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Arabian International Conference on Science, Technology and Innovation (AICSTI 2026)

GENRE PARALLELS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH LITERATURE

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https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24163144

Abstract. The article examines genre correspondences between Uzbek and English literature and asks how far forms that arose in unrelated traditions perform the same artistic tasks. Five pairs are compared: the ghazal and the sonnet, the rubai and the English quatrain, the folk doston and the Old English heroic epic, the allegorical and frame narratives of Alisher Navoi and Geoffrey Chaucer, and the historical novel of Walter Scott and Abdulla Qodiriy. The analysis follows the typological method of V. M. Zhirmunsky and Alastair Fowler's view of genre as a set of shared features rather than a fixed rule.

Keywords: genre, comparative literature, ghazal, sonnet, rubai, doston, heroic epic, allegory, frame narrative, historical novel.

Genre is the category through which readers first meet a literary work. A reader who opens a ghazal or a sonnet expects a certain length, a certain subject and a certain way of ending, and the poet writes with or against these expectations. Comparing genres across literatures therefore shows how two cultures organise poetic experience. Uzbek and English literature have rarely been compared at the level of genre. Uzbek classical poetry belongs to the Persian-Turkic system of forms, with aruz metre and a fixed repertoire that includes the ghazal, rubai, tuyuq, masnavi and qasida. English poetry developed from Germanic alliterative verse and later absorbed Romance and classical forms such as the sonnet and the heroic couplet. The two systems have different metrical foundations and different religious and courtly settings. Yet a reader who knows both notices that many genres solve the same problems: how to compress a love experience into a short poem, how to tell the deeds of a tribal hero, how to present a spiritual journey as a story.

The question matters for teaching. Students of English philology in Uzbekistan usually learn English genre terms as something new, although they already know the corresponding Uzbek forms from school. A comparative account lets them use that knowledge. The aim of this article is to identify the main genre parallels between the two literatures and to separate cases of independent convergence from cases of direct borrowing.

The Uzbek material includes the ghazals, rubais, *Lison ut-tayr* and *Sab'ai sayyor* of Alisher Navoi [9], the rubais of Babur, the heroic doston *Alpomish* as recorded and studied by V. M. Zhirmunsky and H. Zarifov [15], and Abdulla Qodiriy's novel *O'tkan kunlar* [10]. The English material includes Shakespeare's *Sonnets* [13], Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls* and *The Canterbury Tales* [4], *Beowulf* [3], Edward FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* [5], the anthology of English-language ghazals edited by Agha Shahid Ali [2] and Walter Scott's *Waverley* [12].

Genres are compared on four features: external form (length, stanza, rhyme), typical subject, the speaker or narrator, and the social setting of performance. Following Alastair Fowler, a genre is understood as a cluster of such features, so two genres can be close without being identical [6]. Zhirmunsky's distinction between typological analogies and genetic contact [15] is used to classify each parallel. Uzbek genre terms follow A. Hojiahmedov [7] and D. Quronov [11]; English terms follow M. H. Abrams [1].

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The ghazal and the sonnet are the central short lyric forms of their traditions, and both are tied to love poetry. A ghazal consists of couplets (bayt) with a single rhyme, often followed by a repeated word or phrase, the radif. It opens with the matla, in which both lines rhyme, and closes with the maqta, where the poet usually names himself by his pen name [7]. Navoi's collection *Xazoyin ul-maoniy* alone contains about 2,600 ghazals [9]. The English sonnet has fourteen lines; in the Shakespearean variant three quatrains rhymed abab cdcd efef lead to a final couplet that reverses or sums up the argument [14].

The closest structural parallel is the closing turn. The sonnet's final couplet and the ghazal's maqta both mark the end of the poem by changing the speaker's position: the sonnet steps back from the argument, the maqta steps out of the poem and names its author. Shakespeare comes near to the maqta convention in Sonnets 135 and 136, where he plays on his own name, Will [13]. The two forms differ in internal logic. Each bayt of a ghazal is relatively self-contained, whereas a sonnet develops one argument from line to line. Agha Shahid Ali's anthology of ghazals written in English [2] shows that English poets who adopt the form find this autonomy of the couplet the hardest feature to keep.

The rubai is a four-line poem rhymed aaba or aaaa and written in particular variants of the hazaj metre. Its typical subjects are fate, the brevity of life and wine as a philosophical image. Babur and Navoi wrote rubais in Turkic in the same tradition as Omar Khayyam in Persian. This is the one case in the article where contact is direct. Edward FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1859) carried the aaba rhyme pattern into English [5], and the stanza became known in English prosody as the Rubáiyát stanza [1]. English already had the epigrammatic quatrain, so FitzGerald's version found a ready place in the genre system. The Uzbek reader of FitzGerald recognises the form at once, although the iambic pentameter replaces the quantitative metre of aruz.

Alpomish and *Beowulf* belong to the oral heroic epic. Both centre on a hero who protects his people, both include boasts, single combat and a supernatural or monstrous opponent, and both were composed for performance before a listening audience. In *Beowulf* the scop sings in Heorot; in the Uzbek tradition the baxshi performs *Alpomish* to the do'mbira, alternating prose and verse [15].

Albert Lord's theory of oral-formulaic composition, developed from South Slavic material [8], explains the shared technique. The singer does not memorise a text but recomposes it during performance from formulas and typical scenes. Lord's model was applied to Old English verse in the 1950s, and Zhirmunsky described the same mechanism in the repertoire of Uzbek baxshis such as Fozil Yo'ldosh o'g'li [15]. The difference lies in transmission. *Beowulf* survives in a single manuscript of about the year 1000, while the Uzbek doston remained a living tradition and was recorded from performers in the twentieth century. The Uzbek case lets scholars observe a process that English scholarship can only reconstruct.

Navoi's *Lison ut-tayr* (1499) tells how the birds, led by the hoopoe, set out to find the Simurg; only thirty reach the goal and discover that they themselves are the Simurg [9]. Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls* also gathers the birds into an assembly ordered by rank, from birds of prey to waterfowl, though its subject is choosing a mate rather than a mystical journey [4]. The parallel lies in the device: a society of birds used to represent human society and to debate a moral question.

The frame narrative offers a closer match. In Navoi's *Sab'ai sayyor* (1484) the shah Bahrom spends seven days in seven palaces and hears seven travellers tell stories [9]. In *The Canterbury Tales* pilgrims tell stories on the road to Canterbury [4]. In both works the frame unites stories of different types, each told by a speaker whose character colours the tale, and both poets reworked earlier sources: Navoi answered Nizami and Dehlavi, Chaucer drew on Boccaccio.

The novel arrived late in Uzbek literature, and its first major example is a historical novel. Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814), subtitled "'Tis Sixty Years Since", set a private story against the Jacobite rising of 1745 [12]. Qodiriy's *O'tkan kunlar*, published in parts from 1922 and as a book in 1925–1926, places the love of Otabek and Kumush in the Kokand Khanate of the 1840s and 1850s, at a distance of

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roughly seventy years [10]. Both novels use a family story to show a nation divided by political conflict, and both appeared when their societies were reconsidering their past: Scotland after the Union, Turkestan after the fall of the khanates and the 1917 revolution. No direct influence of Scott on Qodiriy can be documented here, so the parallel is treated as typological.

The five genre pairs show that Uzbek and English literature, despite different metrical systems and cultural settings, developed forms with similar functions. The ghazal and the sonnet share a short fixed shape and a marked closing turn, the maqta and the final couplet. The doston and *Beowulf* rest on the same oral-formulaic technique. Navoi and Chaucer used bird assemblies and frame stories for moral and social debate, and Scott and Qodiriy used the historical novel to examine a divided national past from a distance of two or three generations. Only the rubai entered English through direct borrowing, in FitzGerald's version.

The differences are as instructive as the similarities. The ghazal's self-contained couplets resist the argumentative logic of the sonnet, and the living Uzbek epic tradition has no counterpart in English after the Middle Ages. For teaching English literature in Uzbek universities, these parallels give students a familiar point of entry: the sonnet can be introduced through the ghazal, and *Beowulf* through *Alpomish*. Further work might extend the comparison to the tuyuq and the English riddle, or to the qasida and the ode.

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