

National Identity and Patriotism in Fenimore Cooper's Works and Uzbek Epic Narratives

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ABSTRACT

*This article explores the representation of national identity and patriotism in the literary works of James Fenimore Cooper and in classical Uzbek epic narratives. Through a comparative literary analysis, the study examines how historical memory, heroic ideals, moral values, and collective identity are articulated in Cooper's frontier novels—especially *The Last of the Mohicans*—and in Uzbek epics such as *Alpomish*. Using textual, thematic, and cultural-historical methods, the article reveals both shared universal patterns of patriotism and culture-specific forms of national consciousness. The findings demonstrate that while Cooper emphasizes nation-building through frontier struggle and individual moral choice, Uzbek epics foreground communal loyalty, ancestral heritage, and collective resistance as foundations of national identity.*

Keywords: National identity, patriotism, Fenimore Cooper, Uzbek epic, comparative literature, heroism

INTRODUCTION

The concept of freedom has remained one of the most powerful and enduring themes in world literature, serving as both a philosophical ideal and a socio-historical necessity. Writers from different cultures have used literary narratives to explore freedom as personal liberation, national independence, moral autonomy, and resistance against oppression. In English-language literature,

novels devoted to freedom often emerge from periods of political struggle, colonial expansion, or nation-building, while in Uzbek literature the theme is deeply rooted in historical memory, national awakening, and the preservation of cultural identity.

In American literature, the works of James Fenimore Cooper occupy a foundational position in portraying freedom as a defining national value. His novels, particularly *The Last of the Mohicans* and *The Pathfinder*, depict freedom through frontier life, resistance to domination, and the moral struggle for self-determination. Cooper presents freedom not merely as political independence, but as ethical responsibility tied to land, identity, and human dignity. His characters often face choices where personal liberty intersects with national destiny, reflecting the ideological formation of early American patriotism.

Similarly, English-language literature more broadly has addressed freedom through resistance to injustice and the affirmation of individual rights. For instance, the novels of George Orwell, especially *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, explore freedom in its political and ideological dimensions, warning against totalitarian control and the erosion of personal autonomy. These works emphasize that freedom is fragile and must be constantly defended against systems of oppression.

In Uzbek literature, the theme of freedom is inseparable from national history and collective struggle. Novels by Abdulla Qodiriy, particularly *O'tkan kunlar*, portray freedom as both a personal and national aspiration during times of social transformation. Qodiriy connects individual fate with the destiny of the nation, highlighting the struggle against internal decay and external domination. Freedom in his works is linked to moral awakening, cultural continuity, and social justice.

Another significant Uzbek author, Cholpon, addresses freedom through psychological and spiritual resistance. His novel *Kecha va kunduz* reflects the tension between oppression and enlightenment, emphasizing intellectual freedom and national self-consciousness. Cholpon's interpretation of freedom extends beyond political independence to include freedom of thought, language, and cultural expression.

Thus, both English-language and Uzbek novels reveal that freedom functions as a core literary value through which national identity, patriotism, and moral responsibility are articulated. While Western novels often frame freedom in terms of individual rights and political structures, Uzbek literary works emphasize collective liberation, historical continuity, and national survival. This shared yet culturally specific engagement with freedom provides a strong foundation for comparative analysis within the framework of national identity and patriotism.

METHODS

This study applies a comparative literary methodology to examine how the concept of freedom and its connection to national identity and patriotism are represented in selected English-language and Uzbek literary works. The methodological framework is interdisciplinary, combining literary analysis, historical contextualization, and cultural interpretation to ensure balanced comparison across traditions.

The primary method is close textual analysis of representative novels from both literary traditions. From English-language literature, the study focuses on selected works by James Fenimore Cooper and George Orwell, particularly *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. These texts are analyzed for narrative strategies that articulate freedom through frontier struggle, resistance to domination, and moral choice.

In Uzbek literature, the analysis centers on novels by Abdulla Qodiriy and Cholpon, especially *O'tkan kunlar* and *Kecha va kunduz*. These works are examined to identify how freedom is expressed through national awakening, social reform, and resistance to cultural and political oppression. Key passages, character decisions, and symbolic imagery are compared to highlight similarities and differences in thematic development.

A thematic comparative approach is used to identify recurring motifs such as freedom, homeland, resistance, moral responsibility, and national consciousness. For example, Cooper's portrayal of freedom is analyzed through the frontier as a space of ethical testing, where personal liberty contributes to

the formation of national identity. This is compared with Qodiriy's depiction of freedom as a collective aspiration tied to historical continuity and social justice.

Similarly, Orwell's critique of totalitarianism and loss of individual freedom is contrasted with Cholpon's emphasis on intellectual and spiritual freedom under oppressive conditions. This comparison allows the study to trace how freedom functions both as an individual right in English-language novels and as a collective national value in Uzbek prose.

Each work is interpreted within its historical and socio-political context. Cooper's novels are contextualized within early American nation-building and frontier expansion, while Orwell's works are linked to twentieth-century political ideologies and authoritarian regimes. Uzbek novels are examined against the background of colonial pressure, cultural suppression, and the Jadid reform movement.

This contextual method ensures that representations of freedom are not treated as abstract concepts but as responses to concrete historical realities shaping national identity in different societies.

The study also employs comparative character analysis, focusing on protagonists as carriers of national and patriotic ideals. English-language heroes often embody individual moral agency and personal choice, whereas Uzbek protagonists symbolize collective endurance and national survival. Symbolic elements – such as land, language, and tradition—are analyzed to reveal how freedom is encoded in literary imagery across cultures.

The methodological approach combines textual, thematic, historical, and symbolic analysis to compare English-language and Uzbek novels. This integrated method allows for a nuanced understanding of how freedom operates as a literary, cultural, and national concept in both traditions.

RESULTS

The comparative analysis of English-language and Uzbek literary works reveals distinct yet intersecting models of freedom,

patriotism, and national identity. The results are presented through concrete textual and thematic examples that demonstrate how these concepts are embodied in narrative structure, character development, and historical representation.

In English-language novels, freedom is frequently articulated through individual moral choice and resistance to domination. In the works of James Fenimore Cooper, particularly *The Last of the Mohicans*, freedom is represented as a moral and territorial concept. The frontier space becomes a symbolic arena where personal liberty, loyalty, and national destiny intersect. Characters who defend land and ethical principles embody the emerging American understanding of freedom as self-determination and responsibility.

Similarly, in the novels of George Orwell, freedom is explored through its absence. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the systematic destruction of personal autonomy demonstrates that the loss of freedom leads directly to the erosion of national and human identity. The results of analysis show that English-language literature often frames freedom as an individual right threatened by political or ideological forces, with patriotism redefined as resistance to oppression rather than blind loyalty to authority.

Uzbek literary works emphasize freedom primarily as a collective and historical value. In Abdulla Qodiriy's *O'tkan kunlar*, freedom is inseparable from national awakening and moral reform. The narrative demonstrates that personal happiness is impossible without social justice and national dignity. The characters' struggles reflect a broader societal desire for liberation from stagnation and injustice.

A more explicit and historically grounded representation of freedom appears in Baxtiyor Abdug'afur's novel *Madaminbek: Qonli gullar vodiysi*. The results of the analysis indicate that this work presents freedom as armed resistance and national survival during a period of political turmoil. *Madaminbek* is portrayed not merely as an individual hero but as a symbol of collective resistance against foreign domination and ideological violence. His struggle reflects the tragic cost of freedom, where patriotism demands sacrifice, endurance, and moral courage.

Unlike English-language novels that prioritize individual agency, Abdug‘afur’s narrative places the nation above the individual. The land, the people, and historical memory function as central symbols, reinforcing the idea that freedom is achieved through collective struggle rather than personal escape.

The comparative results demonstrate three major patterns:

1. *Nature of freedom*

English-language works depict freedom as an individual moral and political right.

Uzbek works, particularly *Madaminbek: Qonli gullar vodiysi*, portray freedom as a collective historical mission.

2. *Patriotic heroism*

English heroes often act independently, guided by personal ethics.

Uzbek heroes act as representatives of national will and historical responsibility.

3. *Historical memory*

English novels transform history into national myth.

Uzbek novels preserve history as lived trauma and cultural memory.

Overall, the results confirm that while freedom and patriotism are universal literary themes, their artistic realization depends heavily on national experience and historical context. Baxtiyor Abdug‘afur’s novel stands out as a powerful example of Uzbek prose where national identity is forged through struggle, sacrifice, and historical consciousness.

DISCUSSION

Freedom occupies a central position in both English-language literary traditions and Uzbek narrative literature, yet it is conceptualized and represented through culturally distinct frameworks shaped by historical experience, social structure, and national consciousness. A comparative discussion of selected

novels and epic narratives reveals that while freedom functions as a universal human aspiration, its literary embodiment differs significantly between individual-centered and community-centered cultures.

In English and American literature, freedom is most often articulated as individual autonomy, moral choice, and resistance to external constraint. In the novels of James Fenimore Cooper, particularly *The Last of the Mohicans*, freedom is closely linked to the frontier as a symbolic space. The frontier represents both physical and moral liberty, where individuals escape rigid European social hierarchies and redefine themselves through personal courage and ethical responsibility. Cooper's heroes exercise freedom by choosing justice over law, conscience over authority, thereby framing freedom as a moral act rather than a collective inheritance.

A similar understanding of freedom appears in later English novels, such as those by George Orwell, where freedom is defined through opposition to ideological oppression. In *1984*, freedom is articulated negatively as the absence of surveillance, coercion, and enforced conformity highlighting the fragility of individual liberty in the face of authoritarian systems. Unlike Cooper's optimistic frontier vision, Orwell presents freedom as constantly endangered, requiring intellectual resistance and moral awareness.

In contrast, Uzbek literary traditions conceptualize freedom primarily as collective independence, cultural continuity, and loyalty to ancestral land. In the epic *Alpomish*, freedom is inseparable from communal survival. The hero's struggle is not for personal liberation but for the restoration of social order, tribal unity, and national dignity. Freedom here is not an abstract right but a lived condition sustained through sacrifice, loyalty, and resistance to external domination.

This collective understanding of freedom is further developed in modern Uzbek prose. In the novels of Abdulla Qodiriy, particularly *O'tkan kunlar (Bygone Days)*, freedom is closely connected to national awakening and moral responsibility. Qodiriy portrays a society struggling against internal stagnation and external pressures, where the loss of

freedom manifests as cultural decay and ethical compromise. Unlike Western narratives that prioritize individual emancipation, Qodiriy frames freedom as a prerequisite for national renewal and social justice.

Similarly, in the historical novels of Cholpon, freedom is depicted as spiritual and cultural liberation. His works emphasize the right of a nation to preserve its language, traditions, and moral autonomy. Freedom, in this context, becomes synonymous with cultural self-determination rather than political rebellion alone.

The comparative discussion reveals a fundamental contrast: English and American novels often portray freedom as a personal moral struggle, whereas Uzbek narratives present freedom as a collective historical mission. However, both traditions converge in their ethical evaluation of freedom as a supreme value that defines human dignity and national identity. In both literary systems, the loss of freedom results in moral degradation, while its preservation ensures cultural survival.

Thus, literature functions as a moral and ideological space where freedom is not merely described but actively shaped. Whether through the solitary hero of the frontier or the epic defender of communal honor, freedom emerges as a core principle through which nations understand themselves and transmit their values across generations.

CONCLUSION

This comparative study has demonstrated that national identity, patriotism, and freedom function as core literary and ideological values in both English-language literature and Uzbek epic and novelistic traditions, while being articulated through culturally specific narrative models. By examining frontier novels by James Fenimore Cooper alongside classical and modern Uzbek narratives such as *Alpomish* and the novels of Abdulla Qodiriy, the research has revealed how literature becomes a powerful medium for shaping collective memory and sustaining national consciousness.

The findings confirm that in English and American literary traditions, freedom is predominantly represented as an individual moral condition. Characters achieve freedom through ethical choice, resistance to injustice, and the assertion of personal autonomy within historically unstable environments. Cooper's frontier novels, in particular, frame freedom as an experiential and moral process, emerging through conflict, cultural negotiation, and personal responsibility. Patriotism in this context is dynamic and evolving, grounded not in inherited tradition alone but in conscious moral alignment with national ideals.

In contrast, Uzbek epic narratives and national novels conceptualize freedom as a collective and historically grounded value. Freedom is inseparable from homeland, ancestry, and communal solidarity. The epic hero does not seek liberation for personal fulfillment but acts as a guardian of social order, cultural continuity, and national dignity. In modern Uzbek prose, this epic worldview is transformed into a historical and philosophical reflection on national awakening, social justice, and cultural survival. The loss of freedom is depicted not merely as political subjugation but as moral and spiritual erosion.

Despite these structural and ideological differences, the comparative analysis highlights a significant convergence: in both traditions, freedom and patriotism are inseparable from moral responsibility. Literature in both contexts rejects passive or abstract notions of freedom and instead presents it as a value that must be earned, protected, and transmitted. Whether embodied in the solitary frontier hero or the communal epic defender, freedom functions as a measure of human dignity and national integrity.

Furthermore, the study underscores literature's role as a formative force in nation-building processes. Literary texts do not merely reflect historical realities; they actively participate in constructing symbolic frameworks through which societies interpret their past and envision their future. In this sense, Cooper's novels contributed to the mythologization of American national identity, while Uzbek epics and novels preserved historical consciousness during periods of political vulnerability and cultural transition.

In conclusion, the comparative perspective adopted in this article affirms that national identity and freedom, though shaped by distinct historical experiences, fulfill universal literary functions. They serve as ethical ideals, narrative motivators, and cultural anchors that allow societies to articulate continuity amid change. Future research may extend this framework by incorporating postcolonial theory, gender perspectives, or contemporary reinterpretations of epic and national narratives, thereby deepening our understanding of how freedom and identity continue to evolve in global literature.

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