POETIC FUNCTIONS AND AXIOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF LIGHT AND SHADOW IMAGERY IN UZBEK POETRY

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Doi: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23569494

Abstract: This article investigates how imagery associated with light, shadow, shade, and darkness performs poetic functions and communicates values in selected Uzbek poems. Its principal concern is not only what these images mean but how poetic form makes their evaluations possible. A purposive corpus of eight texts by Alisher Navoiy, Abdulhamid Cho‘lpon, Usmon Nosir, Hamid Olimjon, and Usmon Azim is examined using qualitative close reading, an adapted appraisal-oriented evaluation scheme, and functional analysis of comparison, contrast, personification, compositional progression, and perspective. The article argues that value is not an intrinsic feature of light or shade but emerges from their position in the poem, their relationship to human experience, and the speaker's evaluative perspective.

Keywords: Uzbek poetry; light and shadow; poetic function; axiology; literary evaluation; contextual valence; imagery; comparison; perspective; semiotics.

INTRODUCTION

The philosophical contrast between light and darkness is among the most recognizable interpretative resources in literary criticism. Light readily evokes visibility, movement, and discovery, while darkness may suggest obscurity, difficulty, or fear. Yet such associations do not constitute rules that determine the meaning of every poetic image. In verse, night may accommodate contemplation, shade may protect, and the same fire may signify fellowship to its participants and emotional distance to someone excluded from the scene. A theory of Uzbek poetic imagery must explain not only these different meanings but the formal and evaluative processes that create them.

The present investigation addresses a distinction often obscured in broad discussions of symbolism: poetic function is not the same as axiological orientation. A poetic function describes what an image does in the organization of a text-establishes a setting, supports comparison, intensifies contrast, changes perspective, or prepares a conclusion. Axiological orientation describes the value assigned to the referent, feeling, or event within that text. A poet can use a shadow as a compositional pivot without presenting shadow itself as morally objectionable. Similarly, sunlight may be formally prominent without automatically receiving a positive evaluation.

A related lexical distinction is necessary. In Uzbek, nur refers to illumination or radiance, yorug‘lik to brightness, soya to a shadow or shaded refuge, tun to night, and qorong‘ulik to darkness. They belong to a connected field of visual experience, but they are not identical. The relationship between a protective soya and a threatening tun must be demonstrated through the specific poem, not assumed through the English label “dark imagery.”

Roman Jakobson's account of the poetic function shows why recurring relations, parallel patterns, and verbal arrangement are central to the interpretation of literary language [1]. Lotman's semiotic theory further situates a literary work within cultural codes while allowing individual texts to transform inherited expectations [2]. In a complementary linguistic framework, Martin and White conceptualize evaluation through expressions of affect, judgment, appreciation, and stance [3]. Their model was developed for broader discourse analysis, not as a ready-made scheme for Uzbek lyric poetry; it is therefore used here cautiously as a guide to identifying explicit evaluative evidence. Lakoff and

Johnson's theory of conceptual metaphor helps explain mappings from bodily experience to abstract interpersonal relations [4]. Finally, Ricoeur's approach to metaphorical innovation cautions against treating figurative meaning as a fixed dictionary equivalent [5].

These perspectives lead to the article's main research problem: under what conditions does the formal organization of light-shadow imagery produce an identifiable positive, negative, mixed, or indeterminate evaluation? The study pursues four questions: (1) Which poetic devices make the visual opposition artistically productive? (2) What local evidence supports an attribution of value? (3) Can positive and negative evaluations coexist within the same image or scene? (4) How does the observer's position influence the result?

The objective is to develop and apply a modest, text-grounded method for separating poetic function from evaluative interpretation. The results address Section 2.1 of the dissertation plan concerning the poetic functions and artistic-philosophical meanings of light and shadow. Unlike a semantic-layer study, which catalogues kinds of meaning, this article foregrounds what an image accomplishes in a poem and whose value judgment it carries.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Corpus and textual provenance

The study uses eight poems selected for close analysis: Alisher Navoiy's Oshiq o‘ldum… [6]; Cho‘lpon's Go‘zal (1919) [7]; Usmon Nosir's Gulzor - chaman… (1934) [8] and Oydin kecha… [9]; Hamid Olimjon's Holbuki, tun… [10]; and Usmon Azim's Javzo [11], Qaro tunda - Boysun tog‘ida… [12], and Boysun qirlarida bir o‘zim kezdim… [13]. The sample is purposive: each text places visual imagery in a sufficiently developed relational context to support a close reading. It includes a classical ghazal and twentieth-century or later lyric poems, but is neither a representative chronological corpus nor a quantitative survey.

The primary passages were checked against openly accessible Uzbek-language electronic reproductions listed in the references. These webpages do not establish stable pagination in printed poetry collections. Consequently, no unverified page numbers are attached to primary citations. Brief quotations remain in Uzbek; accompanying explanations are the author's analytical glosses, not claims to published English translations. All conclusions are tied to specific textual cues, and no broader distributional claim is inferred from the eight-poem sample.

2.2. Distinguishing function from evaluation

The unit of analysis is a visual image in a bounded poetic context, normally one line or stanza plus the nearby passage necessary for interpretation. For each unit, the study records: (i) the literal or depicted referent; (ii) a salient poetic operation; (iii) the figure or experience being evaluated; (iv) the speaker or observer relative to whom that evaluation occurs; and (v) the most defensible evaluative orientation.

The four evaluative labels are positive (V+), where praise, comfort, affection, relief, or desired possibility is signalled; negative (V-), where fear, grief, exclusion, suffering, or other adverse experience is textually indicated; mixed (V±), where the same image or scene supports competing evaluations; and unassigned (V0), where an image may be vivid but lacks sufficient local evidence for a value judgment. These labels identify local textual orientations, not universal moral qualities. A particularly bright object, for instance, is not V+ merely because the reader associates light with goodness.

Table 1. Operational rubric for poetic function and contextual valuation

Analytical dimension Operational question Positive evidence Caution or exclusion rule

Visual referent What does the passage depict? Named moon, star, shade, wall-shadow, fire, night, sunlight Preserve differences among Uzbek lexemes

Poetic operation	What work does the image perform?	Parallelism, repeated comparison, scene construction, personification, perspective shift	Do not infer a device from a single noun alone
Evaluated target	Who or what is valued?	Beloved, friendship, bodily relief, solitude, poetic activity	Value may attach to the situation rather than the luminous object
Evaluator / viewpoint	Whose perception shapes the assessment?	Lyrical "I," imagined addressee, participant or excluded observer	Avoid treating the entire poem as one undivided viewpoint
Contextual valence	Is an evaluation expressed?	V+ praise or relief; V- grief or fear; V± conflicting cues; V0 no cue	Bright does not automatically mean good; dark does not automatically mean evil

Source: the author's interpretative protocol informed by poetic function, cultural semiotics, and appraisal theory [1-3].

2.3. Analytical procedure and safeguards

First, relevant visual expressions and the surrounding stanzas were isolated. Second, the primary poetic operation was identified, with attention to comparison, recurrence, sound patterning where textually observable, image substitution, personification, narrative movement, and visual foregrounding. Third, an evaluative target and standpoint were recorded. Fourth, a valence label was assigned only when supported by local evidence such as praise, the lexicon of grief, an act of withdrawal, or a statement of relief. Fifth, each analysis was subjected to a counter-reading test: what alternative interpretation could a careful reader defend, and which lines limit either reading?

The analysis does not use sentiment software, statistical testing, informant interviews, or independent coders. Its categories remain proposals to be evaluated in future work. A table is used to make the decisions inspectable and comparable, not to imply numerical reliability or general prevalence.

RESULTS

3.1. Comparative idealization: Cho‘lpon's "Go‘zal"

Cho‘lpon's Go‘zal stages the lyrical speaker's search for the beloved through successive encounters with visible and cosmic phenomena. Its opening, "Qorong‘u kechada ko‘kka ko‘z tikib", establishes a dark sky as the field of visual perception [7]. The speaker addresses a bright star, then turns toward the moon, the morning breeze, and the sun. The repeated comparisons heighten the beloved's exceptional beauty. The most important poetic operation is thus serial comparative idealization: each apparent standard of brightness or beauty becomes inadequate, enabling the next comparison.

At the referential level, night is dark and the heavenly bodies are luminous. At the axiological level, however, no line requires the night to be condemned. The darkness enables the star to become prominent; the star's praise of the beloved establishes the poem's desired aesthetic evaluation. The evaluated target is primarily the beloved, rather than light itself. The poetic operation is V+ because the comparisons contribute to admiration, but the darkness as physical setting is better marked V0 unless another contextual cue is supplied.

This difference is methodologically important. Assigning V- to night because it is dark would impose a conventional moral code not activated by the particular passage. The poem instead uses the relation between visibility and contrast to construct beauty as something exceeding visible analogues. Its philosophical implication is therefore less an abstract victory of light over darkness than a poetic recognition of the limits of natural comparison.

3.2. Relational analogy: shadow as fidelity in Usmon Nosir

In Gulzor - chaman…, Usmon Nosir unites conventional opposites within an affectionate portrait. He describes the beloved's eyes as "Kunday yorug‘, tunday qora" [8]. The grammatical balance of

daylight and night supports aesthetic praise rather than dividing the beloved into a morally good and a morally bad half. Here, contrast produces complementary intensification: the two visual attributes become compatible features of an admired person.

A later statement likens the continuing presence of the beloved-friend to a shadow following at the speaker's side. The brevity of “Soyamday yurar” [8] is rhetorically effective because an everyday spatial relation carries a larger interpersonal claim. Its poetic function is relational analogy: habitual bodily proximity represents emotional reliability. The surrounding friendship vocabulary and the speaker's joy make the V+ assignment textually secure. It would be mistaken to mark this image as negative merely because a shadow lacks brightness.

The poem also contains later passages concerning patriotic commitment and struggle. Those contexts complicate a one-dimensional designation of the entire poem as a love lyric, but they do not invalidate the positive value of companionship in the earlier passage. The proper unit of evaluation remains the local segment. This illustrates why a single poem can contain several evaluative domains without reducing them to one sentiment score.

3.3. Visual revelation without compulsory moral symbolism: *Oydin kecha…*

Nosir's Oydin kecha… is a useful negative-control example because it constructs a nocturnal scene of moonlight, reflection, and flowering nature without demanding an elaborate moral allegory [9]. The visual details include moonlit surfaces, moving water, and the discovery of flowering almond branches. The poetic work lies in perceptual staging: the speaker draws the reader from wide illumination toward a small, concrete sign of seasonal beauty.

Because the poem invites appreciation of the visible scene, its overall aesthetic reception can reasonably be characterized as favorable. Yet the fact of moonlight alone does not justify attributing specific political freedom, divine knowledge, or national renewal to the image. The object of appreciation is the perceived landscape and the unexpected flower, not an established universal formula of light equals virtue.

The poem further demonstrates the value of distinguishing atmosphere from judgment. A peaceful, visually appealing environment can be produced by selected perceptual detail without overt ethical evaluation. This case therefore supports a restrained V+ assignment for the aesthetic discovery, while a moral label for moonlight as such remains V0. The distinction protects literary analysis from overinterpretation.

3.4. Creative activation: light within the disturbed night of Hamid Olimjon

In Holbuki, tun…, Hamid Olimjon moves from environmental noise and troubled thought toward a scene of moonlight, a pursuing shadow, and writing. The image “Nur yog‘ildi qorong‘i jarga” places illumination within a dark ravine [10]. Instead of abolishing darkness from the poem, the light makes features of the nocturnal environment newly visible. The long shadow following the speaker heightens uncertainty, and the later movement toward paper and pen reorients the episode as an experience of artistic attention.

Several poetic operations intersect. Visual contrast makes the dark ravine perceptible; animated spatial pursuit gives the long shadow an apparently intentional movement; compositional progression links restlessness and observation to creative activity. The accompanying shadow cannot be labelled V- with certainty because the poem leaves its intention unresolved, presenting an open question about what it might want to communicate. V±, or even V0 when restricted to the image itself, is more defensible than a categorical statement of evil.

The poem provides especially strong evidence for the distinction between the value of a feeling and the value of an image. The speaker's disturbed state is not equivalent to a morally negative moon or dark valley. The nocturnal environment supports attentiveness and imagination even as it sustains

psychological unease. A satisfactory reading must hold both results together instead of forcing the entire image sequence into one pole of an opposition.

3.5. Embodied utility and favorable time in Usmon Azim's *Javzo*

Usmon Azim's Javzo begins with rapidly changing weather and an intense sun. Dogs move to shade; the phrase “Itlar oldi o‘zin soyaga” records a simple act of seeking relief [11]. The poetic operation is embodied scene construction: the visible behavior of animals conveys oppressive heat more concretely than an abstract statement about temperature would. The evaluative target is the sheltering shade, which carries a locally positive practical value because it offers relief.

The poem subsequently celebrates the arrival of “Yorug‘ kunlar, nur kunlar” [11]. Here brightness marks a desirable phase of life and the opening of emotional possibilities. The evaluative target is now renewed time or experience, not sunlight as a physical source of heat. The same poem accordingly supports two positive evaluations that belong to apparently opposite sides of the light/shadow field.

This is not an inconsistency to be corrected by allegory. The physical sun can produce discomfort, shade can provide respite, and bright days can metaphorically signify opportunity. The exact object being valued changes from bodily relief to emotional renewal. The poetic function changes as well-from sensory staging in the opening to temporal-metaphorical affirmation later in the poem. This intra-textual shift is a strong example of evaluative reorientation.

3.6. Perspectival divergence: the fire in *Qaro tunda - Boysun tog‘ida…*

Azim's poem Qaro tunda - Boysun tog‘ida… stages three friends around a campfire amid a dark mountain landscape [12]. Firelight and darkness alternate on tree branches, and the scene offers warmth, fellowship, and relief from distress. Yet the lyrical speaker is not fully integrated into that circle; the friends do not remember the speaker, who notices the absence of recognition.

The crucial poetic operation is a shift in the evaluative position of the observer. From the friends' perspective, the campfire setting can be associated with togetherness and ease. From the lyrical speaker's standpoint, the same scene becomes evidence of exclusion. An image that initially appears V+ thus develops a V± orientation when the speaker's unmet desire for companionship becomes visible.

The contrast should not be flattened into “fire is good” and “darkness is bad.” The more revealing opposition lies between belonging and non-belonging. Light marks a socially bounded circle, while the darkness around it makes that circle spatially distinct. The campfire's artistic function is therefore both scenic and relational. It illustrates how axiological assessment is indexed to perspective: what benefits one group may intensify loss for an observer situated outside it.

3.7. Elegiac personification: the touch of night in *Boysun qirlarida…*

Boysun qirlarida bir o‘zim kezdim… associates the extinction of a friend's lamp with bereavement and the experience of remaining alone [13]. Later, the speaker recalls: “Yelkamga ohista kaftin qo‘ydi tun.” Night is given a hand and acts with a gentleness not usually assigned to an abstract temporal condition.

The poetic operation is personification, supported by a physical gesture, and elegiac compression, in which a lamp's extinction represents the loss of a life. The extinguished lamp can defensibly carry V- in context because the poem explicitly associates it with the friend's death. The gesture of night is more complex. The adverb meaning “gently” makes the contact potentially consoling, but the speaker remains burdened by solitude and the difficulty of continuing to sing. Its orientation is therefore mixed or unresolved rather than purely positive.

A simplistic reading might claim that the personified night protects the speaker. Another could claim that night merely reinforces grief. The local evidence supports both an intimate gesture and continued sorrow, so the more accurate interpretation preserves their tension. The poem makes

mourning palpable not by eliminating ambiguity but by placing tenderness and loss within the same small visual scene.

3.8. Spatial substitution as affective intensification in Navoiy

Alisher Navoiy's ghazal Oshiq o‘ldum… joins the beloved's wall and its shadow to the lover's suffering [6]. The relevant expression “soya o‘rnig‘a devor emish”-a wall in place of a shadow-functions as a concentrated metaphorical substitution. An evanescent shape associated with a wall is replaced by the wall itself, a firmer and more obstructive presence. Nearby reference to grief provides the affective signal required to interpret the change as painful.

The primary poetic function is not an abstract moral contrast between brightness and darkness, but spatial intensification of separation. The obstacle becomes materially substantial as the lover's position grows more constrained. The negative evaluation pertains to the speaker's deprivation and grief rather than to “shadow” as a permanently hostile cultural symbol.

This classical example is important because it shows that the methodological distinction between poetic operation and evaluative target applies beyond modern lyric texts. The specific historical idiom differs, but the analytical questions remain useful: which relationship changes, what feature is made prominent, and whose experience supplies the valuation?

3.9. Cross-text functional and axiological matrix

Table 2. Evidence-based assessment of light-shadow imagery in the selected poems

Poetic text Main poetic operation Evaluated target Local orientation Decisive contextual cue

Navoiy, Oshiq o‘ldum… Spatial / metaphorical substitution Separation and sorrow V- Grief and replacement of shadow by wall

Cho‘lpon, Go‘zal Serial comparison and foregrounding Beloved's exceptional beauty V+ for beloved; V0 for night Repeated praise; night as visual setting

Nosir, Gulzor - chaman… Parallelism and relational simile Beloved and loyal friend V+ Compliment and friendship context

Nosir, Oydin kecha… Perceptual staging / scenic revelation Observed flowering landscape V+ aesthetic; V0 moral Concrete natural discovery

Olimjon, Holbuki, tun… Contrast and compositional transition Creative attention and uncertainty V± Restlessness, shadow and eventual writing

Azim, Javzo Embodied scene; temporal metaphor Shade as refuge; favorable days V+ / V+ with different targets Relief from heat; welcome to bright days

Azim, Qaro tunda… Scenic enclosure / viewpoint change Fellowship vs exclusion V± Friends' comfort and speaker's absence

Azim, Boysun qirlarida… Elegiac metonymy / personification Loss and possible consolation V- / V± Extinguished lamp, gentle night, continuing grief

Source: author's close reading of primary texts [6-13]. Orientations are interpretative labels, not measured sentiment values.

The matrix reveals three particularly important relationships. First, identical physical properties can support different evaluative results: the shade in Javzo is helpful, whereas a long shadow in Holbuki, tun… is psychologically ambiguous. Second, positive and negative value can attach to different targets within a single scene, as in the friends' campfire. Third, some images are essential to poetic arrangement without being individually assigned a moral evaluation, as with the dark sky in Go‘zal.

DISCUSSION

4.1. Why functions cannot be reduced to symbols

The results support Jakobson's emphasis on poetic organization [1]. An image matters not simply because it is culturally recognizable but because it is positioned within relations of repetition, contrast, sequence, and grammatical comparison. In Go‘zal, the sequence of increasingly expansive comparisons sustains admiration. In Javzo, the transition from physical shade to metaphorical bright days shifts the evaluative target. In Navoiy's ghazal, the substitution of a wall for a shadow compresses an emotional development into a spatial transformation. Each effect would be missed by merely listing a conventional symbolic meaning for the noun.

An operational distinction between “function” and “value” also limits the overextension of theoretical frameworks. Formal analysis can describe what a line does; appraisal-oriented interpretation can identify who evaluates what; conceptual metaphor theory can explain how a bodily relationship underlies an abstract one [3-4]. None of these perspectives supplies a substitute for textual evidence. Their contribution is strongest when their questions are kept distinct before their answers are synthesized.

4.2. Axiological orientation as a relation, not a property

Martin and White's linguistic account of evaluation [3] is helpful because it directs attention to expressed attitudes and the source of assessment. Axiological analysis of lyric poetry requires a similar discipline. The study repeatedly finds that the value belongs to an experienced situation rather than to a light source, shade, or colour in isolation. The darkness of a beloved's eyes is favorable in Nosir because it is a component of praise. The stars and moon are not “good” merely because they shine; they are subordinate comparators in Cho‘lpon's construction of beauty. The campfire does not bear one fixed value for every participant.

This distinction is not the rejection of cultural symbolism. Cultural associations may inform interpretation, but they are best treated as expectations that the poem can confirm, complicate, or overturn. Lotman's cultural semiotics offers an appropriate conceptual setting for understanding that active transformation [2]. A text can preserve inherited contrasts while producing locally unexpected conclusions, especially where the physical usefulness of shade or the social limits of a lighted space become relevant.

4.3. Ambivalence as an analytical result

An especially important outcome is that V± is not a failure of interpretation. Some lyric images are constructed to remain unresolved. The long shadow in Olimjon's nocturnal scene seems intentional but its message is uncertain; the personified night in Azim's elegy is gentle but arrives amidst grief. Calling these scenes simply negative would erase an essential part of their expressive power. Calling them purely positive would ignore pain and uncertainty.

A responsible close reading may therefore report a structured ambiguity. This can be specified rather than vaguely asserted: the analyst identifies the comforting cue and the distressing cue, then explains why neither cancels the other. Such an approach offers a check against arbitrary symbolic interpretation and clarifies the difference between interpretative openness and unsupported speculation.

4.4. A three-part model of evaluative emergence

The evidence suggests a three-part analytical sequence: physical configuration → poetic operation → viewpoint-dependent evaluation. The first term describes the material scene or referent, such as a campfire in darkness. The second identifies what the poem does with the scene-frames it as a social circle, repeats a contrast, or changes the observer's location. The third assesses whether the text associates the represented experience with relief, loss, admiration, anxiety, or an unresolved combination.

This sequence is a heuristic model, not a historical law or a claim about automatic psychological processing. Its explanatory value lies in preventing a premature leap from “light” or “shadow” to a

fixed moral significance. It also allows researchers to compare poems that use related vocabulary but differ sharply in genre, situation, and evaluation.

Table 3. Safeguards for interpreting axiological light-shadow imagery

Risk of overinterpretation Illustrative case Recommended safeguard

Equating physical darkness with moral evil Dark sky in Go‘zal Name the assessed target before assigning valence

Treating shade and shadow as a single experience Javzo versus Holbuki, tun… Preserve the physical referent and participant response

Ignoring different observers Campfire in Qaro tunda… Separate the participants' comfort from the speaker's exclusion

Converting beauty into a national or political allegory without evidence Oydin kecha… Prefer the demonstrated scenic function

Eliminating an intentionally mixed tone Gentle night in Boysun qirlarida… Record both tenderness and persistent grief

Inventing precise printed pages for an online text All quoted electronic poems Cite work and stable source URL; verify print edition later

Source: author's counter-reading protocol applied to the analysed texts.

4.5. Limitations and directions for further inquiry

The principal limitation is the size and structure of the purposive corpus. Its texts were selected because they clarify mechanisms; the study cannot establish whether any function is historically dominant or more frequent in one generation. Three selected works are by Usmon Azim, and digital reproductions may differ in spelling and punctuation from authoritative print editions. The apparatus is transparent about these constraints rather than masking them with unverified numerical claims.

Further work should assemble a balanced corpus of printed critical editions, preserve original orthography, annotate each relevant lexeme and its local evaluator, and recruit more than one specialist to judge interpretative agreement. Such a design could test whether functions and value orientations cluster by genre, date, author, or image type. The proposed rubric may also be applied comparatively to other Central Asian poetic traditions, provided that language-specific meanings and textual histories remain primary.

CONCLUSION

The poetic functions and axiological meanings of light-shadow imagery in the eight selected Uzbek poems are related but analytically distinct. Light, darkness, shadow, and shade perform functions that include visual foregrounding, serial comparison, relational analogy, personification, scene construction, compositional transition, and spatial substitution. These functions cannot reliably be inferred from a symbol's conventional association alone.

The value of the images is likewise context-dependent. In Cho‘lpon, darkness contributes to the staging of aesthetic admiration. In Nosir, a companioning shadow signifies loyalty, while moonlight supports perceptual discovery. In Olimjon, moonlight and a pursuing shadow animate a disturbed yet creative nocturnal experience. In Azim, shade provides material protection, firelight is socially double-edged, and personified night may gesture toward consolation without erasing grief. In Navoiy, the reconfiguration of wall and shadow intensifies the emotional experience of separation.

The article's main theoretical proposal is to interpret light-shadow imagery through three linked questions: what is physically represented, what formal work does the representation perform, and whose experience is evaluated? Applied with explicit textual evidence, this protocol makes it possible to distinguish positive, negative, mixed, and non-explicit evaluation while preserving ambiguity where

the poem requires it. The conclusions are confined to the selected works, but the method offers a reasoned starting point for wider research in Uzbek literary semiotics and axiology.

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