

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EPISTOLARY POETICS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK PROSE

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Abstract: This article investigates the poetics of epistolary discourse in English and Uzbek prose through a comparative literary analysis. The study examines the artistic and structural functions of letters in prose works and explores how epistolary elements contribute to characterization, psychological depth, narrative composition, and emotional expression. The research analyzes selected English literary texts, including *A Scandal in Bohemia*, *The Sign of Four*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and *And Then There Were None*, alongside Uzbek prose works such as *O'tkan* ("Bygone Days") kunlar and *Dunyoning ishlari* ("The Affairs of the World"). Using comparative, hermeneutic, and textual analysis methods, the article identifies similarities and differences in epistolary poetics within both literary traditions. The findings demonstrate that English prose frequently employs letters to create suspense, mystery, and psychological realism, whereas Uzbek prose emphasizes emotional sincerity, moral values, and spiritual intimacy through epistolary forms.

Keywords: epistolary poetics, comparative literature, prose, letters, narrative discourse, English literature, Uzbek literature, artistic composition.

Introduction

The epistolary form has occupied an important position in world literature for centuries. Letters in prose narratives function not merely as communicative devices but also as artistic mechanisms capable of revealing the psychological state of characters, intensifying emotional conflict, and developing narrative structure. Epistolary poetics refers to the aesthetic, structural, and symbolic functions of letters within literary texts.

In literary studies, epistolary discourse is considered one of the most intimate forms of narration because it creates the illusion of direct communication between the character and the reader. Janet Gurkin Altman defines epistolarity as "the use of the letter's formal properties to create meaning" [1; p.5]. Similarly, Elizabeth Campbell emphasizes that epistolary narration allows writers to express hidden emotions and marginalized voices within literary discourse [2; p.333].

English literature has a rich epistolary tradition dating from the eighteenth century. However, even detective and psychological prose frequently employ letters as narrative instruments. Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie skillfully used letters, anonymous notes, and written messages to construct suspense and mystery.

Uzbek literature also demonstrates significant use of epistolary elements. In Uzbek prose, letters often symbolize emotional devotion, separation, family values, and spiritual reflection. Writers such as Abdulla Qodiriy and O'tkir Hoshimov integrate epistolary forms to deepen emotional sincerity and moral expression.

The relevance of this study lies in the growing scholarly interest in comparative poetics and intercultural literary analysis. Although epistolary literature has been widely studied in Western criticism, comparative studies devoted to English and Uzbek epistolary poetics remain limited.



Methods

This research employs comparative-typological, hermeneutic, and textual analysis methods. The comparative method identifies similarities and differences between English and Uzbek literary traditions. Hermeneutic analysis is used to interpret symbolic and psychological meanings embedded within epistolary discourse, while textual analysis examines stylistic and compositional features.

The materials of the study include selected English prose works by Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie as well as Uzbek literary texts by Abdulla Qodiriy, and O'tkir Hoshimov.

Results

Epistolary Poetics in English Prose

In English detective prose, letters frequently function as catalysts for narrative development. They introduce mystery, create suspense, and intensify psychological tension. In *A Scandal in Bohemia*, the anonymous message received by Sherlock Holmes initiates the entire plot: "There will call upon you to-night, at a quarter to eight o'clock," it said, "a gentleman who desires to consult you upon a matter of the very deepest moment." [3; p.3] This written message establishes intrigue and immediately creates an atmosphere of secrecy. The letter acts as a narrative trigger that moves the story forward.

Similarly, in *The Sign of Four*, Mary Morstan receives mysterious anonymous letters: "Miss Morstan, you are wronged. You shall have justice." [4; p.18] The note serves both psychological and structural purposes. It introduces uncertainty and anticipation while revealing hidden moral tensions within the narrative.

In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the warning note addressed to Sir Henry Baskerville strengthens the gothic atmosphere of fear: "As you value your life or your reason keep away from the moor." [5; p.41] This epistolary fragment creates emotional anxiety and symbolic danger. The written warning becomes an instrument of psychological manipulation.

Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* also employs epistolary techniques. The invitation letters sent to the characters become the foundation of the entire plot: "Some closely guarded secrets are about to be revealed to you." [6; p.9] The letter functions as a foreshadowing device and creates suspense before the central conflict emerges.

Thus, English prose frequently uses epistolary discourse to construct detective intrigue, psychological realism, and dramatic suspense.

Epistolary Poetics in Uzbek Prose

In Uzbek literature, epistolary forms are generally associated with emotional sincerity, moral reflection, and spiritual intimacy. Unlike English detective prose, where letters frequently function as instruments of suspense and mystery, Uzbek prose often employs epistolary discourse to express deep emotional attachment, ethical values, and human relationships. Letters in Uzbek literary tradition are not merely communicative texts; they serve as artistic reflections of the characters' inner worlds, revealing their emotional suffering, loyalty, longing, and spiritual devotion.

In *O'tkan kunlar* ("Bygone Days"), letters exchanged between Otabek and Kumush reveal profound emotional devotion and psychological suffering. One of Kumush's heartfelt confessions states: "Sizni ko'rmay ko'nglim taskin topmaydir..." [7; p.214] ("My soul finds no comfort when I cannot see you"). The epistolary form here becomes a medium of emotional confession and romantic idealization. Through the letter, the characters articulate feelings that cannot be fully expressed in direct dialogue. The written form intensifies emotional sincerity and allows the reader to witness the characters' psychological vulnerability. Moreover, the letter symbolizes emotional closeness despite physical separation, which is one of the central poetic functions of epistolary discourse.

The emotional and aesthetic significance of letters is also evident in *Dunyoning ishlari* ("The Affairs of the World") by O'tkir Hoshimov. In the work, written communication



symbolizes maternal affection, spiritual support, and emotional continuity between family members. The narrator states: “Onamning har bir xati menga duo kabi yetib kelardi.” [9; p.63] (“Each of my mother’s letters came to me like a blessing and a prayer”). The metaphorical comparison between letters and prayers demonstrates the spiritual significance of epistolary discourse in Uzbek prose. Here, the letter transcends its practical communicative function and acquires symbolic meaning. It becomes a source of emotional comfort, moral guidance, and spiritual connection. The maternal letter embodies traditional Uzbek cultural values such as respect for family, emotional warmth, and spiritual unity.

Furthermore, Uzbek epistolary prose frequently reflects national mentality and ethical ideals. Letters often function as moral testimony, preserving emotional memory and reinforcing interpersonal relationships. The language of such letters is usually lyrical, metaphorical, and emotionally expressive, which strengthens their poetic effect within narrative structure.

Thus, epistolary discourse in Uzbek prose performs not only compositional but also psychological, symbolic, and ethical functions. Through letters, Uzbek writers reveal the spiritual depth of characters and create emotionally rich literary worlds that emphasize sincerity, compassion, and moral consciousness.

Discussion

The comparative analysis reveals both similarities and differences in English and Uzbek epistolary poetics.

In English prose, epistolary elements primarily perform compositional and psychological functions. Letters introduce mystery, develop suspense, and provide indirect characterization. Detective fiction especially benefits from written messages because they create hidden meanings, ambiguity, and dramatic tension.

In Uzbek prose, however, epistolary discourse is more closely connected with emotional sincerity and ethical values. Letters frequently symbolize loyalty, love, memory, and spiritual closeness. Unlike English detective prose, Uzbek literary texts often emphasize the moral and emotional dimensions of correspondence.

Despite these distinctions, both literary traditions employ letters as intimate narrative devices capable of revealing internal consciousness. Epistolary discourse enables authors to combine personal confession with artistic narration.

The analysis also demonstrates that letters possess symbolic value beyond their practical communicative function. They represent distance and intimacy simultaneously. Through letters, characters overcome physical separation while exposing emotional vulnerability.

Conclusion

The comparative study of epistolary poetics in English and Uzbek prose demonstrates that letters function as significant artistic devices within both literary traditions. English prose predominantly employs epistolary forms to create suspense, mystery, and psychological realism, while Uzbek prose emphasizes emotional sincerity, ethical reflection, and spiritual intimacy.

The research confirms that epistolary discourse enriches narrative composition, deepens characterization, and intensifies emotional expression. Letters remain powerful literary instruments capable of connecting private emotion with broader cultural and artistic meanings.

Future studies may explore the transformation of epistolary poetics in contemporary digital communication, including emails, online messages, and virtual correspondence in modern literature.

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