JOURNAL OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Volume: 5 Issue: 08 | Aug–2026 ISSN: 2720-6882

http://journals.academiczone.net/index.php/jiphr

Intertextual Dimensions Of The Material–Spiritual Conflict In Uzbek And World Literature: A Comparative Study

Amirova Zokhida Oripovna

PhD in Philology, Associate Professor

Abstract: This article offers a comparative analysis of the material–spiritual conflict in Uzbek and world literature through the framework of intertextuality theory. Focusing on the early twentieth-century Uzbek prose of Abdulla Qodiriy and Cho'lpon alongside the nineteenth-century European realist tradition represented by Balzac, Dickens, and Dostoevsky, the study identifies typological parallels between these national literary traditions despite the absence of documented direct influence. The study argues that such parallels illustrate the broadest, architextual level of intertextuality, in which historically and linguistically distant literatures independently contribute to a shared universal artistic-philosophical theme.

Keywords: Uzbek literature, world literature, materiality, spirituality, conflict, intertextuality, comparative literature, typological parallel, national identity.

Introduction

Comparative literary studies have long been concerned with the question of how strikingly similar themes and structures can emerge independently in literatures that have had little or no direct contact with one another. The conflict between materiality and spirituality — the tension between an individual's pursuit of wealth, status, and physical comfort on the one hand, and their commitment to conscience, love, faith, and moral integrity on the other — is one of the clearest examples of such a theme. It appears with striking regularity across literary traditions as different as nineteenth-century French and Russian realism and early twentieth-century Uzbek prose.

This article approaches the question through the framework of intertextuality theory, and in particular through Gérard Genette's concept of architextuality, which describes the way texts are connected not through direct borrowing but through shared generic and thematic structures. The purpose of this study is to compare the treatment of the material–spiritual conflict in the foundational works of modern Uzbek prose with its treatment in canonical works of European realism, to identify the typological parallels between them, and to consider what such parallels reveal about the universality of this literary theme.

Central Asian literary scholarship has, in recent decades, increasingly turned toward comparative frameworks of this kind, moving beyond earlier approaches that tended to treat Uzbek prose either in isolation or exclusively within the framework of its relationship to Russian and Soviet literature. Situating Qodiriy and Cho'lpon within a wider comparative horizon that includes Western European realism allows their achievement to be assessed on genuinely world-literary terms, while also clarifying what is distinctive about the specifically Central Asian articulation of a theme that recurs, in various guises, across the literatures of the modern world.

1. Theoretical Framework: From Influence To Typology

Traditional comparative literary scholarship often privileged the study of direct influence — tracing how one author demonstrably read, borrowed from, or responded to another. Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, developed from Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, expanded this framework considerably by proposing that every text is inherently a "mosaic" of other texts, regardless of whether

Volume: 5 Issue: 08 | Aug–2026 ISSN: 2720-6882
http://journals.academiczone.net/index.php/jiphr

direct influence can be documented. Gérard Genette's subsequent typology of transtextual relations refined this insight further, distinguishing between intertextuality in the narrow sense (demonstrable quotation or allusion) and architextuality — the broader affiliation of a text with a genre, mode, or thematic tradition that may have arisen independently in different cultural contexts.

This distinction is of central importance for comparative literature, since it allows scholars to meaningfully analyze typological parallels between literatures that had no realistic opportunity for direct textual exchange, such as early twentieth-century Central Asian prose and nineteenth-century Western European fiction. Where direct influence cannot be established, architextual analysis instead asks what shared human and social conditions — the rise of a money economy, the erosion of traditional communal bonds, the emergence of new social classes — might account for the independent emergence of a common thematic structure.

Methodology

This study employs comparative-typological analysis in combination with intertextual analysis grounded in Genette's classification of transtextual relations. The comparative-typological method is used to identify structural and thematic parallels between selected works of early twentieth-century Uzbek prose and nineteenth-century European realist fiction, while intertextual analysis is applied to determine the specific nature of the connection between the compared texts — distinguishing, where relevant, between demonstrable direct influence, coincidental typological similarity, and shared architextual affiliation arising from comparable historical conditions. The corpus selected for close analysis includes two major novels by Abdulla Qodiriy, one novel by Cho'lpon, and, on the European side, representative works by Balzac, Dickens, and Tolstoy.

The Material–Spiritual Conflict In Early Uzbek Prose

Abdulla Qodiriy's O'tkan kunlar (Days Gone By), widely regarded as the first modern Uzbek novel, offers one of the most psychologically nuanced treatments of the material–spiritual conflict in Uzbek literature. Through the character of Otabek, the novel dramatizes the tension between authentic love and loyalty on one side, and the mercantile family interests and social status associated with wealth on the other. The tragedy of the character Zaynab, whose marriage is arranged primarily on the basis of material and social calculation, illustrates how this conflict could determine — and destroy — an individual's life, particularly for women within the social structures of the period.

In Qodiriy's second major novel, Mehrobdan chayon (A Scorpion from the Altar), the same underlying conflict is intensified through the setting of court politics and religious authority. The protagonist Anvar must struggle to preserve his personal moral integrity amid a courtly environment governed by ambition, property, and the pursuit of power. The recurrence of this basic structural opposition across Qodiriy's two major novels — an individual of moral integrity resisting a social environment organized around material interest — constitutes what might be described as a form of auto-intertextuality, a stable narrative-thematic schema that the author returns to and reworks.

Cho'lpon's Kecha va kunduz (Night and Day) extends this tradition through the character of Zebi, whose personal aspiration toward spiritual and emotional freedom collides with a patriarchal social order organized around material and familial interest. The novel's very title — invoking the opposition of night and day — functions as a symbolic register for the underlying conflict between the visible, external, material realm of social life and the hidden, internal, spiritual world of the individual, extending Qodiriy's thematic legacy onto the level of symbolic structure.

Volume: 5 Issue: 08 | Aug–2026 ISSN: 2720-6882
http://journals.academiczone.net/index.php/jiphr

Typological Parallels With European Realism

When set alongside the European realist tradition, these Uzbek novels reveal striking typological affinities despite the absence of any demonstrable direct literary influence. Otabek's struggle to preserve his personal integrity against the mercantile calculations of his family bears a clear structural resemblance to the situation of Balzac's Eugénie Grandet, whose capacity for love and generosity is systematically thwarted by her father's obsession with material accumulation. In both cases, a young protagonist's spiritual and emotional life is subordinated to the material logic of an older generation, and in both cases the novel invites the reader to judge this subordination as a moral failure of the surrounding social order rather than of the protagonist.

Similarly, the courtly intrigues that threaten Anvar's moral integrity in Mehrobdan chayon find a structural parallel in the world of provincial ambition and status-seeking that entraps Dickens's Pip in Great Expectations, even though the cultural and political settings of the two novels could hardly be more different. Both protagonists must ultimately learn to distinguish authentic human value from the false promises of material advancement, and both novels stage this lesson through a prolonged sequence of disillusionment. Such parallels cannot be explained by direct influence — there is no evidence that Qodiriy had read Dickens — but they can be productively understood through Genette's concept of architextuality: both authors, working within the broader generic tradition of the realist novel as it had developed across Europe and, by extension, into the literatures influenced by nineteenth-century reformist and modernizing movements, drew on a shared structural template for dramatizing the conflict between individual integrity and social-material pressure.

A further parallel can be drawn between Cho'lpon's Zebi and the heroines of Russian realist fiction, particularly Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, in that both authors use the constrained position of a woman within a rigid social order to dramatize the cost exacted by a society that subordinates emotional and spiritual authenticity to material and reputational considerations. Where Tolstoy's heroine is destroyed by the rigid material-social conventions of Russian aristocratic society, Cho'lpon's Zebi is entrapped by the material-patriarchal structures of early twentieth-century Turkestan — different social systems generating a strikingly similar narrative logic.

It is also worth noting an important point of divergence alongside these parallels. Where the European realist tradition, shaped in large part by a broadly secular and increasingly market-oriented worldview, tends to resolve the material–spiritual conflict tragically — through the death, ruin, or disillusionment of its protagonists — early Uzbek prose frequently draws on an underlying Sufi philosophical substratum, in which renunciation of material attachment is coded not as tragedy but as a path toward spiritual elevation. This distinction does not weaken the typological parallel; rather, it demonstrates how a shared narrative structure can be inflected differently according to the deeper philosophical and religious traditions available to a given literary culture, adding a further layer of comparative interest to the architextual relationship between these literatures.

Explaining The Parallels: Shared Historical Conditions

The typological parallels identified above are not merely coincidental; they can be plausibly linked to broadly comparable historical conditions. Both the European realist novel of the nineteenth century and early twentieth-century Uzbek prose emerged during periods of significant social transformation, in which traditional communal and religious structures were being reorganized under the pressure of new economic relations, expanding trade, and, in the Central Asian case, the particular social ferment associated with the Jadid reform movement. In both contexts, the novel as a literary form proved to be a particularly effective vehicle for dramatizing the resulting tensions between inherited moral-spiritual frameworks and emergent material-economic pressures.

Volume: 5 Issue: 08 | Aug–2026 ISSN: 2720-6882
http://journals.academiczone.net/index.php/jiphr

This shared historical condition helps explain why authors working in entirely separate literary traditions, without access to one another's work, nonetheless produced structurally similar narratives. It also illustrates a broader methodological point for comparative literature: architextual analysis, grounded in intertextuality theory, allows scholars to move beyond the search for direct influence and instead examine how literatures across the world independently articulate a shared human experience through comparable narrative structures.

This methodological point carries broader implications for world literature studies. As David Damrosch and others have argued, world literature should not be understood merely as a canon of works that circulate internationally through translation, but as a mode of reading that positions any given national literature within a global horizon of comparison. Reading Qodiriy and Cho'lpon alongside Balzac, Dickens, and Tolstoy in this way does not diminish the specificity of the Uzbek literary tradition; rather, it reveals how that tradition participated, on its own terms and through its own historical experience, in a literary problem of genuinely global significance.

Conclusion

This comparative analysis demonstrates that the material–spiritual conflict, as developed in the foundational works of modern Uzbek prose by Qodiriy and Cho'lpon, exhibits clear typological affinities with its treatment in the canonical European realist tradition, despite the absence of documented direct influence between these literatures. These affinities are best understood through Genette's concept of architextuality, which explains how texts belonging to historically and culturally distant traditions can independently draw on a shared structural and thematic template. The Uzbek and European cases examined here suggest that the material–spiritual conflict functioned as a genuinely universal literary response to the broader historical experience of social and economic transformation in the modern era.

Further comparative research might productively extend this analysis to other national literatures that underwent comparable reformist and modernizing movements in the early twentieth century, in order to determine whether the typological pattern identified here reflects a still broader, transregional literary phenomenon.

References

1. Qodiriy A. O'tkan kunlar (Days Gone By). Tashkent: G'afur G'ulom Publishing House, 2018.
2. Qodiriy A. Mehrobdan chayon (A Scorpion from the Altar). Tashkent: Sharq, 2010.
3. Cho'lpon A. Kecha va kunduz (Night and Day). Tashkent: G'afur G'ulom Publishing House, 2016.
4. Genette G. Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.
5. Kristeva J. Word, Dialogue and Novel // The Kristeva Reader / Ed. by T. Moi. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.
6. Moretti F. Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900. London: Verso, 1998.
7. Damrosch D. What Is World Literature? Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
8. Karimov N. Panorama of Twentieth-Century [Uzbek] Literature. Tashkent: O'zbekiston, 2008.