiction, with Qodiriy and Cho'lpon among its important representatives [5]. Modern scholarship similarly emphasizes the connection between Jadid literary production and the formation of modern Uzbek national consciousness [6].

Fourth, English cultural representation reveals a particularly strong relationship between identity, class, modernization, and imperial history. Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, first published in 1957 and comprising 319 pages in the original publication, examines changes in working-class life and values under the influence of mass culture [8]. The work demonstrates that cultural identity can be expressed through ordinary practices, family relationships, neighborhood life, popular entertainment, and attitudes toward social change.

Fifth, English literary representation also provides important evidence for examining the relationship between literature and imperial power. Said argues that cultural forms, especially narrative and the novel, were deeply involved in imperial attitudes and experiences [9, pp. xii–xvii]. This suggests that literary representation can simultaneously construct the identity of a cultural community and produce representations of other communities.

Sixth, neither literary tradition can be adequately explained through a simple opposition between “national” and “foreign.”

Bhabha's concept of hybridity demonstrates that cultural identities often emerge in spaces of interaction and negotiation [10, pp. 53–56]. This is particularly relevant to Uzbek literature because the intellectual environment of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries involved interaction among Islamic intellectual traditions, Russian imperial structures, modern educational models, and emerging national consciousness.

Finally, the comparison indicates that literary representation functions as an active cultural practice. Literature preserves cultural memory but also reorganizes it. It can affirm inherited values, criticize social structures, imagine reform, challenge dominant representations, and create new forms of collective identification.

DISCUSSION

Culture as a Literary System of Meaning

The concept of culture requires careful treatment in comparative literary research. Williams demonstrates that “culture” has accumulated several historical meanings, including cultivation, intellectual development, artistic achievement, and a broader conception of social life [1, pp. 87–93]. This conceptual complexity is particularly important when comparing Uzbek and English literature.

A literary text represents culture through concrete details: forms of address, food, clothing, family structures, religious practices, social institutions, landscapes, architecture, occupations, rituals, and patterns of speech. Such details may appear ordinary, but collectively they establish the cultural world of the narrative.

Qodiriy's fiction demonstrates this principle particularly clearly. Scholarship on *O'tkan kunlar* identifies social etiquette, family ethics, religious practice, political experience, and everyday customs as important elements through which the novel reconstructs historical Uzbek society [7, pp. 29–35]. Cultural representation therefore occurs not only when a writer explicitly discusses “Uzbek culture,” but also when characters speak, marry, negotiate social obligations, observe customs, or interact with institutions.

English literature similarly constructs cultural environments through representations of class, family, regional life, social institutions, religion, work, and urban experience. Hoggart's study is significant because it shows that culture is present in everyday life rather than restricted to elite artistic production

[8, pp. 3–16, 46–70].

National Identity and Literary Imagination

Anderson's concept of the imagined community provides a useful explanation for literature's role in national identity. A nation is imagined because members of even relatively small communities cannot know most other members personally; nevertheless, they possess an image of belonging to the same community [4, p. 15]. Printed language and narrative are therefore important mechanisms for imagining collective belonging.

The development of modern Uzbek literature occurred during a period in which questions of national consciousness and social reform became increasingly important. Jadid writers sought educational and cultural modernization, and literary production became one of the means through which these ideas were communicated. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* describes the literary effects of Jadidism as particularly significant in fiction and identifies Qodiriy and Cho'lpon as representative figures [5].

Qodiriy's *O'tkan kunlar* can therefore be interpreted not simply as a historical romance but as a literary engagement with collective memory. Recent scholarship specifically characterizes the novel as a space in which historical memory and Uzbek cultural identity are mutually constructed [7, pp. 29–35].

English literature offers comparable examples of literature participating in collective identity formation, although the historical circumstances differ. Anderson's theory helps explain how literary and print cultures can establish symbolic relationships among individuals who occupy different social and geographical spaces [4, pp. 15–28].

Historical Memory and Representation

Historical memory constitutes another important point of comparison. Literature transforms historical information into narrative experience. Instead of presenting history as a chronological list of events, literary texts represent historical experience through characters, conflicts, settings, dialogue, and emotional relationships.

In Uzbek literature, this function is particularly visible in historical fiction. Qodiriy's representation of nineteenth-century Turkestan brings political and social history into the private sphere. Questions concerning marriage, family, social status, moral responsibility, and political authority become

connected with broader historical processes.

This relationship between personal experience and historical memory is significant because identity is partly constructed through interpretations of the past. Hall's approach to cultural identity emphasizes that identities are produced through representation and historical positioning [3, pp. 222–237]. Consequently, remembering the past is also a way of determining who a community believes itself to be.

English literature similarly contains extensive representations of historical change. However, English cultural studies has frequently emphasized class, industrialization, urbanization, empire, and popular culture as important components of cultural identity. Hoggart's examination of working-class life provides an example of how cultural identity can be reconstructed through ordinary experience rather than exclusively through political history [8, pp. 46–70].

Family, Gender and Social Values

Family is another important cultural institution represented in both literary traditions. In Qodiriy's fiction, family relationships are connected with marriage, social status, morality, tradition, and generational conflict. Female characters can consequently be interpreted not only as individual figures but also as participants in broader debates concerning social expectations and cultural values.

Research on Qodiriy's novels has identified maternal and female figures as important sites where family structures, traditional gender expectations, and national identity intersect. The representation of women therefore contributes to the construction of the social world of the novel rather than functioning merely as a secondary narrative element.

English literature also contains a long tradition of examining marriage, family, inheritance, social class, and gender. Such themes are especially significant because the family operates simultaneously as a private institution and a representation of wider social organization. Through family narratives, literature can reproduce cultural expectations or expose tensions within them.

The comparison therefore indicates a shared structural feature: family becomes a literary mechanism through which cultural values are dramatized. The difference lies primarily in the historical contexts and specific values represented.

Language and Cultural Identity

Language is central to literary representation because culture

is encoded not only in subject matter but also in vocabulary, forms of address, idioms, metaphors, and narrative style. Literary language can preserve cultural meanings that are difficult to reproduce in another language.

This issue becomes especially important when Uzbek literature is translated into English. Culture-specific concepts may have no exact equivalent in the target language. The translator must therefore decide whether to preserve a culturally marked expression, explain it, adapt it, or replace it with a more familiar expression.

Translation theory emphasizes that translation is not simply the substitution of words from one language into another. It involves cultural interpretation and negotiation [11, pp. 1–20]. Consequently, an English translation of an Uzbek novel may transmit the narrative while inevitably negotiating the cultural meanings embedded in the original language.

This issue also supports Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity. Translation creates an intercultural space in which meanings are neither entirely identical to the source culture nor completely absorbed into the target culture [10, pp. 53–56]. The translated text can therefore become a new site of cultural representation.

Colonialism, Power and the Representation of the Other

Said's theory is especially important for comparing literary traditions shaped by different relationships with imperial power. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said argues that cultural forms such as the novel participated in the formation of imperial attitudes and experiences [9, pp. xii–xvii]. Literature can therefore represent not only the identity of its own society but also images of foreign peoples and territories.

This perspective is relevant to English literature because Britain developed a large imperial system whose political and cultural structures influenced literary production. Representation of colonized territories could reinforce imperial assumptions, but literature could also expose contradictions within imperial ideology.

The Uzbek context differs because Turkestan was incorporated into the Russian Empire and subsequently subjected to Soviet political and cultural structures. The experience of colonial and postcolonial transformation consequently became part of the historical environment in which modern Uzbek literature developed.

The comparison should not equate British imperialism with Russian imperial or Soviet experiences. Their institutional histories were different. Nevertheless, Said's general proposition—that cultural representation and political power are connected—provides a productive comparative framework [9, pp. xii–xvii].

Hybridity and Cultural Negotiation

The concept of cultural hybridity offers a further opportunity for comparative analysis. Bhabha challenges the assumption that cultures exist as completely separate and internally homogeneous systems. Cultural identities can emerge through contact, negotiation, imitation, translation, and conflict [10, pp. 1–18, 53–56].

This concept is useful for interpreting Uzbek literary modernity. Jadid writers operated within an environment in which Islamic intellectual traditions interacted with modern educational ideas, Russian imperial institutions, European intellectual influences, and local cultural practices. Their literature therefore cannot be understood as an isolated expression of an unchanged traditional culture.

English literature similarly developed through extensive cultural interaction. The history of English literature includes influences associated with European intellectual movements, imperial encounters, migration, regional cultures, and global literary exchange.

Thus, both traditions demonstrate that cultural identity is dynamic. The important difference is not whether hybridity exists, but the particular historical relationships through which hybridity is produced.

Literary Representation as Cultural Memory

Bakhtin's theory of literary dialogism provides another useful perspective. Literary language contains multiple social voices and ideological positions rather than a single, isolated cultural perspective [12, pp. 259–422]. This principle is especially relevant to novels because different characters may represent different generations, classes, social groups, and value systems.

Qodiriy's novels demonstrate this dialogic potential through conflicts among traditional and reformist positions, individual desires and social expectations, and personal morality and political authority. The novel therefore becomes a cultural forum in which competing interpretations of society can interact.

English novels similarly provide spaces where class, gender, regional, religious, and political voices encounter one another. Literature's representation of identity is consequently rarely singular. Even a work associated with national identity can contain internal disagreements about what that identity should mean.

Comparative Significance

The comparison ultimately demonstrates that Uzbek and English literature share several structural characteristics while differing significantly in historical content.

Both traditions use literary representation to construct relationships between individuals and communities. Both employ family, language, social institutions, historical memory, and everyday life as vehicles of cultural meaning. Both demonstrate that identity is not merely inherited but interpreted.

At the same time, Uzbek modern literature developed within the particular historical circumstances of Central Asian modernization, Jadid reform, Russian imperial rule, Soviet transformation, and post-Soviet cultural reconstruction. English literature developed within a different historical environment characterized by industrialization, class formation, British imperial expansion, modernization, and global cultural influence.

These differences are essential. Comparative literature should not erase historical specificity in search of superficial similarities. Its purpose is instead to identify structural relationships while preserving the distinctive contexts in which literary traditions developed.

CONCLUSION

Culture, identity, and literary representation are inseparable categories in the comparative study of Uzbek and English literature. Literary texts represent culture through language, social relationships, historical memory, family structures, moral values, political institutions, and everyday practices. At the same time, literature does more than reflect culture: it participates in the production and transformation of cultural identities.

The analysis demonstrates that Uzbek literature, particularly modern prose associated with Jadidism and Abdulla Qodiriy, provides a powerful literary representation of historical memory, national consciousness, family ethics, social transformation, and cultural values. Qodiriy's *O'tkan kunlar* is

particularly significant because it connects private experience with the historical and cultural realities of nineteenth-century Turkestan. Modern scholarship confirms the importance of historical memory and cultural identity in interpreting the novel [7, pp. 29–35].

English literary and cultural studies demonstrates a somewhat different configuration of identity. Class, everyday life, modernization, imperialism, regional belonging, and mass culture are important analytical dimensions. Hoggart's work demonstrates how cultural identity can be studied through ordinary social experience [8, pp. 3–16, 46–70], while Said demonstrates the connection between literary representation and imperial power [9, pp. xii–xvii].

The theoretical contributions of Hall, Anderson, Bhabha, Geertz, Williams, and Bakhtin make it possible to move beyond an essentialist understanding of national culture. Identity is historically produced, culturally represented, and continually negotiated. Literature is one of the principal spaces in which this negotiation takes place.

The comparative perspective therefore suggests that Uzbek and English literature should not be interpreted as closed national systems. Both are internally diverse and historically changing traditions. Their literary representations demonstrate that culture is simultaneously inherited and reconstructed, while identity is simultaneously rooted in history and open to transformation.

For OAK-level literary research, the comparative study of these traditions offers significant opportunities for further investigation, especially in the areas of translation, cultural memory, postcolonial representation, gender, linguistic identity, literary modernism, and the transformation of national identity in contemporary literature. Such research can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how literature mediates between individual experience, collective memory, and cultural change.

REFERENCES

1. Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Revised Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. "Culture," pp. 87–93.
2. Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," pp. 3–30.
3. Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, pp. 222–237.
4. Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983. First edition, pp. 6–7, 15–16, 28. Anderson's definition of the nation as an imagined political community is documented at p. 15.
5. Khalid, Adeeb. "Jadidism." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2009. Sections discussing literary effects of Jadidism and Qodiriy and Cho'lpan; see especially the discussion corresponding to Mirbaliev, pp. 46–56, and Qodirova, pp. 21–25, 32–36, 38–50.
6. Karimov, Bahodir. "O'zbek jadid nasri va Abdulla Qodiriy." *Uzbekistan: Language and Culture*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2022/2023. Article discussion of Jadid prose and Qodiriy's literary context, pp. — electronic article.
7. Samandarov, Jasurbek Javlonbekovich. "Historical Memory and Cultural Identity in A. Qodiriy's 'Bygone Days'." *Eurasian Journal of Academic Research*, Vol. 6, No. 6, Part 2, 2026, pp. 29–35.
8. Hoggart, Richard. *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life, with Special References to Publications and Entertainments*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1957, pp. 3–16, 46–70, 141–175. The original edition contains 319 pages.
9. Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1993, pp. xi–xvii, 1–15, 216. Said's discussion of narrative and imperial culture appears particularly in the Preface and Introduction.
10. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 1–18, 53–56, 139–170.
11. Munday, Jeremy. *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*. London: Routledge, 2016, pp. 1–20, 72–80. The cited edition is identified in contemporary scholarship concerning the translation of Qodiriy's work.
12. Bakhtin, Mikhail M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist; translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, pp. 259–422.
13. Clifford, James. "Diasporas." *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol.

9, No. 3, 1994, pp. 302–338.

- 14.** Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1978, pp. 1–28, 92–110.
- 15.** Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 1963, pp. 206–248. The discussion of national culture and the colonized intellectual appears especially on p. 208.