



“THE FEMALE PROTAGONIST IN POSTMODERN LITERATURE: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH LITERATURE.”

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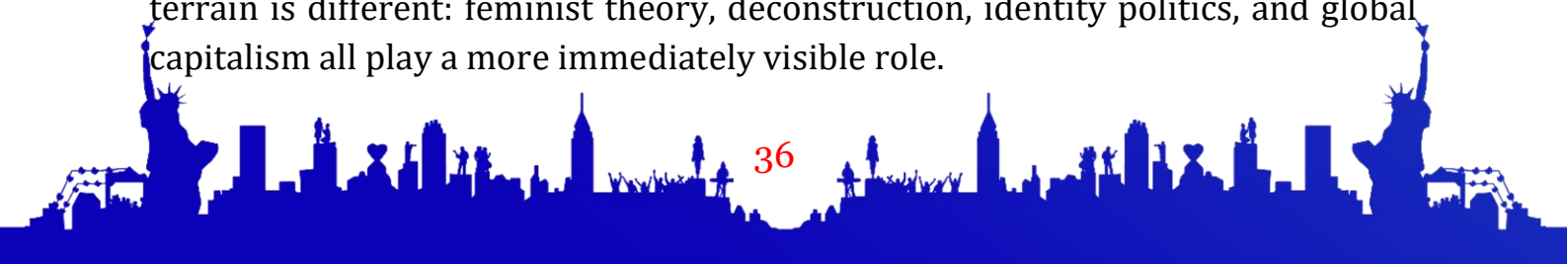
Annotation: This article examines the figure of the female protagonist in postmodern literature, comparing the trajectories in Uzbek and English (Anglophone) literary traditions. It argues that while both literatures embrace fragmentation, multiplicity of identity, and critique of grand narratives, the Uzbek postmodern female hero is often entangled with national identity, cultural tradition, and post-colonial dilemmas in ways not always present in English literature. Through close readings of exemplary texts, this study traces convergences (e.g. fragmentation, intertextuality, metafiction) and divergences (e.g. tradition versus globalization, religious-cultural tensions) in how women characters are constructed. Finally, it discusses how these differences reflect differing socio-historical environments, and suggests directions for further comparative work.

Keywords: postmodernism, female hero, Uzbek literature, English literature, fragmentation, identity

Introduction

In the wake of modernism's crisis of faith in unified narratives and coherent subjects, postmodern literature foregrounds fragmentation, multiplicity, and the instability of identity. Against this backdrop, the representation of women often becomes a site of experimentation: female protagonists may be destabilized, reassembled, questioned, or resequenced in a way that troubles conventional gendered subjectivity.

In Uzbek literature, postmodern currents have merged with local impulses—national identity, postcolonial legacies, Islamic-cultural tensions, and language debates—to produce a distinctive mode of female characterization. In Anglophone (especially British and American) postmodernism, the cultural terrain is different: feminist theory, deconstruction, identity politics, and global capitalism all play a more immediately visible role.





This thesis asks: What are the common formal and thematic strategies in the depiction of women protagonists in Uzbek and English postmodern literatures? In what ways do these literatures diverge—especially in relation to cultural tradition, identity, and politics?

To explore this, the paper proceeds by (1) briefly recalling key features of postmodernism, (2) analyzing convergences in female protagonist representation, (3) examining divergences via case studies, and (4) drawing conclusions about what these similarities and differences tell us about the literatures' respective contexts.

Analysis and Discussion

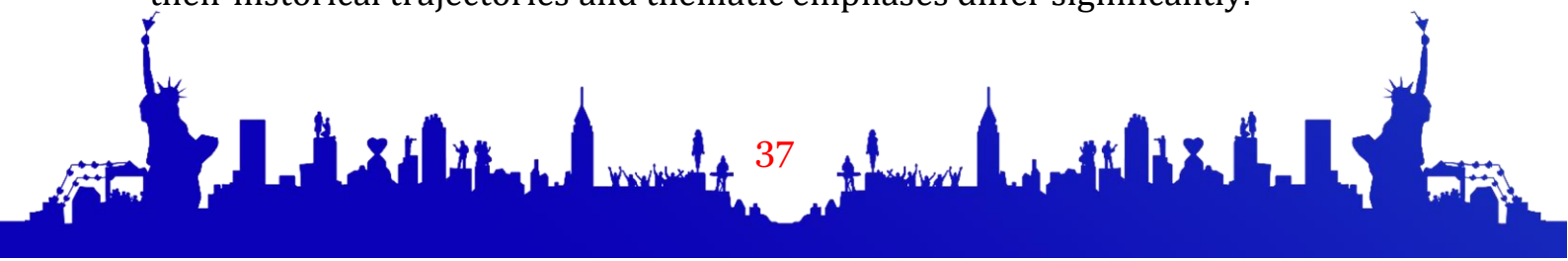
Postmodern literature has redefined the contours of literary representation, particularly in the way women are portrayed as central characters. Both Uzbek and English literary traditions, although emerging from different cultural, historical, and ideological contexts, have used postmodernism to challenge stereotypes and reconstruct female identity in fiction. This section provides a comparative analysis of how women are represented in postmodern Uzbek and English literature, highlighting points of convergence and divergence. The analysis is grounded in scholarly works, feminist literary criticism, and textual examples from both traditions.

Postmodern Context and Female Identity

Postmodernism, which gained momentum in the mid-20th century, is characterized by fragmentation, intertextuality, metafiction, and the rejection of grand narratives [1]. Within this framework, women's voices gained new visibility. Postmodernism allowed female characters to break away from traditional patriarchal constructs, thereby enabling a pluralistic and diverse representation of gender identity [2].

In Uzbek literature, postmodern tendencies emerged strongly after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. Writers such as Isajon Sultan, Hamid Ismailov, and Gulchehra Nuriddinova began to explore fragmented female voices, reflecting both personal and collective traumas of the transition period [3]. In English literature, postmodern female characters had already been well established through the works of Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson, and Margaret Atwood, who used postmodern strategies to challenge patriarchal ideologies and explore themes of sexuality, identity, and power [4].

Thus, both traditions exhibit a reimagining of the female protagonist, but their historical trajectories and thematic emphases differ significantly.





Representation of Female Protagonists in Uzbek Postmodern Literature

Uzbek postmodern literature is deeply shaped by the socio-political shifts of the post-Soviet era. The female protagonist often embodies the struggles of navigating tradition, modernity, and globalization simultaneously [5].

- **Fragmented Identity:** Women characters in works like Isajon Sultan's *Boqiy darbadar* reflect fragmented identities, torn between Soviet cultural remnants and newly emerging nationalistic ideologies.

- **Cultural Boundaries:** Female characters often embody the tension between traditional Uzbek family roles and the aspiration for individuality and freedom.

- **Spiritual and Mystical Dimensions:** Unlike in English literature, Uzbek postmodernism frequently incorporates mystical and Sufi motifs in female characterization, reflecting the region's Islamic heritage [6].

These tendencies show that Uzbek postmodern writers use female figures to articulate not only gender issues but also national and cultural anxieties in the wake of independence.

Representation of Female Protagonists in English Postmodern Literature

In contrast, English postmodern literature emerged in a context where feminism had already gained momentum. Thus, female protagonists often serve as direct challenges to patriarchal traditions and gender stereotypes [7].

- **Deconstruction of Stereotypes:** Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* deconstructs fairy-tale archetypes, presenting women as powerful and sexual beings rather than passive victims [8].

- **Multiplicity of Voices:** Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* employs intertextuality and fragmented narrative to represent lesbian identity and the clash between personal freedom and religious orthodoxy.

- **Political and Environmental Dimensions:** Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* integrates feminist critique with dystopian warnings about authoritarianism, making the female body a site of political control [9].

English postmodern female protagonists are therefore more explicitly political, global, and feminist, reflecting the influence of second-wave and third-wave feminism in Western contexts.

Comparative Dimensions: Convergences

Despite differences, Uzbek and English postmodern literature share important convergences in the portrayal of women.





- **Fragmentation:** Both traditions use fragmented narrative forms to reflect women’s fractured identities in a postmodern world.

- **Resistance to Patriarchy:** Female protagonists in both contexts challenge patriarchal norms, though the form of resistance varies depending on cultural context.

- **Multiplicity of Meanings:** Postmodern strategies allow women characters to embody multiple, sometimes contradictory roles simultaneously, resisting fixed definitions of “womanhood.”

Comparative Dimensions: Divergences

However, significant divergences remain.

- **Cultural Specificity:** Uzbek literature embeds female protagonists in cultural, religious, and national identity struggles, while English literature situates them within feminist and global contexts.

- **Narrative Function:** In Uzbek postmodern works, women often symbolize collective struggles of society (e.g., transition, cultural identity), whereas in English works they frequently serve as individualized voices of feminist critique.

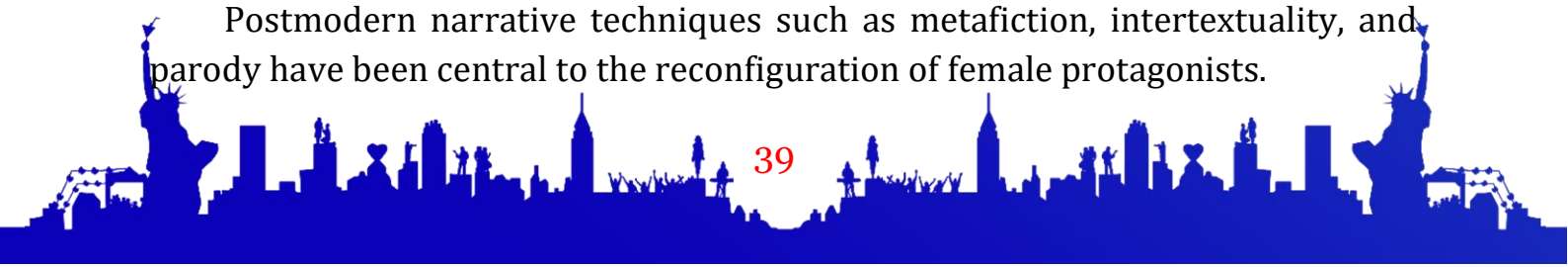
- **Use of Intertextuality:** While English literature heavily draws on Western literary traditions and feminist re-readings, Uzbek literature often integrates folklore, oral storytelling, and mystical motifs [10].

Comparative Features of Female Protagonists

Feature	Uzbek Postmodern Literature	English Postmodern Literature
Historical Context	Post-Soviet transition (1990s onwards)	Second/third-wave feminism (1960s onwards)
Identity Focus	Cultural hybridity, tradition vs modernity	Gender, sexuality, individuality
Narrative Style	Folklore elements, mysticism, fragmentation	Metafiction, intertextuality, parody
Symbolism	Women as collective/national symbols	Women as individualized feminist subjects
Resistance	Subtle, within cultural boundaries	Explicit, politically charged

Postmodern Techniques and Gender Representation

Postmodern narrative techniques such as metafiction, intertextuality, and parody have been central to the reconfiguration of female protagonists.





• **Metafiction:** In Winterson’s works, metafiction destabilizes linear storytelling and questions gender norms. Similarly, Hamid Ismailov uses metafictional techniques to deconstruct Soviet and post-Soviet narratives, often embedding female perspectives within shifting realities [11].

• **Intertextuality:** Angela Carter’s rewriting of fairy tales parallels Uzbek writers’ reworking of folk stories, though the cultural content differs. Uzbek authors often rely on oral traditions, while English writers invoke canonical Western texts.

• **Parody and Irony:** Both literatures use irony to critique gender norms, but English literature tends to be more explicit and politically motivated, while Uzbek literature often couches irony in allegory and symbolism.

Postmodern Techniques in Gender Representation

Technique	Uzbek Literature	English Literature
Metafiction	Used to question Soviet history and cultural identity	Used to destabilize gender norms and heteronormativity
Intertextuality	Folklore, Islamic mysticism, oral storytelling	Fairy tales, canonical Western texts, feminist re-readings
Irony/Parody	Allegorical, culturally embedded	Explicitly feminist, politically charged

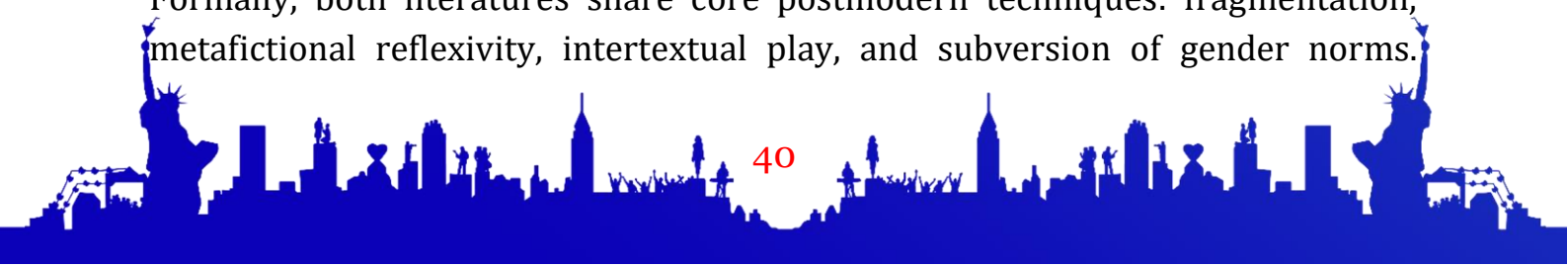
Challenges and Future Directions

The analysis reveals that while English literature has firmly situated female protagonists within feminist critique, Uzbek postmodern literature continues to balance between cultural traditions and modern feminist impulses. This divergence reflects broader socio-political contexts: in Uzbekistan, discussions of gender remain closely tied to national identity, while in English-speaking countries feminist discourses dominate the literary landscape [12].

Future scholarship should focus on cross-cultural readings that bring these traditions into dialogue, highlighting how postmodern female protagonists embody global as well as local struggles. Comparative studies can help illuminate how women’s literary voices negotiate between universality and cultural specificity in the age of globalization.

Conclusion

The figure of the woman as protagonist in postmodern literature offers a rich site for comparative inquiry between Uzbek and English literary traditions. Formally, both literatures share core postmodern techniques: fragmentation, metafictional reflexivity, intertextual play, and subversion of gender norms.





However, divergences arise in how culturally embedded these techniques become: in Uzbek literature, the female protagonist must often mediate between tradition and modernity, religious norms and secular pressures, language conflicts, and national trauma; in English postmodernism, female subjectivity is more freely experimental, less burdened by culturally specific restoration or repair.

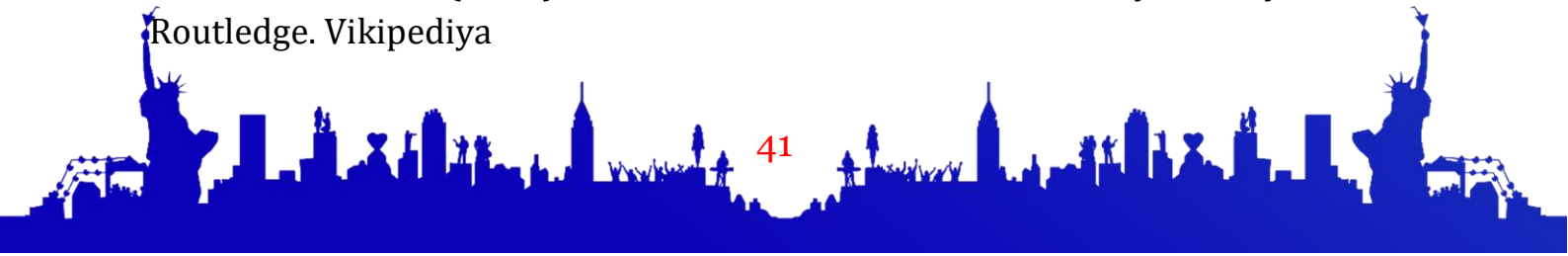
These divergences make comparative study fertile: they challenge simple transplantation of theory and invite attention to the ways in which postmodern strategies are localized, mediated by social history, and inflected by gendered cultural discourses.

Further research might develop full comparative textual analyses (e.g. pairing a modern Uzbek novel with an Anglophone postmodern novel), explore how female subjectivity evolves in younger Uzbek authors, or analyze translation of Uzbek female voices into English and vice versa.

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