

Comparative Interpretation of The Concept of Postmodernism in Uzbek And English Literature

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Abstract: This article offers a comparative interpretation of the concept of postmodernism as it manifests in Uzbek and English prose. While postmodernism has been theorized as a rupture with grand narratives and a turn toward self-reflexive textuality, its meanings and operative features differ across literary systems. By situating Uzbek post-Soviet prose within the dynamics of cultural transition and English late-twentieth-century fiction within debates over historiography, identity, and market modernity, the study clarifies how a shared conceptual vocabulary—fragmentation, intertextuality, metafiction, and simulacra—acquires localized functions. Methodologically, the article employs a qualitative, hermeneutic-comparative approach that reads a small, representative corpus: English novels associated with postmodern aesthetics and Uzbek prose written in the decades around and after independence. The analysis articulates a comparative interpretive grid that emphasizes four axes—historicity, subjectivity, textuality, and style cohesion—through which postmodernism operates differently yet recognizably in each tradition. The results show that English postmodernism often interrogates history as narrative and the subject as performative construct, while Uzbek postmodernism tends to refract collective memory and cultural continuity amid ideological realignment, transforming postmodern tools into vehicles for ethical remembrance and aesthetic renewal. The article concludes by proposing “situated postmodernism” as a flexible framework that respects both convergences and divergences, and by outlining implications for translation studies and pedagogy.

Keywords: Postmodernism, Uzbek literature, English literature, intertextuality, metafiction, historiography, style cohesion, reader reception.

Introduction: Postmodernism occupies a paradoxical place in literary discourse. It names both a historical horizon—loosely the late twentieth century—and a repertoire of formal and rhetorical strategies that purposely resist singular definition. Canonical theorists have described it as incredulity toward metanarratives, a cultural logic of late capitalism, a poetics of irony and self-reflexivity, or a field of simulacra in which representation detaches from referent. Such theoretical coordinates provide a powerful descriptive shorthand, yet they may obscure variations that arise across languages, regions, and publishing ecosystems. When postmodernism is treated as a universal wave, the risk is that its concepts will be applied homogeneously to literatures whose sociohistorical conditions differ substantially.

A comparative view of Uzbek and English prose exposes

the stakes of this problem. English postmodernism emerges in a robust, globally distributed literary market and often stages playful but serious interrogations of historical truth, authorial authority, and reader complicity. Uzbek postmodernism, developing in and after the late Soviet and early independence periods, coincides with a renegotiation of cultural memory, national identity, and ethical commitments to tradition. The same devices—metafiction, pastiche, temporal dislocation, and unreliable narration—are present in both traditions, but their functions and valences differ. The task, therefore, is not simply to list common traits, but to interpret how the concept of postmodernism is realized and re-purposed within each setting.

This study contributes a focused, theory-informed comparison that foregrounds the interpretive work

required to read postmodernism locally. It asks what writers intend by their formal gestures, how readers negotiate idiosyncratic blends of modernist inheritances and postmodern innovations, and where style cohesion is preserved or deliberately fractured to shape readerly perception. In clarifying these operations, the article speaks to ongoing debates about world literature, the portability of critical terms, and the ethics of comparing center and periphery within global literary studies.

The aim is to produce a rigorous, textually grounded interpretation of postmodernism in Uzbek and English prose that respects shared terminology while revealing distinct cultural uses. The article addresses three questions: How do Uzbek and English writers mobilize postmodern strategies to shape the reader's perception of history and subjectivity? In what ways do they sustain or suspend style cohesion to guide the reader's cognitive and affective engagement with the text? What model can capture convergences without erasing local particularities?

The study adopts a qualitative, hermeneutic-comparative approach that integrates close reading with theory-driven interpretation. The corpus consists of emblematic English-language novels often associated with postmodern techniques and a set of Uzbek-language or Uzbek-authored prose works written around and after the transition to independence. The English selection includes historiographic metafiction and self-consciously reflexive narratives, while the Uzbek selection includes prose that blends modernist legacies with postmodern strategies to reframe memory, myth, and everyday ethics. Rather than aim for exhaustiveness, the method seeks representativeness—texts that make visible the workings of postmodern form in their respective systems.

Four analytical axes structure the comparison. The axis of historicity examines how texts treat historical truth, memory, and archive. The axis of subjectivity considers voice, selfhood, and the distribution of narrative agency. The axis of textuality interrogates intertextual play, metafictional disclosure, and the ontological status of the narrated world. The axis of style cohesion focuses on whether and how writers integrate heterogeneous registers and genres into a coherent aesthetic experience, thereby influencing the reader's processing of narrative complexity. Each axis is operationalized through narratological markers (e.g., free indirect discourse, frame breaks, embedded documents) and stylistic cues (e.g., code-switching, proverb reframing, rhythmic or rhetorical motifting). The method remains interpretive rather than computational; it is interested in how features mean

within cultural horizons of expectation.

A comparative reading along the axis of historicity shows that English postmodern fiction frequently turns history into a site of epistemological skepticism and narrative experimentation. Historiographic metafiction revisits events, archives, and cultural myths to perform the contingency of documentation and the inevitability of narrative framing. This practice often foregrounds the instability of truth claims without abandoning ethical seriousness; the reader is invited to scrutinize the rhetoric of authority, the seduction of plot, and the politics of selection. The English postmodern novel in this mode works like a hall of mirrors where documents, testimonies, and fictional reconstructions reflect and distort one another, leading the reader to recognize that verification itself is narratively mediated.

Uzbek prose mobilizes similar devices yet typically recruits them for a different purpose. Rather than suspend historical meaning indefinitely, Uzbek postmodern writing often turns to memory and myth to build connective tissues across ruptures produced by ideological change. The effect on the reader is less a vertigo of infinite regress than an ethically inflected reanchoring of lived experience within layered cultural time. Metafictional moments do not merely display cleverness; they are often a means to show how stories survive political regimes, how oral forms converse with written prose, and how the archive of everyday speech—sayings, laments, ritual phrases—becomes a counter-archive to official discourse. Where the English novel sometimes delights in exposing the seams of its own fabrication, the Uzbek text tends to use that exposure to rehabilitate suppressed or marginalized voices and to secure continuity without naivety.

On the axis of subjectivity, English postmodern novels frequently treat the self as a performance assembled from media, consumer culture, and textual precedents. Narrative voices may be fractured or self-ironizing; focalization shifts to dramatize how language and institutions write the subject. The reader experiences identity as a construct pressed into being by discourses that can be sampled, parodied, or strategically refused. Uzbek prose, by contrast, has its own repertoire of subject formation in which the self is dialogically situated among kinship, locality, and cultural memory. Unreliable narration appears, but its function often concerns moral self-scrutiny and communal accountability as much as it does the playful disassembly of the self. The reader encounters a subject who is split not primarily by media saturation but by the pressures of historical transition, ethical inheritance, and a renewed encounter with global modernity.

The axis of textuality highlights a common toolkit: intertextual allusion, quotation, pastiche, and frame-breaking commentary. In English novels this toolkit builds a dense web of references to high and popular culture alike, annotates itself in paratexts, and stages acts of reading within the storyworld. The Uzbek usage of the same devices shows a distinct gravitational pull toward oral tradition, Sufi parable, and proverb as intertexts, often making the implied reader into a cultural insider who recognizes resonances beyond the page. As a result, intertextuality in Uzbek prose can function as cultural translation within a single language, mediating between past forms and present sensibilities. The reader's cognitive work lies not only in tracking textual echoes but in negotiating how inherited wisdom is re-registered in a modern idiom. Both traditions thereby engage in what might be called pedagogies of reading: English novels teach skepticism toward authority by exposing how narratives are made; Uzbek novels teach cultural listening by demonstrating how textual surfaces conceal deeper resonances that ask to be heard again.

Style cohesion—the final axis—makes visible a productive difference that comparative studies often miss. English postmodernism is famous for embracing heteroglossia, genre-mixing, and conspicuous stylistic play, yet many novels remain compositionally tight, guiding readers through complexity via recurring motifs, symmetrical structures, or disciplined modulation between voices. This cohesion is not a betrayal of postmodernism; it is the condition of legibility that allows irony and pastiche to register as meaningful rather than chaotic. Uzbek prose likewise accepts stylistic plurality but frequently curates heterogeneity in ways that privilege rhythmic continuity, proverb-anchored aphorism, or narrative frames that loop back to communal or familial spaces. The result is an aesthetic in which fragmentation is felt, but not allowed to abolish orientation. Readers in both traditions are asked to do more work than in conventional realism, yet the pathways through that work are differently paved: one with architectural patterning that echoes modernist craft, the other with sonic and ethical cues that echo oral narration.

These convergences and divergences can be synthesized in a comparative interpretive grid. Along historicity, both traditions question naïve realism, but English novels dramatize the undecidability of historical truth while Uzbek works stage the restorative power of memory under the sign of plurality. Along subjectivity, both dismantle the sovereign self, yet English texts highlight performativity under late capitalism whereas Uzbek texts foreground responsibility within communal time. Along textuality, both expose textual

construction, yet English fiction leans toward media-saturated intertext while Uzbek prose leans toward proverb, parable, and myth as living intertexts. Along style cohesion, both manage multiplicity, yet English novels tend to architect patterns that reward rereading while Uzbek narratives braid voices to preserve orientation within a reconfigured ethical world.

For the reader, these differences matter. The English postmodern reader is often asked to become a critic inside the novel, weighing claims and spotting devices, a co-producer of epistemological vigilance. The Uzbek postmodern reader is asked to become a custodian of memory, alert to echoes and undertones that index suppressed histories and ongoing moral debates. Both readerly roles are forms of agency, and both transform the act of reading into a rehearsal of how to live with complexity.

The results also have implications for translation. When English postmodern novels travel into Uzbek, translators must mediate dense intertextuality and preserve the metanarrative signals that train the skeptical reader. When Uzbek postmodern prose travels into English, translators face the challenge of carrying proverb-based resonance and oral cadence without exoticizing them. In both directions, the translator becomes an architect of style cohesion across languages, curating equivalences that allow the target reader to perform the intended cognitive and affective labor.

Finally, the comparison reframes postmodernism as a portable but not uniform concept. It shows that the same theoretical lexicon maps onto different pragmatic programs and that postmodern strategies, far from being the property of a single literary economy, can be recruited to renegotiate memory, authority, and ethical life under very different historical horizons.

This article has argued that postmodernism, as a literary concept, is best understood comparatively as a set of strategies whose meanings are specified by local histories and readerly conventions. In English prose, the concept frequently orchestrates skepticism toward historical truth, self-reflexive textual play, and the performative construction of the subject. In Uzbek prose, the same toolkit reorients toward cultural continuity, ethical recollection, and dialogic subjectivity within communal time. Both traditions affirm that complexity can be made legible through carefully managed style cohesion; the difference lies in how each guides perception—through architectural patterning in one case and through braided oral-textual resonance in the other. The proposed framework of “situated postmodernism” accommodates these patterns without dissolving the conceptual unity of the term.

Future research might extend the corpus, incorporate reception studies to document how different audiences actually read these texts, and explore how digital environments reshape postmodern strategies in both languages. For pedagogy and translation, the key is to recognize postmodernism not as a static catalogue of devices but as a dynamic negotiation between form, memory, and the reader's work.

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