

Universality and Cultural Specificity of the Concept of Love in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Ajiniyaz's Poetry: A Comparative Typological and Linguocultural Study

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ABSTRACT

Love is one of the most universal emotional concepts represented in world literature, yet its poetic conceptualization is strongly influenced by culturally specific systems of values, aesthetic traditions, collective memory, and models of interpersonal behaviour. The present study investigates the universal and culture-specific features of the concept of love in William Shakespeare's sonnets and the lyrical poetry of the Karakalpak classical poet Ajiniyaz. The research combines comparative-typological analysis, conceptual analysis, linguocultural interpretation, conceptual metaphor analysis, and close reading. The primary material includes Shakespeare's Sonnets 18, 29, 43, 55, 116, and 147 and selected poems by Ajiniyaz, including 'Yoqmeniñ,' 'Hárkimseniñyaribolsa,' 'Biybigül,' 'Birjanan,' 'Birpáriy,' 'Dilbarım,' and 'Güljan.' The findings reveal a shared conceptual core organized around the categories of beauty, fidelity, suffering, absence, memory, and permanence. Nevertheless, these universal components acquire different cultural configurations. Shakespeare predominantly conceptualizes love through Renaissance-oriented individual reflection, temporality, mutability, psychological conflict, and the capacity of poetry to preserve beauty against Time. Ajiniyaz places greater emphasis on fidelity, patience, hijran, moral beauty, interpersonal responsibility, cultural memory, and Eastern-Turkic aesthetic symbolism. The study proposes a

three-level model consisting of a universal emotional core, cultural-axiological configuration, and poetic-symbolic verbalization. The model demonstrates that universality and cultural specificity are not mutually exclusive: culturally distant poetic traditions may share fundamental conceptual structures while differing significantly in their metaphors, symbols, value systems, and discursive forms.

Keywords: Concept of love, Shakespeare, Ajiniyaz, comparative typology, linguoculturology, conceptual metaphor, cultural specificity, poetic discourse, Karakalpak literature.

INTRODUCTION

Love belongs to the most persistent themes and concepts of world literature. It appears across historical periods, languages, literary traditions, and cultural systems and therefore may initially seem to represent an essentially universal human experience. Literary representations of love, however, demonstrate that universality does not necessarily imply conceptual uniformity. Every literary culture interprets emotional experience through its own system of values, metaphors, symbols, behavioural expectations, aesthetic conventions, and cultural memory. This relationship between universality and cultural specificity becomes particularly important when historically and culturally distant literary traditions are compared. William Shakespeare and Ajiniyaz represent two such traditions. Shakespeare's sonnets emerged from the literary and intellectual environment of the English Renaissance, whereas Ajiniyaz's lyrical poetry developed within nineteenth-century Karakalpak culture and the broader Eastern and Turkic poetic tradition. There is no sufficient basis for explaining the correspondences between their representations of love through direct historical-genetic influence. Their comparison is therefore primarily comparative-typological rather than genetic.

A typological approach makes it possible to investigate how similar conceptual structures may emerge independently in different literary systems. Both Shakespeare and Ajiniyaz

conceptualize love through beauty, constancy, emotional suffering, separation, memory, and the desire to preserve emotional attachment. Nevertheless, these components are organized differently according to the cultural and literary systems to which the poets belong. In Shakespeare's sonnets, love is repeatedly placed in relation to Time, mutability, beauty, memory, reason, desire, and poetic immortality. The lyrical speaker often turns emotional experience into philosophical reflection. Love may function as an unchanging value, a source of psychological restoration, a destructive fever, or a force capable of resisting temporal change through poetic representation. Ajiniyaz also presents love as a central spiritual and emotional value. However, his lyrical discourse frequently connects it with fidelity, patience, separation, *hijran*, moral responsibility, sweetness of speech, hospitality, memory, and culturally recognizable ideals of the beloved. His poetry employs images such as the moon, flower, *peri*, *Layli*, *Zuhra*, dark eyes, bow-shaped eyebrows, and arrow-like eyelashes, placing individual emotion within the symbolic memory of Eastern and Karakalpak literary culture. The comparison therefore raises a fundamental question: if love is universal, why does its poetic representation differ so significantly across cultures? The present study argues that the answer can be found by distinguishing between different levels of conceptualization. At the most abstract level, Shakespeare and Ajiniyaz share a relatively stable emotional-conceptual core. At the cultural level, however, this core is reorganized through different value systems. At the level of poetic verbalization, cultural specificity becomes even more visible through metaphors, symbols, forms of address, and literary genres.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept has become an important interdisciplinary category connecting linguistics, cognitive science, cultural studies, and literary analysis. In cognitive linguistics, abstract concepts are understood partly through conceptual structures that organize human experience. Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) *Conceptual*

Metaphor Theory demonstrated that metaphor is not merely a decorative feature of poetic language but a fundamental mechanism through which abstract phenomena are understood in terms of more concrete experiential domains [6; 5].

This principle is particularly productive for the study of emotions. Love is difficult to describe through literal language alone and is therefore frequently conceptualized through bodily, spatial, natural, medical, and social experiences. Expressions representing LOVE AS FIRE, LOVE AS ILLNESS, LOVE AS A JOURNEY, or LOVE AS A GUIDING FORCE illustrate how emotional experience can be cognitively structured through metaphor.

Kövecses (2000, 2005) further developed this approach by demonstrating that emotion metaphors display both cross-cultural regularities and cultural variation [4; 5]. Some metaphorical patterns may be motivated by broadly shared bodily experiences, while their concrete elaborations and cultural meanings vary among linguistic communities. This theoretical distinction is especially relevant to Shakespeare and Ajiniyaz because both poets conceptualize intense love through bodily disturbance, but Shakespeare foregrounds fever and disease, whereas Ajiniyaz frequently employs fire, burning, *dárt*, and *hijran*.

Wierzbicka (1997) emphasizes the importance of culturally specific meanings encoded in language [9: 31]. From this perspective, emotional categories cannot automatically be assumed to possess identical semantic and cultural structures merely because they are translated by apparently equivalent words. In literary discourse, the relationship between concept and culture becomes even more complex. The poet draws upon collective linguistic and cultural knowledge while simultaneously transforming inherited images through individual artistic creativity. A literary concept is therefore not simply a dictionary meaning or a cognitive schema; it is a dynamic structure in which language, culture, evaluation, symbolism, and aesthetic form interact.

Shakespeare scholarship has repeatedly demonstrated the centrality of time, beauty, desire, memory, constancy, and poetic immortality in the sonnets. Booth (1977) and Vendler (1997),

among others, demonstrate the semantic and rhetorical complexity of the sequence and the importance of reading individual sonnets as carefully structured poetic arguments [2; 8]. Ajiniyaz's poetry similarly requires interpretation within its own cultural and literary environment. The poet's representation of love combines individual emotional experience with Karakalpak cultural values and the wider symbolic heritage of Eastern classical poetry. Consequently, images such as Layli, Zuhra, peri, the moon, flowers, dark eyes, and bow-shaped eyebrows operate as elements of a culturally recognizable aesthetic code rather than merely isolated ornaments. The present research integrates these perspectives through comparative typology and linguocultural analysis.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Shakespearean corpus consists primarily of Sonnets 18, 29, 43, 55, 116, and 147. These texts were selected because they represent different dimensions of love relevant to the comparative model: beauty, temporality, constancy, suffering, absence, remembrance, and poetic permanence.

The Ajiniyaz corpus consists of 'Yoqmeniń,' 'Hárkimsenińyaribolsa,' 'Biybigúl,' 'Birjanan,' 'Birpáriy,' 'Dilbarım,' and 'Gúljan.' These poems were selected because they provide corresponding material relating to beauty, idealization, fidelity, suffering, separation, memory, and cultural symbolism.

The analysis employs four complementary methods. Comparative-typological analysis is used to identify correspondences between the two poets without presupposing direct historical influence. Conceptual analysis reconstructs semantic relations such as LOVE-BEAUTY, LOVE-FIDELITY, LOVE-SUFFERING, LOVE-ABSENCE, LOVE-MEMORY, and LOVE-PERMANENCE. Conceptual metaphor analysis identifies metaphorical models through which abstract emotional experience is represented. Linguocultural analysis determines how culturally significant symbols, values, ethical expectations, and forms of behaviour participate in the poetic construction of

love. Close reading is employed throughout the study to prevent individual lexical units or metaphors from being detached from their poetic contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the strongest conceptual correspondences between Shakespeare and Ajiniyaz is the relationship between love and beauty. Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 begins:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate. [7,146]

The comparison with summer initially functions as aesthetic praise, but the poem quickly transforms beauty into a temporal problem. Summer is attractive yet transient. Natural beauty is vulnerable to seasonal change and eventual disappearance. Shakespeare therefore constructs the following conceptual movement: LOVE → BEAUTY → TIME → POETIC PRESERVATION → IMMORTALITY. The beloved's beauty becomes significant not merely because it is aesthetically superior but because poetic language is presented as capable of preserving it against temporal destruction.

Ajiniyaz constructs the beloved through another axiological system. In 'Hárkimsenińyarıbolsa,' beauty is connected with speech and inner character:

*Sóylersózıbolpshıyrın,
Ózıturıp, kózıkulsın.* [1: 4]

The beloved's attractiveness is therefore not limited to visible appearance. Sweet speech and emotional warmth form part of the ideal. The poet further writes:

*Yarıńbolsınhimaykibi,
Kónlibolsınsaraykibi,
Yúzibolsınhámaykibi.* [1: 4]

Physical beauty, generosity, and inner refinement are integrated into a single image. This structure becomes even clearer in 'Biybigúl':

Aqlıkámil, sahib-támiz, Biybigúl. [1: 19]

The ideal beloved possesses intelligence, refinement, and moral purity. Thus:

Shakespeare: BEAUTY → TIME → POETIC IMMORTALITY
 Ajiniyaz: BEAUTY → INNER CHARACTER → ETHICAL
 IDEAL

The shared conceptual core is beauty, while its axiological configuration is culturally differentiated.

Sonnet 116 provides Shakespeare's most explicit conceptualization of constant love:

Love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds. [7: 342]

Authentic love is defined through resistance to change. Shakespeare subsequently represents it metaphorically:

O, no, it is an ever-fixèd mark
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken. [7: 342]

Love is an ever-fixed mark: external instability cannot alter its essential nature. The navigational metaphor develops this conceptualization further:

It is the star to every wand'ring bark. [7: 342]

The metaphor generates two related conceptual models: TRUE LOVE IS STABILITY, LOVE IS A GUIDING FORCE

Ajiniyaz similarly conceptualizes true love through constancy, but the discourse is more directly interpersonal. In 'Yoqmeniń,' the lyrical speaker declares:

*Qarakózli, shiyrinsózlidilbarım,
Sennenózgesáweryarım yoqmeniñ. [1: 4]*

The beloved is unique and irreplaceable. The declaration establishes exclusivity as evidence of fidelity. The poem further associates the beloved with emotional liberation:

*Senikórsebolurmeniñkóñlim shad,
Jáhánniñgamiydinbolurmanazad. [1: 5]*

The beloved therefore functions as an emotional centre capable of restoring psychological harmony. The conceptual correspondence can be represented as:

Shakespeare: LOVE → CONSTANCY DESPITE CHANGE
Ajiniyaz: LOVE → EXCLUSIVE FIDELITY DESPITE CIRCUMSTANCE

The underlying value is shared, but Shakespeare formulates it philosophically while Ajiniyaz expresses it through direct lyrical devotion.

A particularly revealing typological correspondence appears in the conceptualization of love through physical suffering. Shakespeare opens Sonnet 147 with:

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease. [7, 410]

The central conceptual metaphor is: LOVE IS ILLNESS. Passion resembles a fever because it disturbs psychological and bodily equilibrium. The paradox is that desire seeks precisely what continues to nourish the disease. The poem further constructs a conflict between passion and rational control. Reason is metaphorically associated with the physician, but desire refuses treatment. Thus: LOVE/DESIRE → FEVER → LOSS OF RATIONAL CONTROL → SUFFERING.

Ajiniyaz conceptualizes a comparable emotional state through fire. In "Birjanan", he writes:

*Kózimekórinip, begler, birjanan,
Shiyrinjanımotqajaqtı da ketti.* [1, 7]

The beloved's appearance produces burning. Elsewhere, the poet similarly describes the beloved's gaze as setting his soul on fire. The conceptual metaphor is: LOVE IS FIRE.

The Shakespearean fever and Ajiniyazian fire are not identical metaphors, but they share an experiential basis: intense love is conceptualized through bodily heat and loss of emotional equilibrium. The comparison therefore reveals:

Shakespeare: LOVE IS FEVER.
Ajiniyaz: LOVE IS FIRE.

Both belong to the more general conceptual model: INTENSE LOVE IS PHYSICAL HEAT/BODILY DISTURBANCE.

Ajiniyaz develops suffering particularly strongly through the concept of *hijran*. In 'Birpáriy,' the lyrical speaker states:

*Xoshlasıp men qalıp, boldımintizar,
Denemdeqalmadızárredeymádar,
Men onıñishqındaboldımıxarı-zar.* [1: 9]

Separation produces both psychological and bodily weakness. The intensity increases in:

*Tınbaskeshe-kúndizkózimgiryanı,
Jismimdiórtedidağı, hijranı.* [1: 9]

Here *hijran* becomes an active burning force. The structure is: LOVE → SEPARATION → HIJRAH → SUFFERING → CONTINUED FIDELITY.

Shakespeare's Sonnet 43 provides an important typological parallel. The poem opens:

When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see. [7: 196]

The paradox arises because the absent beloved becomes visible in dreams. Physical absence is compensated for through

imaginative vision. Thus: ABSENCE → DREAM → IMAGINED PRESENCE.

Both poets therefore demonstrate that separation does not destroy love. Instead, absence can intensify the emotional presence of the beloved. Shakespeare's Sonnet 29 presents the lyrical speaker in a condition of despair and dissatisfaction. The emotional direction of the poem changes when the beloved enters memory:

Haply I think on thee, and then my state. [7: 168]

The memory produces psychological transformation, and the poem culminates in:

For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings. [7: 168]

The conceptual sequence is: DESPAIR → MEMORY OF LOVE → PSYCHOLOGICAL RESTORATION.

Ajiniyaz develops a comparable model in "Dilbarım". However, remembrance is materially mediated by a letter:

*Sağınıp, sarğayıp, jazğanxatıñdı,
Jibergenmollañnanaldım, dilbarım.* [1: 26]

The beloved's written name subsequently generates the experience of imagined presence:

*Xattanoqıp Guljandegenatıñdı,
Özindikörgendeyboldım, dilbarım.* [1: 26]

The conceptual structure is: LETTER → NAME → MEMORY → IMAGINED PRESENCE → EMOTIONAL RENEWAL. Thus, Shakespeare foregrounds the internal cognitive act of remembrance, whereas Ajiniyaz frequently externalizes memory through material and semiotic signs.

The concept of memory acquires another important form in Ajiniyaz's 'Güljan.' Places associated with the beloved become carriers of emotional memory:

*Seniñmenenbirgejürgenjerlerim,
Ötkendetisedisoğankózlerim.* [1: 24]

The physical environment is transformed into a mnemonic landscape. The model can be reconstructed as: PLACE → TRACE → MEMORY → CONTINUITY OF LOVE.

This structure is typologically related to Shakespeare's dream in Sonnet 43 and remembrance in Sonnet 29. In all three cases, physical absence is overcome symbolically through consciousness. The broader universal structure is: ABSENCE → MEMORY/SIGN → SYMBOLIC PRESENCE.

One of the most distinctive Shakespearean configurations is the relationship between love and Time. Sonnet 55 opens:

Not marble nor the gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme. [7, 220]

Material monuments are vulnerable to destruction, whereas poetry is presented as capable of preserving memory. The beloved survives through:

The living record of your memory. [7: 220]

The conceptual sequence is therefore: LOVE → MEMORY → POETRY → RESISTANCE TO TIME.

This model also clarifies the ending of Sonnet 18, where poetry guarantees the continuation of the beloved's beauty. Shakespeare consequently constructs a distinctive relationship: LOVE + POETRY → SYMBOLIC IMMORTALITY.

Ajiniyaz does not foreground the same explicit struggle between poetry and chronological Time. His model of permanence develops more strongly through fidelity, remembrance, longing, names, letters, and places. Therefore:

Shakespeare: TIME ↔ POETRY
Ajiniyaz: SEPARATION ↔ FIDELITY/MEMORY

Both models seek continuity, but they employ different cultural-poetic mechanisms.

The ideal beloved provides particularly strong evidence for cultural specificity. Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 employs summer as an aesthetic point of comparison. Sonnet 116 employs the star to conceptualize stability and guidance. Natural images therefore frequently become vehicles for philosophical reflection on love. Ajiniyaz's imagery is more explicitly connected with Eastern and Turkic poetic conventions. In 'Birjanan,' the beloved is described through the lines:

Kirpigioqkibi, qaslarıkaman. [1: 7]

The eyelashes resemble arrows and the eyebrows a bow. This creates the conceptual relationship: BEAUTY IS A WEAPON. The beloved is also associated with culturally recognizable figures such as Layli and Zuhra. Such references place individual love within a larger cultural memory of legendary lovers and idealized beauty. Ajiniyaz additionally uses the moon, flower, peri, dark eyes, sweet speech, and other culturally meaningful images. The contrast can be summarized as:

Shakespeare: BELOVED → NATURE → TIME → PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION
 Ajiniyaz: BELOVED → EASTERN SYMBOLISM → MORAL BEAUTY → CULTURAL MEMORY

The two poets also differ in the discursive relationship between the lyrical subject and the beloved. Shakespeare's sonnets frequently develop emotional experience through reflection, paradox, argument, and philosophical meditation. The lyrical subject examines love in relation to Time, reason, beauty, memory, and poetry. Ajiniyaz frequently uses direct and emotionally immediate forms of address such as *dilbarım*, *yarım*, *sawdigim*, and *páriyzádim*. Expressions such as: *Sennenózgesáweryarım yoqmeniń.* [1: 4] make the lyrical discourse strongly dialogical.

It would, however, be overly simplistic to interpret this contrast merely as Western individualism versus Eastern collectivism. A more textually accurate distinction is:

Shakespeare – introspective-philosophical orientation

Ajiniyaz – interpersonal-ethical and dialogical orientation

This formulation avoids reducing complex literary traditions to broad cultural stereotypes. The results make it possible to construct the following model:

Conceptual dimension	Shakespeare	Ajiniyaz	Typological correspondence
LOVE–BEAUTY	Summer; beauty confronted by Time	Moon, sweet speech, ethical beauty	Idealization of the beloved
LOVE–FIDELITY	Ever-fixed mark; guiding star	Exclusive devotion and loyalty	Love resists change
LOVE–SUFFERING	Fever and disease	Fire, dārt, hijran	Love disturbs the lover
LOVE–ABSENCE	Dream reconstructs presence	Longing and hijran	Absence intensifies attachment
LOVE–MEMORY	Remembrance restores the self	Letter, name, place, trace	Memory preserves love
LOVE–PERMANENCE	Poetry defeats temporal oblivion	Fidelity and memory resist separation	Love seeks continuity
Ideal beloved	Aesthetic and philosophical image	Aesthetic, moral, and cultural image	Beloved as value centre
Major symbols	Summer, star, fever, lark, monument, verse	Moon, flower, fire, peri, Layli, Zuhra, arrow/bow	Metaphorical representation

The comparison produces a three-level conceptual model:

Level I. Universal Emotional Core

LOVE - BEAUTY – FIDELITY – SUFFERING – ABSENCE – MEMORY – PERMANENCE

Level II. Cultural-Axiological Configuration

Shakespeare: Renaissance literary-humanist discourse→ individual consciousness→ Time and mutability→ reason/desire conflict→ aesthetic permanence→ poetic immortality

Ajiniyaz: Karakalpak/Eastern poetic tradition → fidelity → patience → hijran → moral beauty → interpersonal ethics → cultural memory

Level III. Poetic-Symbolic Verbalization

Shakespeare: summer – star – fixed mark – fever – lark – monument – verse

Ajiniyaz: moon – flower – fire – letter – trace – peri – Layli/Zuhra – arrow/bow

The proposed model demonstrates an important regularity: the higher the level of abstraction, the greater the typological similarity; the closer the analysis moves toward concrete cultural values and poetic symbols, the greater the cultural differentiation.

CONCLUSION

The comparative-typological and linguocultural analysis of Shakespeare's sonnets and Ajiniyaz's lyrical poetry demonstrates that the concept of love combines universal and culturally specific characteristics. At the most general conceptual level, both poetic systems associate love with beauty, fidelity, suffering, absence, memory, and the aspiration toward permanence. These components constitute the universal emotional core of the concept. However, the cultural interpretation of these components differs substantially.

Shakespeare predominantly conceptualizes love within an introspective and philosophical framework. Beauty is confronted with Time; constancy is represented as resistance to alteration; destructive passion is conceptualized as fever; memory restores the individual; and poetry functions as a symbolic mechanism for overcoming temporal oblivion. This system may be summarized as: LOVE → BEAUTY → TIME → POETRY → IMMORTALITY.

Ajiniyaz constructs another culturally marked configuration. Love is closely connected with fidelity, patience, separation, hijran, emotional endurance, memory, and moral beauty. The beloved is valued not only for physical attractiveness but also for

intelligence, sweetness of speech, generosity, appropriate behaviour, and ethical refinement. Eastern-Turkic images such as the moon, peri, Layli, Zuhra, arrow-like eyelashes, and bow-shaped eyebrows embed personal emotion within cultural memory. The Ajiniyazian configuration can be represented as:

LOVE → FIDELITY → SEPARATION → MEMORY →
ETHICAL CONTINUITY

The most important contribution of the research is the proposed three-level model of literary conceptualization:

UNIVERSAL EMOTIONAL CORE → CULTURAL-
AXIOLOGICAL CONFIGURATION → POETIC-SYMBOLIC
VERBALIZATION

The model makes it possible to explain why Shakespeare and Ajiniyaz, despite belonging to historically and culturally distant literary traditions, display significant similarities in their conceptualization of love while preserving distinct poetic identities. The findings also demonstrate that universality and national-cultural specificity should not be regarded as mutually exclusive categories. Universal emotional experience acquires literary meaning through culturally specific mechanisms of evaluation and representation. Thus, the concept of love becomes a particularly productive field for comparative linguocultural research because it reveals both the shared structures of human emotional experience and the distinctive symbolic languages through which cultures interpret that experience.

The study ultimately suggests that Shakespeare and Ajiniyaz converge most strongly at the level of fundamental emotional structures and diverge most clearly at the level of cultural values, poetic imagery, and symbolic verbalization. Love is therefore universal in its emotional foundation but culturally distinctive in its literary conceptualization.

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