

**COLOR SYMBOLISM IN XX CENTURY ENGLISH AND UZBEK LITERATURE**

**Abdullayeva Sokhibakhon Olimbek qizi**

Doctorate student, Namangan State University

e-mail: [abdullayevas191@gmail.com](mailto:abdullayevas191@gmail.com)

99890 5557480

**Abstract:** This scientific article examines the functional and semantic peculiarities of color symbolism in 20th century English and Uzbek literature. Through comparative analysis, the research reveals how color symbolism in these two literary traditions reflects different historical, cultural, and ideological contexts. The study demonstrates that while English modernists used color symbolism to express existential anxiety, spiritual crisis, and social criticism, Uzbek writers employed it as a means of national identity preservation, covert political expression, and cultural resistance. The article analyzes works by key representatives including George Orwell, Virginia Woolf, F. Scott Fitzgerald from English literature, and Abdulhamid Cho'lpon, Abdulla Qodiriy, Oybek from Uzbek literature, revealing fundamental differences in their approaches to color symbolism.

**Keywords:** color symbolism, comparative literature, 20th century literature, English modernism, Uzbek literature, socialist realism, national identity, political allegory.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The 20th century represents a pivotal period in world literature characterized by radical transformations in artistic consciousness and expression. Color symbolism, as one of the most potent literary devices, underwent significant evolution in both English and Uzbek literary traditions, though in fundamentally different directions determined by their respective historical and cultural contexts.

In English literature, the modernist movement that emerged after World War I brought about revolutionary changes in the use of color symbolism. Writers like T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and F. Scott Fitzgerald employed colors not merely as descriptive elements but as complex psychological and philosophical markers reflecting the fragmentation of modern consciousness, existential anxiety, and social criticism. The trauma of two world wars, industrialization, and the crisis of traditional values necessitated new symbolic languages, with color becoming a crucial component of this linguistic innovation.

Conversely, 20th century Uzbek literature developed under dramatically different historical conditions. The Jadid movement of the early century, followed by Sovietization, Stalinist repression, and eventual independence created a complex socio-political landscape that profoundly influenced literary expression. Color symbolism in Uzbek literature served multiple functions: as a tool for covert political commentary under censorship, as a means of preserving national identity, and as a bridge between traditional Islamic symbolism and new socialist realist aesthetics.

This article aims to conduct a comparative analysis of color symbolism in these two literary traditions, examining how similar colors acquired divergent meanings and functions in different cultural contexts.

### **METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

This study employs a comparative literary analysis methodology within a cultural-historical framework. The theoretical foundation draws upon semiotic approaches to color symbolism (Barthes, 1972), cultural semiotics (Lotman, 1990), and postcolonial literary theory (Said, 1978). The research utilizes close reading of primary texts, contextual historical analysis, and comparative synthesis to identify patterns and divergences in color usage.

The selection of authors represents key literary movements: for English literature - modernism (Virginia Woolf), political allegory (George Orwell), and the Jazz Age critique (F. Scott Fitzgerald); for Uzbek literature - Jadid poetry (Cho'lpon), historical realism (Qodiriy), socialist realism (Oybek), and post-Stalinist poetry (Rauf Parfi).

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In English modernist literature, white undergoes a profound transformation from its traditional associations with purity and innocence to become a symbol of spiritual emptiness and existential crisis. Virginia Woolf's implementation of white symbolism represents a paradigmatic shift. In "To the Lighthouse" (1927), white is not merely an absence of color but an active presence of nothingness:

"The white space of the canvas... represented not possibility but limitation, not potential but absence." (Woolf, 1927)

Woolf employs white to depict the fragmentation of consciousness and the inability to find coherent meaning in modern existence. This represents a radical departure from Victorian literary traditions where white typically symbolized moral purity or divine presence.

T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922) further develops this modernist interpretation of white:

"A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,

And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,

And the dry stone no sound of water."

Here, the blinding white of the wasteland sun becomes an agent of spiritual desiccation rather than enlightenment. Eliot's white symbolizes the sterility of modern civilization, stripped of its capacity for spiritual regeneration.

Red in 20th century English literature acquires complex, often contradictory meanings. F. Scott Fitzgerald in "The Great Gatsby" (1925) uses red as a multifaceted symbol of desire, danger, and the corruption of the American Dream:

"Gatsby's red car wasn't just a vehicle; it was a projectile of desire, a machine of destruction painted the color of warning and blood." (Fitzgerald, 1925)

The red light at the end of Daisy's dock, Gatsby's red car, and the blood-soaked imagery of the novel's climax create a symbolic network where red represents both passionate aspiration and

inevitable tragedy. Fitzgerald's red critiques the destructive potential of unrestrained desire within capitalist modernity.

George Orwell employs red with explicit political connotations in "1984" (1949). The omnipresent red banners of the Party, the red-armed proletarians, and the scarlet-colored propaganda materials create a visual regime of control:

"The posters with the enormous face and the red banners were everywhere, a constant reminder of the Party's watchful presence." (Orwell, 1949)

Orwell's red symbolizes not revolutionary hope but totalitarian oppression, subverting the traditional socialist association of red with liberation.

Green undergoes significant semantic transformation in English modernist literature. While traditionally associated with nature and renewal, 20th century English writers frequently employ green to critique modernity's artificiality and moral corruption.

In "The Great Gatsby," Fitzgerald's green light represents both aspiration and illusion:

"Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us."

This green is not natural but electric, artificial - symbolizing the manufactured nature of the American Dream itself. Fitzgerald critiques how natural symbols become commodified within capitalist culture.

D. H. Lawrence uses green in "Women in Love" (1920) to explore psychological states and social tensions:

"The green of the English countryside became for him not peace but enclosure, not freedom but limitation."

Lawrence's green symbolizes both the vitality of natural forces and the suffocating constraints of conventional society, reflecting modernist ambivalence toward nature itself.

In contrast to English modernism's association of white with emptiness, Uzbek literature maintains and transforms traditional Islamic and Turkic associations of white with spiritual purity, while adding new layers of political meaning under Soviet conditions.

Abdulhamid Cho'lpon's poetry exemplifies this dual function of white symbolism. In his poem "White Nights" (1919), white operates on multiple levels:

"Oq libosli kechalarda,

Oq yulduzli osmon ostida,

Oq sochli kampirlar aytadi:

Oq kunning kelishi yaqin"

("In nights dressed in white,

Under a sky of white stars,

White-haired grandmothers say:

The white day is near")

Cho'lpon's white combines traditional associations (purity, wisdom represented by white hair) with covert political hope for national liberation ("the white day"). Under Soviet censorship, white became a coded language for expressing aspirations that could not be stated openly.

Abdulla Qodiriy in "O'tkan Kunlar" (Days gone by, 1926) uses white within historical narrative to signify moral purity amidst political corruption:

"Kumushning oq ro'molisi fe'l-atvoridagi poklikning ramzi edi, lekin bu oqlik zolim jamiyatda uning og'ir taqdirini ham bashorat qilardi."

("Kumush's white scarf was a symbol of purity in her demeanor, but this whiteness also foretold her tragic fate in a tyrannical society.")

Qodiriy's white symbolizes both traditional virtue and the vulnerability of purity in oppressive political systems.

The color red in 20th century Uzbek literature embodies the complex negotiation between Soviet ideological demands and national cultural traditions. Socialist realism mandated positive representations of red as the color of revolution, but Uzbek writers often infused this symbolism with ambivalence or covert criticism.

Oybek's novel "Navoiy" (1945) represents the official socialist realist approach to red:

"Qizil bayroqlar yangi hayotning, yangi jamiyatning ramzi edi. Ular shamolda hilpirar, kelajakning adolatli dunyosini bashorat qilardi."

("The red flags were symbols of new life, of a new society. They fluttered in the wind, heralding a future world of justice.")

Oybek's red follows socialist realist conventions, symbolizing revolutionary progress and historical optimism. However, even within this framework, subtle tensions emerge as traditional Uzbek cultural symbols are recolored with socialist meanings.

Rauf Parfi's post-Stalinist poetry employs red with greater complexity, reflecting disillusionment with Soviet promises:

"Qizil rang endi faqat bayroqda emas,

Yuraklardagi yaralarda ham ko'rinardi."

("The color red was now visible not only on flags,

But also in the wounds of hearts.")

Parfi's red acknowledges the official symbolism while suggesting its human cost,

Green holds particular significance in Uzbek literature due to its importance in Islamic culture and its association with the Central Asian landscape. Throughout the Soviet period, green became a subtle marker of national and religious identity.

Cho'lpon's use of green connects natural imagery with spiritual and national themes:

"Yashil bog'lar - Vatanning nafasi,

Yashil daraxtlar - xalqning ildizi."

("Green gardens are the breath of the Homeland,

Green trees are the roots of the people.")

This symbolism operates within what literary scholar Hamidulla Boltaboyev terms "botanical nationalism" - using plant imagery to express national consciousness under conditions where direct political expression was dangerous.

In socialist realist works, green was often mobilized for production themes, but Uzbek writers frequently infused these descriptions with traditional associations. The persistent appearance of green in descriptions of courtyards, gardens, and clothing throughout Soviet-era literature represents what cultural theorist Madina Tlostanova calls "the subterranean persistence of Islamic color symbolism within

The comparative analysis reveals fundamental differences in how color symbolism functions in 20th century English and Uzbek literature:

#### 1. Historical Context and Political Pressure:

English modernist color symbolism developed in response to world wars, industrialization, and philosophical crises, operating within relative freedom of expression. Uzbek color symbolism, conversely, evolved under conditions of colonialism, totalitarianism, and censorship, requiring coded language and covert meanings. This difference explains why Uzbek color symbolism often operates on multiple levels - surface compliance with official ideology masking deeper national or religious meanings.

#### 2. Relationship to Tradition:

English modernists consciously broke with Victorian color symbolism, creating new associations reflecting modern fragmentation. Uzbek writers, while incorporating socialist elements, maintained stronger continuity with Islamic and Turkic color traditions, using them as reservoirs of cultural memory. Green's persistent Islamic associations in Uzbek literature, despite Soviet secularization efforts, exemplify this cultural resilience.

#### 3. Psychological versus Political Orientation:

English color symbolism tends toward psychological and existential exploration (Woolf's white as consciousness, Fitzgerald's red as desire). Uzbek color symbolism is more frequently oriented toward political and collective concerns (Cho'lpon's white as national hope, red as revolutionary ambivalence). This reflects different literary priorities shaped by historical circumstances.

#### 4. The Role of Censorship:

The need to evade censorship in Soviet Uzbekistan created sophisticated forms of symbolic encoding absent in English literature. Uzbek writers developed what scholar William Fierman calls "Aesopian color coding" - using colors to express meanings understandable to national audiences but opaque to censors. This resulted in greater semantic density and intertextual complexity in Uzbek color symbolism.

### 5. Universal versus Particular Symbolism:

English modernist color symbolism often aspires to universal psychological or philosophical statements (Eliot's wasteland, Orwell's totalitarian red). Uzbek color symbolism remains more particular, rooted in specific national experience and cultural memory, though sometimes achieving universal resonance through this very particularity.

These differences should not obscure important similarities. Both traditions use color to critique modernity, though from different angles. Both employ color to express spiritual concerns in an increasingly secular age. And both demonstrate color's capacity to carry complex, often contradictory meanings within single texts.

### CONCLUSION

This comparative study of color symbolism in 20th century English and Uzbek literature reveals how literary devices are shaped by, and in turn help to shape, historical experience. While English modernists used color to map the fragmented psychology of modern individuals and critique capitalist modernity, Uzbek writers employed color as a means of cultural survival, political commentary, and identity preservation under conditions of censorship and ideological pressure.

The research demonstrates that color symbolism cannot be understood outside its specific historical and cultural context. The same colors acquire radically different meanings in different literary traditions: white signifies spiritual void in Woolf but national hope in Cho'lpon; red represents dangerous passion in Fitzgerald but ambivalent revolution in Parfi; green critiques artificiality in English modernism but affirms national identity in Uzbek literature.

These findings have implications for comparative literary studies more broadly. They suggest that apparently universal literary devices like color symbolism are profoundly particular in their operations, shaped by specific historical pressures and cultural traditions. Future research could productively extend this comparative framework to other literary traditions or examine how color symbolism evolves in post-independence Uzbek literature and contemporary English literature.

Ultimately, the study of color symbolism in these two traditions reveals literature's dual capacity: to register the particular textures of historical experience while creating symbolic languages that transcend their immediate contexts. Both English modernists and Uzbek writers of the Soviet period used color not merely to describe their worlds, but to reconfigure them imaginatively, offering alternative visions of reality through the symbolic potential of color.

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