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THE SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATION OF TREES IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This scholarly article presents a comparative analysis of the symbolic meanings of trees in English and Uzbek literature. The study examines the cultural, philosophical, and aesthetic functions of tree imagery within samples from both national literary traditions. The article analyzes the similar and different aspects of tree symbols based on a cultural-cognitive approach, determining their role in expressing national worldviews. The research results demonstrate that tree symbols are artistic expressions of national mentality, geographical environment, and historical experience.

Keywords

tree symbol, comparative literature, English literature, Uzbek literature, cultural semiotics, imagery system.

Introduction

The tree is a universal, yet nationally nuanced symbol. Its interpretation in literature reflects a society's relationship with nature, its system of values, and its historical memory. If English and Uzbek literatures are analyzed comparatively, the profound differentiation of cultural codes within tree imagery becomes evident. These differences depend on climate, geographical environment, historical processes, and national intellectual traditions. The **purpose** of this article is to identify the artistic transformation of the tree symbol within the context of two distinct cultures. Its **objectives** are: to formulate a typology of tree imagery, to determine its cultural semantics, and to conduct a systematic analysis of interliterary similarities and differences.

1. Studying the Tree Symbol in Literary Scholarship: Theoretical Foundations

Scientific perspectives on the symbolic meanings of trees have developed in various directions. Based on Jung's theory of archetypes, the tree is interpreted as an archetype of the "Mother," the "Self," or "Spiritual growth." Mircea Eliade's concept of the "sacred tree" emphasizes its significance as a cosmic axis (axis mundi). Ecocriticism (Cheryll Glotfelty, Lawrence Buell) views the tree as a key object for studying the relationship between nature and culture.

In Uzbek literary scholarship (N. Mallayev, G'. Karimov, M. Qo'chqorov), the tree is often analyzed as a symbol of spiritual heritage, historical memory, and national self-awareness.

2. The Evolution and Main Directions of the Tree Symbol in English Literature

2.1. The Renaissance Period: Symbol of Domination and Order

In William Shakespeare's works, trees appear as symbols of human and monarchical order. The oak tree in *Macbeth* signifies the disruption of natural order. In *King Lear*, the forest is depicted as a source of natural laws and justice. In the Renaissance, the tree represents an anthropocentric worldview – the symbol of human dominion and control over nature.

2.2. Romanticism: Nature's Spiritual and Divine Force

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For the Romantics, the tree is the divine language of nature. In William Wordsworth's poem "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," trees are a source of spiritual renewal, childhood memory, and connection with the divine being. In S. T. Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," the birch tree is used as a symbol of a guide on the path out of spiritual alienation.

2.3. The Victorian Era: Resistance to Industrialization and Nostalgia

The poplar trees in Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* are symbols of ancient, vanishing rural life; their felling signifies the destruction of traditions. In Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, the oak is the eternal symbol of old England.

2.4. The 20th Century: Modernist and Postmodernist Interpretations

In J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, the Ents (tree-people) manifest as symbols of nature's wrath and vengeance. In T. S. Eliot's poem "The Waste Land," dry trees symbolize spiritual aridity and moral crisis.

3. The Cultural Context and Functions of the Tree Symbol in Uzbek Literature

3.1. Classical Literature: Symbol of Sufism and Spirituality

In Alisher Navoi's *Khamsa*, the plane tree (chinor) is a symbol of wisdom and protection. In *Layla and Majnun*, the tree is a witness to Majnun's sorrow and wild passion. In Babur's *Baburnama*, the mulberry tree is depicted as a symbol of the beauty and yearning for the motherland. In this period, the tree is often a metaphor for a person's spiritual state and moral path.

3.2. 20th-Century Literature: National Self-Awareness and Modernization

In Abdulla Qodiriy's *Past Days*, the plane tree is a symbol of eternal life, lineage, and historical memory. The image of the "Father Plane Tree" in the work is a witness and patron of an entire generation's life journey. In Ghafur Ghulam's poems, the mulberry tree is expressed as a symbol of the people's labor, simplicity, and sincerity.

3.3. Contemporary Literature: Complex Personal and Social Symbols

In Tog'ay Murod's *Fields Left by My Father*, the tree is a symbol of life in the desert, endurance, and hope. In Erkin Vohidov's poems, the plane tree is a symbol of the homeland, native land, and values unchanged since time immemorial. In O'tkir Hoshimov's *The Affairs of the World*, the tree in the drought becomes a symbol of withstanding the difficulties of an entire era.

4. Comparative Analysis of the Tree Symbol in English and Uzbek Literature

Analysis Parameters	**English Literature**	**Uzbek Literature**
Main Function	Individualistic, psychological, philosophical expression	Collective, national, historical memory expression
Attitude to Nature	Aesthetic and divine object, subject of domination	Mother, patron, source of life
Tree Species	Oak, birch, poplar, apple	Plane tree, mulberry, saxaul, walnut (juglans)
Interpretation of Time	Linear: past – nostalgia, present – critique	Cyclical: eternal life, continuity of lineage
Cultural Context	Industrial, urban, Protestant ethic	Agrarian, traditional, Islamic culture
Symbolic Complex	Self-awareness, spiritual quest, critique	Homeland, national identity, lineage, labor, hospitality

Similarities:

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1. In both literatures, the tree is a symbol of the existence and continuity of life.
2. Trees serve as a means of expressing human emotions (sorrow, hope, love).
3. In both traditions, the tree is seen as a source of connection with the divine and spiritual renewal.

Key Differences:

1. **Functional Difference:** In English literature, the tree is often an object of individual experience, whereas in Uzbek literature, it is a symbol of collective identification.
2. **Semantic Difference:** In Uzbek literature, the tree's connection to home, mother, and homeland is more strongly expressed.
3. **Historical Context:** In English literature, the tree is a symbol of resistance to industrialization, while in Uzbek literature, it is a symbol of traditions being eroded by modernization.

Conclusion

The interpretation of the tree symbol in English and Uzbek literature is an artistic expression of the national cultural code. While in English literature the tree often manifests as a symbol of individual psyche, philosophical inquiry, and the transformation of the relationship with nature, in Uzbek literature it becomes an emblem of collective memory, the continuity of lineage, and national self-awareness.

These differences stem not only from climatic and geographical conditions but also from historical experience, social structure, and divergences in worldview. If English literature possesses an anthropocentric approach, in Uzbek literature the tree has anthropomorphic characteristics – it resembles a mother, a patron, a wise elder.

For future research, gender, ecological, and postcolonial interpretations of the tree symbol in comparative literary studies represent promising directions.

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