

Syncretism in Classical and Modern English and Uzbek Literature

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Abstract: Syncretism in classical and modern English and Uzbek literature illustrates the blending of diverse cultural elements, traditions, and ideologies within literary works. This phenomenon can be observed in the way both literatures incorporate aspects from various historical, religious, and social contexts. For instance, classical English literature often integrates themes from mythology and religion, while modern works reflect contemporary influences, including globalization and multiculturalism. Similarly, Uzbek literature, with its rich history influenced by Persian, Arabic, and Russian cultures, demonstrates syncretism through its narrative styles and thematic explorations. This article reveals that the syncretic nature of both English and Uzbek literature not only enriches their respective narratives but also highlights the interconnectedness of human experiences across different cultures and time periods.

Keywords: classicism, modern literature, blending, interpretation, novel, tendency, form and content, lyrical, epic, style, modernist.



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Introduction. At a time when written literature had significantly distanced itself from the artistic synthesis of mythological and divine elements found in folklore, representatives of classicism began to create their own literary works within written literature. In M.Bakhtin's studies titled *Epic and Novel* and *Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel*, he notes that by a certain stage in the development of literature, the epic had undergone differentiation, and that various genres had formed based on epic literary elements. He emphasizes that one aspect of the relationship between the novel and the epic is directly connected to this process¹.

Literary review. The Middle Ages and the Renaissance represent important stages in the development of syncretic tendencies in world literature. This period, shaped by complex religious, philosophical, and cultural transformations, fostered the fusion of religious and secular knowledge, East and West, classical and folk traditions. The literary texts created during this time reflect a rich tapestry of blended interpretations—divine teachings were interwoven with royal

¹ Bemong N. and others. BAKHTIN'S THEORY OF THE LITERARY CHRONOTOPE: REFLECTIONS, APPLICATIONS, PERSPECTIVES., Gent, Academia Press, 2010, 213 pp.

romances, mystical allegories with rational philosophy, and classical motifs took on new meanings in novel ideological contexts.

A number of chivalric adventure works created during the Middle Ages—such as Lancelot, King Arthur, Tristan and Isolde, and Amadis of Gaul—stood alongside later works like “bandit novels” and “picaresque novels” that emerged as expressions of the hardships and challenges of social life. In the East, during the same period, prose works in a folkloric tone that were passed down through generations—such as the stories of Ibrahim Adham, Abu Muslim Khorasani, and ancient oral and written literary examples like One Thousand and One Nights and The Book of Sindbad, which celebrated cunning and adventure — bear resemblance to this category of prose literature.

Discussion. Dante’s Divine Comedy is often revered for its religious content and poetic grandeur, but it also stands on equal footing as a syncretic literary work. The poem is a fusion of Classical Roman mythology (with Virgil as guide), Christian eschatology (Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell), and medieval scholastic philosophy (especially that of Thomas Aquinas). A key aspect is that Dante’s guiding characters—Virgil (representing reason and classical wisdom) and Beatrice (symbolizing divine grace)—embody a synthesis of humanism and divine revelation. The poem, relying on scholastic logic, is composed through a rich symbolic literary style that unites multiple discourses into a singular artistic vision. The narrative itself is built upon an allegorical journey of the soul, but at the same time, it serves as a moral critique of 14th century Florentine politics, thus blending the religious and the secular.

From a structural perspective, Dante fuses the epic form with theological treatise, philosophical dialogue, and lyrical poetry. The formally innovative *terza rima stanza* structure facilitates an understanding of Dante’s metaphysical vision through its recursive, spiral logic. However, this formal unity is interwoven with a profound heterogeneity that transforms The Divine Comedy into a paradigmatic syncretic text. The literary works of Giovanni Boccaccio, Thomas More, Cervantes, Francis Bacon, and Petrarch continued this tradition.

In the East, poetic innovations of the Renaissance such as *khamisa* writing, *dastan* epic poetry, *nazira* (poetic response) tradition, and *takhmis* (adding to existing verses) also followed the same principles—grounded in the laws of classicism. In the so-called *Golden Age* of medieval Persian literature, especially in the works of Nizami Ganjavi, Fariduddin Attar, Jalaluddin Rumi, and Khusrau Dehlavi, we encounter a profound, multi-layered syncretism of Sufi mysticism, Quranic spirituality, pre-Islamic Persian imagery, and classical Greek thought. For example, Rumi’s *Masnavi-ye Ma’navi* cannot be read solely as a Sufi text; it is simultaneously philosophical, didactic, poetic, and narrative. The fusion of symbolic language, metaphysical reflection, and moral allegory elevates the work to a literary form far beyond simple genre classification.

This work exemplifies syncretism through the harmonious blending of Sufi mysticism, Quranic interpretation, Persian poetic aesthetics, and Greek philosophical logic. The narrative form is episodic and fluid, with fables often merging with theological commentary and philosophical reflection. During such a high classical era, centuries-old aesthetic principles, genre standards, imagery, and style developed on the foundation of Islamic enlightenment. The period of codified classicism is observed within the context of the three khanates of Turkestan.

This synthesis is not only stylistic but also ideological. For instance, Rumi interprets Platonic and Aristotelian concepts of the soul, the Neoplatonic theory of emanation, and the Islamic notion of *tawhid* (the absolute oneness of God) as an integrated spiritual worldview. All of these are expressed through lyrical storytelling and poetic fables. This represents syncretism both in form and content.

One noteworthy example is the story of the elephant in a dark room, which simultaneously functions as a Sufi allegory, a partial philosophical critique of perception, and a didactic fable rooted in oral tradition. Rumi’s poetic work constantly oscillates between moral instruction and

lyrical ecstasy, creating a profoundly syncretic literary world in terms of both worldview and expression.

European classicism, characterized by the gradual development of lyrical and dramatic genres, is clearly visible in the form of sentimental and Enlightenment novels in England. Legal, historical, and psychological novels also emerged in this environment. Samuel Richardson, Laurence Sterne, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Robert Burns, and Henry Fielding were active during this phase. Walter Scott, known as the “father of the historical novel,” initiated this tradition, while Charles Dickens and William Thackeray are regarded as pioneers of the psychological novel.

Sentimentalism, romanticism, naturalism, and realism—literary movements born in countries like England and France and widely spread to other regions—share parallel structural and semantic features. Emerging as an independent literary trend during the 1750s–60s Renaissance period, sentimentalism derives from the word *sentiment*, meaning feeling or perception, and marked an escape from the rigid conventions of classicism by focusing on emotionally perceived reality and its artistic expression. The poetry of Rumi, Ferdowsi, Nizami, Lutfi, and Navoi is also rich in sentimental motifs, indicating that such literature is not alien to Eastern Islamic poetry.

Later, in Great Britain, romanticism gave way to realism, and from 1837 to 1901, the era known as Victorian literature saw the popularization of large-scale prose genres, which portrayed life from a realist perspective more than poetic one. In the 1840s–50s, demand for social novels grew, and notable English authors such as Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Thomas Hardy, Anthony Trollope, Charlotte Bronte, and the American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe produced famous works. Charles Dickens, who made a great contribution to the development of the realist genre, remains one of the most widely read authors today. His adventure novels addressed important social issues, gave a broad and comprehensive depiction of society, and created vivid portrayals of dozens, even hundreds, of characters.

John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, and Thomas Carlyle wrote works in documentary and historical prose, while the autobiographical and religious writings of Cardinal Newman were highly appreciated by readers².

In poetry, the works of Thomas Hardy, Alfred Tennyson, and Robert Browning were especially highly regarded by readers.

The industrialization and urbanization that surged at the turn of the 20th century, along with the two world wars originating in Europe, gave rise to modernism—a literary movement in opposition to the dominant realism of the 19th century. Modernism (from the French *moderne*—“new”) developed as a trend focusing on the individual, their inner world, and their struggles. According to Merriam-Webster, modernism is defined as a practice characteristic of the modern era, striving to find original means of expression.³ In literature, it is defined as a deliberate break from the past and the search for new forms of expression.

Modernist literature embodies a fusion of formal innovation and philosophical depth. Covering the period from 1901 to 1939, modernism was a new movement not only in literature but also in art, philosophy, and cinema. Among the early modernists—alongside Franz Kafka and Robert Musil—Virginia Woolf noted in 1924 that “human nature changed entirely in December 1910,”⁴ referring to transformations in human relationships paralleled by changes in religion, politics, and literature.

² Dawson, Carl. *Victorian High Noon: English Literature in 1850*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1979.

³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/modernism>

⁴ Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary Woolf: Selected Papers from the Twenty-Second Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf (англ.)/Martin, Ann; Holland, Kathryn. — Liverpool University Press, 2013. — ISBN 978-0-9890826-2-4.

This movement arose in Europe following the collapse of the bourgeois order and is also known in academia by the term *decadence* (from the French *décadence*—“decline”, “decay”). The movement first developed in American literature in the early 20th century. In addition to the industrial revolution, it was influenced by prohibition and the Great Depression, intensifying feelings of despair and loss. In the 1920s, the literature of decadence expanded to include new trends such as expressionism, futurism, imagism, unanimism, and acmeism. Prominent American modernists include such writers as William Faulkner, T.S. Eliot, and E.E. Cummings.

Writers such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and T.S. Eliot used stream-of-consciousness, mythological references, and intertextual collage to reflect the fragmented yet interconnected reality of modern life. For instance, each chapter of *Ulysses* presents a distinct literary style—from catechism to screenplay—while drawing from Catholic liturgy, Irish folklore, Shakespearean drama, and psychoanalytic theory. Each chapter skillfully blends different literary traditions, ranging from church catechism to romantic prose and even film montage. *Ulysses* has become a symbol of modernist syncretism through its radical formal experimentation and deep intertextuality.⁵ The novel exemplifies how Homer’s *Odyssey* is reborn in early 20th century Dublin, creating a literary palimpsest that merges ancient myth and modern realism while transcending time and space. The novel transforms into a vast syncretic textual space, reflecting the “corrupted,” yet interconnected consciousness of modern existence through constantly shifting form, expression, and language.

Conclusion. The birth of the modern novel is characterized by a shift in artistic literature from portraying the individual within a social sphere to exploring the individual as a person. This shift became evident through the depiction of human thought processes and unconscious impulses. Though this became a new literary tendency, some authors continued to rely on traditional themes of social stratification. One such author encompassing both Victorian and modernist ideals was E.M. Forster. Although many of his works explored class and hierarchy, he also showed interest in individual values. His two most famous works are *A Room with a View* (1908) and *A Passage to India* (1924).

D.H. Lawrence’s novels focused on relationships between social classes. His most famous and controversial novel, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928), discusses a romantic relationship between a woman of the upper class and a man from the working class.

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, elements characteristic of critical realism as a stage of realism found clear expression in the literature of the Jadid movement in Turkestan. Alongside a deeper exploration of the essence of social life, the subject of the individual living and acting within society was artistically depicted across various settings and timeframes. By this time, in Europe, including England, realism and critical realism were being reflected through the works of Bernard Shaw, James Aldridge, H.G. Wells, and in America by Mark Twain, Jack London, Theodore Dreiser, and Ernest Hemingway—through social-psychological, biographical, psychoanalytical, and mythological perspectives.

After the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia, another form of realism emerged in the Turkestan region, now grounded in the Marxist-Leninist ideology that formed the basis of the Soviet Union’s ideology⁶. In Soviet—and by extension, Uzbek literature, the image of the communist was taken as the main character, and all events in the work were to revolve around and be directed by this central figure. By the early 20th century, prose works on socio-domestic themes, referred to as

⁵ Aljohani A. James Joyce’s *Ulysses*: The Search for Value. *Epiphany: Journal of Transdisciplinary Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (2013) © Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, 27 pp.

⁶ Jo’raqulov U., Hamroyev K. Qiyosiy adabiyotshunoslik. O’quv qo’llanma T.: “LESSON PRESS” nashriyoti, 2021, 189 b., 146-b.

national novels, began to appear in Jadid literature. However, these works were simple and straightforward stories, differing from the standards of the new European novel.

The first true novel in Uzbek literature was “Bygone Days” (O‘tkan kunlar), written by Abdulla Qodiriy and published in 1926. Later novels by authors such as Cho‘lpon, Oybek, Abdulla Qahhor, Odil Yoqubov, O‘tkir Hoshimov, Muhammad Do‘st, and Nazar Eshonqul were rich in elements of realism, critical realism, and modernism influenced by Russian, Arab, European, and American literature. In the century-long history of Uzbek novel writing, these works continued the traditions of folk prose and classical epic thinking while blending them with the traditions of world literature.

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