

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PROPER CHARACTERS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH NOVELS (IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE WORKS OF U.HAMDAM AND S.MAUGHAM)

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Abstract

This article provides a comparative analysis of the autobiographical interpretations of the protagonists of the English (Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*) and Uzbek (Ulugbek Hamdam's *Muvozanat*) novels—Philip Carey and Yusuf. The study examines how each author reflects their personal experiences through their characters, and the impact of autobiographical elements on narrative structure and thematic content. Through quotations, Philip and Yusuf's struggles with personal identity, social challenges, and the search for meaning are analyzed. The results show that while both novels reflect the authors' personal experiences, their autobiographical interpretations are shaped differently by cultural and historical contexts. The study highlights the literary significance of these works and the universal and local dimensions of autobiographical novelism.

Keywords

Uzbek and English literature, Somerset Maugham, Ulugbek Hamdam, *Of Human Bondage*, *Balance*, protagonist, social constraint, personal slavery.

Introduction: Literature is considered a significant cultural domain that serves to explore and understand human identity amidst the trials of the human psyche, society, and time. In particular, the autobiographical novel genre provides a unique opportunity to artistically express specific stages of a writer's life, their inner struggles, and the external social-cultural pressures with a high degree of artistry. In autobiographical works, the author's life and the protagonist's tragedy intersect, inviting readers into a distinctive spiritual and philosophical dialogue. Such works deeply illuminate real historical and cultural realities, revealing universal ideas and issues through the author's personal experiences.

Somerset Maugham's «*Of Human Bondage*» and Ulug'bek Hamdam's «*Muvozanat*» are vivid representatives of this genre, reflecting the complex spiritual quests arising from the authors' personal lives and their confrontations

with society. Both works, through their protagonists - Philip Carey in English literature and Yusuf in contemporary Uzbek literature - depict the authors' own life journeys, their ceaseless internal struggles, and their sincere efforts to find their place in society. Philip's anguish amidst the social and personal constraints of Victorian England and Yusuf's process of rediscovering himself and his society against the backdrop of post-Soviet Uzbekistan's social-economic changes highlight the local manifestations of universal existential issues – identity, meaning, freedom, social pressure, and adaptation to life – in each respective society.

Ulug'bek Hamdam's «Muvozanat», published in 2003, is recognized as one of the most significant works in contemporary Uzbek literature. Written against the backdrop of Uzbekistan's social-economic transformations following the collapse of the Soviet system and the transition to a market economy, this novel raises existential questions about purpose, personal identity, and balance in life. The story centers on a young man named Yusuf, whose personal and social trials are depicted, accompanied by characters such as Amir (his brother), Muhammadjon (a wise elder), and Oygul, who are interpreted as responses to various existential dilemmas. Upon its publication, «Muvozanat» ushered in a new phase in Uzbek literature, characterized by a philosophical approach and deep psychological analysis. The work was created in response to significant stages of the author's life, personal experiences, and the profound changes occurring in society, with themes of self-awareness, the search for the meaning of life, social instability, and spiritual quests taking center stage. Written during a complex historical period – Uzbekistan's pursuit of independence in the early 1990s, marked by a challenging social-economic environment – the novel stands out as an artistic and philosophical expression of this complexity.

This work, centered on existential issues and autobiographical elements, deeply explores the meaning of human life, the freedom of choice, responsibility, internal conflicts, the complex relationships between family and society, and the psychological struggles within the human psyche through a profound philosophical lens. Through Yusuf's character, the personal anguish, search for freedom, and quest for meaning symbolically reflect the spiritual state of the Uzbek people during their pursuit of independence. This article aims to analyze «Muvozanat» from the perspective of existential philosophy, exploring the parallels between the author's life and the novel's characters, as well as revealing the deeper layers of the work through autobiographical motifs and symbolic imagery.

The autobiographical aspects of these novels not only connect them to the authors' personal memories and experiences but also reflect the significant historical, social, and philosophical transformations of their respective eras.

Maugham's childhood, orphanhood, medical education, and feelings of alienation among his contemporaries are symbolically analyzed through Philip's character. Similarly, Ulug'bek Hamdam's rural life, the post-Soviet social crisis, and the appreciation of Uzbekistan's independence are reflected in Yusuf's character, which embodies the spiritual forces driving self-awareness, family, and societal understanding.

Moreover, these novels stand out for their significant impact on the contemporary development of their respective national literatures. «Of Human Bondage» opened new avenues for the artistic expression of individual freedom and existential concepts in English literary traditions, while «Muvozanat» elevated the themes of balance between individual and society, as well as national and universal issues, to a new artistic-philosophical level in Uzbek literature. Through their works, both authors articulate the spiritual struggles of countless individuals striving to find themselves in their respective societies, portraying their battles against life's obstacles and their search for meaning and freedom on both individual and socio-cultural levels.

Furthermore, this article examines the autobiographical approaches of these two major novels and their connections to their cultural-historical contexts through a comparative literary-analytical method. We believe that through these works, the authors seek answers to universal existential questions through their personal experiences while skillfully harmonizing global and local discourses. Somerset Maugham and Ulug'bek Hamdam's novels offer not only an artistic interpretation of personal life experiences but also a contemporary literary model addressing the ever-relevant issues of individual and society, identity and balance, meaning and eternity in every society.

Materials and Methods: The research is based on qualitative literary analysis methods, focusing on close reading and thematic interpretation of the novels *Of Human Bondage* and *Muvozanat*. The main data consist of autobiographical elements of the protagonists in both novels, as well as original quotes related to existential and socio-cultural contexts. Autobiographical elements are identified through comparison with factual information about the authors' lives — Maugham's experiences of orphanhood, medical education, and social alienation, Hamdam's rural life, post-Soviet changes, and activities during Uzbekistan's independence period. The analysis is based on existential philosophical concepts such as Jean-Paul Sartre's "existence for itself" and Albert Camus's "absurd," as well as narrative strategies of autobiographical novel writing. Symbolic images are interpreted through semiotic and hermeneutic approaches. The novels are

compared based on the historical-cultural conditions of early 20th-century England and post-Soviet Uzbekistan.

Main part: The novel *Of Human Bondage* is known as an autobiographical work that deeply reflects Maugham's personal life. The protagonist Philip Carey struggles with orphanhood, physical disability (clubfoot), and social constraints, symbolically representing Maugham's own life experiences – orphanhood, medical education, and social alienation. Philip's reflection on his physical defect, “My clubfoot was a chain that bound me to the earth,” reflects Maugham's childhood feelings of inferiority and social rejection. This chain symbolically represents the internal and external barriers to Philip's pursuit of personal freedom, connected to the strict social norms of Victorian England.

Philip's romantic relationships, particularly his interaction with Mildred, reveal Maugham's emotional trials. The passionate but self-destructive love for Mildred, “I was a slave to my passion, and it humiliated me,” depicts Maugham's youthful romantic experiences and emotional vulnerabilities. Philip's search for meaning through art, medicine, and philosophy reflects Maugham's own process of professional and personal path-seeking in his life. For example, Philip's interest in art reflects Maugham's youthful literary and aesthetic pursuits, while his medical education represents his own short-lived medical career.

Philip's religious doubts and atheistic explorations show Maugham's own rebellion against his religious upbringing and turn toward secular philosophy. His reflection, “There is no meaning in life, and man must create it,” aligns with Sartre's existential concepts, where the individual independently shapes their essence.

The novel “*Muvozanat*” deeply explores existential questions through its characters and narrative structure. The protagonist Yusuf profoundly embodies the existential struggle to find meaning in a world marked by uncertainties. His journey reflects Sartre's concept of “existence for itself,” where individuals must independently define their purposes under conditions of freedom and responsibility. Yusuf's childhood memory reflection on the stone appears as a key moment in this process: “This stone was the weight of my life, I was forced to carry it.” This metaphor reflects the burden of existence, personal trials, and social pressures. The stone also symbolically represents Yusuf's need to confront his actions and limitations, aligning with Sartre's philosophy of responsibility tied to freedom.

Yusuf's brother Amir represents an opposing response to existential freedom. His turn to religious fanaticism depicts Camus's concept of the absurd – when individuals seek absolute meaning in a chaotic world, they encounter only despair. Amir's words, “I thought I would find the truth only through religion, but it

suffocated me,” indicate his failure to find balance and his loss of equilibrium, the central theme of the novel. Amir's path reflects the spiritual and social crises faced by many youths in the post-Soviet era, where the collapse of the old system demanded a search for new meaning.

The wise elder Muhammadjon serves as a philosophical anchor, promoting balance between material and spiritual worlds. His advice to Yusuf, “Life flows like a river, and you are not the water in it, but the boat,” emphasizes the need to manage life's uncertainties with resilience. The river symbolizes the flow of life, while the boat represents human action and independence. Muhammadjon's words are based on wisdom and patience traditions in Uzbek culture, but they harmonize with existential philosophy, highlighting that humans must adapt to the changing nature of life. Through female characters like Oygul, the novel also addresses issues of gender equality and social change. Oygul's pursuit of independence and her attempt to find her own path reflect the changing roles of women in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, expanding the interpretation of existential freedom from a gender perspective.

Ulug'bek Hamdam's personal experiences deeply permeate “Muvozanat” and bestow authenticity on its themes. Born and raised in an Uzbek village, Ulug'bek Hamdam experienced the social-economic changes of the 1990s, namely the collapse of the Soviet system and the rise of national identity. Yusuf's childhood in the village and his struggles reflect Hamdam's own life, especially in scenes depicting rural life and family ties. For example, Yusuf's memory of his mother's garden, “My mother's garden was my world, where everything was in balance,” evokes Hamdam's childhood nostalgia mentioned in his interviews. This garden is interpreted not only as a personal memory but also as a symbol of balance related to nature and family in Uzbek culture.

Muhammadjon's character may reflect Ulug'bek Hamdam's encounters with wise elders in his community, who shaped his understanding of balance. The novel's setting in Tashkent and references to Uzbekistan's independence parallel Hamdam's experiences in the post-Soviet era. For example, Yusuf's life in Tashkent reflects Hamdam's years in the capital and the difficulties of adapting to the new economic system. These autobiographical elements place the novel's existential explorations in a precise social-cultural context, turning Yusuf's story into a universal yet deeply personal narrative.

The symbols in the novel, such as Ulug'tog', the river, and the stone, deepen its existential and autobiographical resonance. Ulug'tog', as a mountain, symbolizes national identity and resilience, as seen in Yusuf's reflection: “Ulug'tog'

is our independence, every stone standing there is the heart of an Uzbek.” This symbol aligns with Hamdam's advocacy for Uzbekistan's cultural self-awareness during the independence period. Ulug'tog' also represents the historical and spiritual strength of the Uzbek people, which holds significant importance in the process of rediscovering national identity in the post-Soviet era.

The river symbolizes the flow of life, while the stone represents existential burdens. Yusuf's struggle with carrying the stone reflects Ulug'bek Hamdam's own confrontation with social changes, as seen in his essays on Uzbekistan's post-independence issues. The stone, similar to the stone in Camus's “The Myth of Sisyphus,” implies an existential load, but Yusuf's determination in carrying it shows the possibility of creating meaning. The river is interpreted as a symbol of life and change in Uzbek folklore, demonstrating Hamdam's loyalty to cultural heritage.

Additionally, the bus symbol in the novel represents social trials and collective experiences. Yusuf's bus journeys symbolically depict the economic and social uncertainties in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, showing Ulug'bek Hamdam's intent to explore the social issues of his time.

The analysis shows that “Muvozanat” deeply explores existential issues through autobiographical elements. Yusuf's journey reflects Sartre's concept of existential freedom, where individuals shape their essence through their actions. Amir's tragic path shows the dangers of seeking absolute meaning, aligning with Camus's absurdism. Muhammadjon's wisdom offers a culturally grounded solution that emphasizes balance in response to existential crises, based on Uzbek traditions of patience and harmony.

The autobiographical elements enhance the novel's authenticity, linking Ulug'bek Hamdam's personal experiences to broader social-cultural themes. The rural setting, family ties, and references to Uzbekistan's independence connect the story to Hamdam's lived reality, turning “Muvozanat” into a microcosm of post-Soviet Uzbek identity. The symbols of Ulug'tog', the river, and the stone connect existential philosophy with cultural specificity, positioning the novel as a unique contribution to world literature.

From a comparative perspective, “Muvozanat” shares similarities with postcolonial and post-Soviet novels like Chinua Achebe's “Things Fall Apart” or Chingiz Aitmatov's “Jamila,” where personal struggles reflect social transitions. For example, Achebe's novel depicts cultural crisis under colonial influence, while “Muvozanat” explores national identity in the context of post-Soviet changes. The female protagonist's pursuit of independence in Aitmatov's “Jamila” resembles Oygul's character, but Hamdam's focus on balance and integration of

autobiographical elements distinguishes “Muvozanat” in this genre. The novel's reception in Uzbekistan and abroad, especially in Central Asian studies circles (e.g., discussed in US Central Asia department seminars), highlights its universal appeal and philosophical depth.

The novel's uniqueness in depicting social-economic changes allows comparison with other post-Soviet literature, such as Viktor Pelevin's “Omon Ra” or Lyudmila Ulitskaya's “Medea and Her Children.” In these works, personal crises are linked to societal changes, but “Muvozanat” offers a unique approach through the Uzbek concept of balance and national symbols. For example, the river symbol resembles water imagery in Aitmatov's “The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years,” but Hamdam's river has a more philosophical meaning as an existential flow.

The novel's impact on Uzbek literature is also significant. “Muvozanat” opened a new direction in contemporary Uzbek novel writing by combining philosophical and social issues, continued in the works of later writers such as Isajon Sultan or Khurshid Dustmuhammad. At the same time, the novel's appeal to foreign readers contributes to Uzbek literature's addition to global literary discourse.

In Ulug'bek Hamdam's novel *Muvozanat*, the protagonist Yusuf reflects Hamdam's childhood in the village, the social-economic changes in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, and the search for national identity. Scenes depicting Yusuf's rural life and family ties are based on Hamdam's personal memories. For example, Yusuf's memory of his mother's garden, “My mother's garden was my world, where everything was in balance,” symbolizes Hamdam's childhood nostalgia and the concept of harmony in Uzbek culture. This garden is interpreted as a symbol of balance related to personal memory and nature-family ties in Uzbek culture.

Yusuf's struggle with the stone, “This stone was the weight of my life, I was forced to carry it,” reflects Hamdam's personal and collective trials in the post-Soviet era. This stone, similar to the stone in Camus's “The Myth of Sisyphus,” signifies an existential burden, but Yusuf's determination reflects Hamdam's belief in the resilience of the Uzbek people. Yusuf's life in Tashkent represents Hamdam's experiences in the capital and the difficulties of adapting to the new economic system, as well as the process of rediscovering national identity. Yusuf's reflection on Ulug'tog', “Ulug'tog' is our independence, every stone standing there is the heart of an Uzbek,” shows Hamdam's advocacy for Uzbekistan's cultural self-awareness during the independence period. This symbol connects Yusuf's personal struggle to national identity searches, harmonizing Ulug'bek Hamdam's own experiences with the general trials of the Uzbek people.

The autobiographical interpretation of *Of Human Bondage* and *Muvozanat* is shaped differently depending on their social-cultural contexts. *Of Human Bondage* explores the contradictions between personal freedom and social class constraints in early 20th-century England. Philip's physical defect and social alienation reflect Victorian England's strict social norms and class stratification. Philip's search for meaning through art and philosophy aligns with Western literary trends of individualism and secularism. For example, Philip's words, "I must find my own way, even if it leads to nothing," reflect Maugham's pursuit of personal freedom and the existential searches of Western philosophy.

In contrast, *Muvozanat* depicts the social-economic changes and the rediscovery of national identity in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. Yusuf's search for balance is based on Uzbek cultural traditions of patience, harmony, and collective identity. The novel's river symbol, "Life flows like a river, and you are not the water in it, but the boat," emphasizes the need to adapt to the changing nature of life according to Uzbek folk wisdom. This symbol connects Ulug'bek Hamdam's personal experiences to the collective trials of the post-Soviet era, deepening Yusuf's story in a national context.

From a comparative perspective, both novels are important examples of autobiographical novel writing with similarities. Both protagonists struggle in searching for personal identity and meaning, reflecting the authors' life experiences. However, *Of Human Bondage* focuses on personal freedom and individual crises, while *Muvozanat* explores national identity and social balance more. These differences arise from the novels' cultural and historical contexts. For example, Philip's romantic relationships reflect romantic individualism in Western literature, while Yusuf's family ties emphasize the collectivism in Uzbek culture.

The novels' social-cultural contexts further reveal the differences in their autobiographical interpretations. *Of Human Bondage* emphasizes individualism and personal freedom in Western literature, connected to class stratification and secularism trends in Victorian England. Philip's religious doubts and atheistic searches reflect the existential and secular directions of Western philosophy. *Muvozanat* relies on a Uzbek cultural context that emphasizes collective identity and national independence. Yusuf's pursuit of balance highlights the focus on spiritual and social harmony in Uzbek folk wisdom, which gains importance against the backdrop of post-Soviet social-economic crises. From a comparative viewpoint, both novels have similarities as important samples of autobiographical novel writing. Both protagonists struggle in searching for personal identity and meaning, reflecting the authors' life experiences. However, *Of Human Bondage* focuses on personal crises, while *Muvozanat* explores national

identity and social balance more. These differences arise from the novels' cultural and historical contexts. For example, Philip's romantic relationships reflect romantic individualism in Western literature, while Yusuf's family ties emphasize the collectivism in Uzbek culture.

The novels' social significance is also important. *Of Human Bondage* had a major impact on the development of autobiographical novels in 20th-century English literature. *Muvozanat* opened a new direction in contemporary Uzbek novel writing by combining philosophical and social issues. Both works successfully combine the universal and local dimensions of autobiographical novel writing, contributing to global literary discourse. The symbolic images in the novels deepen the autobiographical interpretations. The chain in *Of Human Bondage* represents Philip's social and personal constraints, while the stone and river in *Muvozanat* depict Yusuf's existential and national struggles. These symbols connect the authors' personal experiences to philosophical and cultural contexts, enhancing the literary depth of the novels. For example, the river in *Muvozanat* is interpreted as a symbol of life and change in Uzbek folklore, while the chain in *Of Human Bondage* reflects the contradiction of personal slavery and freedom in Western literature.

Somerset Maugham's «*Of Human Bondage*» and Ulug'bek Hamdam's «*Muvozanat*» interpret the authors' personal experiences through the autobiographical lens of their protagonists—Philip Carey and Yusuf. Philip's struggle between social constraints and personal freedom reflects Maugham's experiences in Victorian England, while Yusuf's search for balance embodies Hamdam's personal and collective trials in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. Symbolic imagery—such as the chain, stone, river, and Ulug'tog'—and socio-cultural contexts deepen these interpretations, highlighting the universal and local dimensions of the novels. This analysis underscores the significance of both works in autobiographical novel writing, their place in English and Uzbek literature, and their contributions to global literary discourse.

Ulug'bek Hamdam's «*Muvozanat*» skillfully integrates existential themes with autobiographical elements, delicately exploring human existence in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. Through characters like Yusuf, Amir, Muhammadjon, and Oygul, as well as symbols such as the river, stone, and Ulug'tog', the novel raises universal questions about meaning, identity, and balance, firmly rooted in Ulug'bek Hamdam's personal and cultural context. This analysis emphasizes the novel's significance as a literary and philosophical work, contributing to the global discourse on existentialism and identity. Its comparison with postcolonial and post-Soviet literature further enhances its universal and local significance.

«Muvozanat» is not only a literary work but also a philosophical analysis of the complex interplay between society and the individual. The events, characters, and symbols depicted in the novel illuminate the life challenges, spiritual quests, and identity crises of the Uzbek people in the post-Soviet era. Yusuf's inner struggles, his resistance against social pressures, and his efforts to find meaning align with existentialist theories, offering readers an opportunity to deeply reflect on universal human issues. The novel symbolically portrays human life, its burdens, its flow, and the inner strength to achieve purpose. In particular, the stone symbol, harmonized with elements reminiscent of Camus's absurdism, advances the idea of creating meaning through seemingly meaningless struggles. The autobiographical elements in the novel are revealed through the author's childhood memories, rural life, attitudes toward social changes, and connections to cultural and spiritual heritage. Ulug'bek Hamdam masterfully weaves his personal life experiences into the literary text, confronting readers with real-life realities. This makes the novel more authentic, genuine, and rooted in the experiences of the people.

Thus, «Muvozanat» deserves recognition as a unique work in Uzbek literature that profoundly explores the philosophical, social, and spiritual dimensions of human destiny. This novel provides opportunities for deeper exploration of themes such as gender issues, the tension between modernity and tradition, and the formation of national identity. It plays a significant role in enhancing the international prestige of Uzbek literature, as it advances universal ideas through local experiences.

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